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THE

CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

JANUARY, 1888.

A LIFE'S MORNING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'DEMOS,' 'THYRZA,' ETC.

CHAPTER I.

AN UNDERGRADUATE AT LEISURE.

WILFRID ATHEL went down invalided a few days after the beginning of Trinity term. The event was not unanticipated. At Christmas it had been clear enough that he was overtaxing himself; his father remarked on the fact with anxiety, and urged moderation, his own peculiar virtue. Wilfrid, whose battle with circumstances was all before him, declined to believe that the body was anything but the very humble servant of the will. So the body took its revenge.

He had been delicate in childhood, and the stage of hardy naturalism which interposes itself between tender juvenility and the birth of self-consciousness did not in his case last long enough to establish his frame in the vigour to which it was tending. There was nothing sickly about him; it was only an excess of nervous vitality that would not allow body to keep pace with mind. He was a boy to be, intellectually, held in leash, said the doctors. But that was easier said than done. What system of sedatives could one apply to a youngster whose imagination wrought him to a fever during a simple walk by the seashore, who if books were forcibly withheld consoled himself with the composition of five-act tragedies, interspersed with lyrics to which he supplied original strains? Mr. Athel conceived a theory that such exuberance of emotionality might be counterbalanced by

studies of a strictly positive nature; a tutor was engaged t
ground young Wilfrid in mathematics and the physical science
The result was that the tutor's enthusiasm for these pursuits com
municated itself after a brief repugnance to the versatile pupil
instincts of mastery became as vivid in the study of Euclid an
the chemical elements as formerly in the humaner paths c
learning; the plan had failed. In the upshot Wilfrid was sent t
school; if that did not develop the animal in him, nothin
would.

He was not quite three-and-twenty when the break-dow
removed him from Oxford. Going to Balliol with a scholarshi
he had from the first been marked for great things, at all event
by the measure of the schools. Removal from the system c
home education had in truth seemed to answer in some degre
the ends aimed at; the lad took his fair share of cricket and foot
ball, and kept clear of nervous crises. At the same time he mad
extraordinary progress with his books. He acquired with extrem
facility, and his ambition never allowed him to find content in
second place; conquest became his habit; he grew to deem i
the order of nature that Wilfrid Athel's name should come firs
in the list. Hence a reputation to support. During his earl
terms at Balliol he fagged as hard as the mere dullard whos
dear life depended upon a first class and a subsequent tutorshi
What he would make of himself in the end was uncertain; uni
versity distinctions would probably be of small moment to him a
soon as they were achieved, for already he spent the greate
portion of his strength in lines of study quite apart from th
curriculum, and fate had blessed him with exemption from sordi
cares. He led in a set devoted to what were called advanced ideas
without flattering himself that he was on the way to solve th
problem of the universe, he had satisfaction in reviewing th
milestones which removed him from the unconscious man, an
already clutched at a measure of positive wisdom in the suspicio
that he might shortly have to lay aside his school-books and re
commence his education under other teachers. As yet he wa
whole-hearted in the pursuit of learning. The intellectua
audacity which was wont to be the key-note of his conversatio
did not, as his detractors held, indicate mere bumptiousness an
defect of self-measurement; it was simply the florid redundanc
of a young mind which glories in its strength, and plays at victor
in anticipation. It was true that he could not brook the semblanc

of inferiority; if it were only five minutes' chat in the Quad, he must come off with a phrase or an epigram; so those duller heads who called Athel affected were not wholly without their justification. Those who shrugged their shoulders with the remark that he was overdoing it, and would not last out to the end of the race, enjoyed a more indisputable triumph. One evening, when Athel was taking the brilliant lead in an argument on 'Fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,' his brain began to whirl, tobacco-smoke seemed to have dulled all the lights before his eyes, and he fell from his chair in a fainting-fit.

He needed nothing but rest; that, however, was imperative. Mr. Athel brought him to London, and the family went down at once to their house in Surrey. Wilfrid was an only son and an only child. His father had been a widower for nearly ten years; for the last three his house had been directed by a widowed sister, Mrs. Rossall, who had twin girls. Mr. Athel found it no particular hardship to get away from town and pursue his work at The Firs, a delightful house in the midst of Surrey's fairest scenery, nor would Mrs. Rossall allow that the surrender of high season cost her any effort. This lady had just completed her thirty-second year; her girls were in their tenth. She was comely and knew it, but a constitutional indolence had preserved her from becoming a woman of fashion, and had nurtured in her a reflective mood, which, if it led to no marked originality of thought, at all events contributed to an appearance of culture. At the time of her husband's death she was at the point where graceful inactivity so often degenerates into slovenliness. Mrs. Rossall's homekeeping tendencies and the growing childhood of her twins tended to persuade her that her youth was gone; even the new spring fashions stirred her to but languid interest, and her music, in which she had some attainments, was all but laid aside. With widowhood began a new phase of her life. Her mourning was unaffected; it led her to pietism; she spent her days in religious observance, and her nights in the study of the gravest literature. She would have entered the Roman Church but for her brother's interposition. The end of this third year of discipline was bringing about another change, perhaps less obvious to herself than to those who marked her course with interest, as several people did. Her reading became less ascetic, she passed to George Herbert and the 'Christian Year,' and by way of the decoration of altars proceeded to thought for her personal adornment. A certain journal

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of society which she had long ago abandoned began to show itself occasionally in her rooms, though only as yet by oversight left to view. She spoke with her brother on the subject of certain invitations, long neglected, and did not seem displeased when he went beyond her own motion to propose the issuing of cards for a definite evening. Then came Wilfrid's break-down. There was really no need, said Mr. Athel, that she should transfer herself immediately to the country, just when everybody was well settled in town. But Mrs. Rossall preferred to go; she was not sure that the juncture had not some connection with her own spiritual life. And she maintained, on the whole, a seemly cheerfulness.

Mr. Athel was an Egyptologist of some distinction. Though not in person or manner suggestive of romantic antecedents, he had yet come by this taste in a way which bordered on romance. Travelling in Southern Europe at about the age which Wilfrid had now reached, he had the good fortune to rescue from drowning an Italian gentleman then on a tour in Greece. The Italian had a fair daughter, who was travelling with him, and her, after an acquaintance of a few weeks, Athel demanded by way of recompense. Her father was an enthusiastic student of Egyptian antiquities; the Englishman plied at one and the same time his wooing and the study of hieroglyphics, with marked success in both directions. The Mr. Athel who at that time represented parental authority, or at all events claimed filial deference, was anything but pleased with the step his son had taken; he was a highly respectable dealer in grain, and, after the manner of highly respectable men of commerce, would have had his eldest son espouse some countrywoman yet more respectable. It was his opinion that the lad had been entrapped by an adventurous foreigner. Philip Athel, who had a will of his own, wedded his Italian maiden, brought her to England, and fought down prejudices. A year or two later he was at work in Egypt, where he remained for some twelve months; his studies progressed. Subsequently he published certain papers which were recognised as valuable. Wilfrid found the amusement of his childhood in his father's pursuit; he began to decipher hieratic not much later than he learned to read English. Scarabs were his sacred playthings, and by the time of his going to school he was able to write letters home in a demotic which would not perhaps have satisfied Champollion or Brugsch, but yet was sufficiently marvellous to his schoolfellows and gratifying to his father.

For the rest, Philip Athel was a typical English gentleman. He enjoyed out-of-door sports as keenly as he did the pursuit of his study; he had scarcely known a day's illness in his life, owing, he maintained, to the wisdom with which he arranged his day. Three hours of study was, he held, as much as any prudent man would allow himself. He was always in excellent spirits, ever ready to be of service to a friend, lived with much moderation on victuals of the best quality procurable, took his autumnal holiday abroad in a gentlemanly manner. With something of theoretic radicalism in his political views, he combined a stout respect for British social institutions; affecting to be above vulgar prejudices, he was in reality much prepossessed in favour of hereditary position, and as time went on did occasionally half wish that the love he had bestowed on his Italian wife had been given to some English lady of 'good' family. He was liberal, frank, amiably autocratic in his home, apt to be peppery with inferiors who missed the line of perfect respect, candid and reasonable with equals or superiors. For his boy he reserved a store of manly affection, seldom expressing itself save in bluff fashion; his sister he patronised with much kindness, though he despised her judgment. One had now and then a feeling that his material circumstances aided greatly in making him the genial man he was, that with beef and claret of inferior quality he might not have been altogether so easy to get along with. But that again was an illustration of the English character.

We find the family assembling for breakfast at The Firs one delightful morning at the end of July. The windows of the room were thrown open, and there streamed in with the sunlight fresh and delicious odours, tonics alike of mind and body. From the Scotch firs whence the dwelling took its name came a scent which mingled with wafted breath from the remoter heather, and the creepers about the house-front, the lovely bloom and leafage skirting the lawn, contributed to the atmosphere of health and joy. It was nine o'clock. The urn was on the gleaming table, the bell was sounding. Mr. Athel stepped in straight from the lawn, fresh after his ten minutes' walk about the garden. Wilfrid Athel appeared at the same moment; he was dark-complexioned and had black, glossy hair; his cheeks were hollower than they should have been, but he had not the aspect of an invalid. Mrs. Rossall glided into the room behind him, fresh, fair, undemonstrative. Then came the twins, by name Patty and Minnie, delicate,

with promise of their mother's English style of beauty; it was very hard to distinguish them, their uncle had honestly given up the pretence long ago, and occasionally remonstrated with his sister on the absurdity of dressing them exactly alike. The last to enter the room was the governess, Miss Emily Hood.

Mr. Athel, having pronounced a grace, mentioned that he thought of running up to town; did anybody wish to give him a commission? Mrs. Rossall looked thoughtful, and said she would make a note of two or three things.

'I haven't much faith in that porridge regimen, Wilf,' remarked the master of the house, as he helped himself to chicken and tongue. 'We are not Highlanders. It's dangerous to make diet too much a matter of theory. Your example is infectious; first the twins; now Miss Hood. Edith, do you propose to become a pervert to porridge?'

'I have no taste for it,' replied his sister, who had become absent-minded.

'There's a certain dishonesty about it, moreover,' Mr. Athel pursued. 'Porridge should be eaten with salt. Milk *and* sugar—didn't I hear a suggestion of golden syrup, more honestly called treacle, yesterday? These things constitute evasion, self-deception at the least. In your case, Miss Hood, the regimen is clearly fruitful of ill results.'

'Of what kind, Mr. Athel?'

'Obviously it leads to diminution of appetite. You were in the habit of eating a satisfactory breakfast; at present some two ounces of that farinaceous mess——'

'My dear Philip!' interposed Mrs. Rossall, still absently.

'I hold that I am within my rights,' asserted her brother. 'If Miss Hood goes down into Yorkshire in a state of emaciation——'

Wilfrid and the twins showed amusement.

'To begin with,' pursued Mr. Athel, 'I hold that sweet food the first thing in the morning is a mistake; the appetite is checked in an artificial way, and impaired. Even coffee——'

'You would recommend a return to flagons of ale?' suggested Wilfrid.

'I am not sure that it wasn't better, dietetically.'

Mrs. Rossall had taken an egg, but, after fruitlessly chipping at the shell throughout this conversation, put down her spoon and appeared to abandon the effort to commence her meal. Presently she broke silence, speaking with some diffidence.

'I really think I will go to town with you, Philip,' she said. 'I want some things you can't very well get me, and then I ought to go and see the Redwings. I might persuade Beatrice to come to us for a day or two.'

'Do so by all means. You're quite sure,' he added with a smile, 'that I couldn't save you the trouble of the journey? I have no objection to visiting the Redwings.'

'I think it will be better if I go myself,' replied Mrs. Rossall, with a far-off look. 'I might call on one or two other people.'

Having decided this point, she found herself able to crack the egg. The anticipation of her day in London made her quite gay throughout the meal.

The carriage was at the door by ten o'clock, to drive to Dealing, the nearest station, some four miles away. The twins had gone upstairs with Miss Hood to their lessons, and Wilfrid was sauntering about the hall. His father paused by him on the way to the carriage.

'What do you propose to do with yourself, Wilf?' he asked.

'Ride, I think.'

'Do. Go over to Hilstead and lunch there. Capital lunch they give you at the inn; the last time I was there they cooked me one of the best chops I ever ate. Oberon wants exercise; make a day of it.'

'Very well.'

'You're not looking quite so well, I'm afraid,' remarked his father, with genuine solicitude in his tone. 'Haven't been reading, have you?'

'No.'

'No imprudences, mind. I must stop that porridge regimen; it doesn't suit you. Ready, Edith?' he shouted heartily at the foot of the stairs.

Mrs. Rossall came down, buttoning her gloves.

'If I were you, Wilf,' she said, 'I'd go off somewhere for the day. The twins will only worry you.'

Wilfrid laughed.

'I am going to eat unexampled chops at the "Waggoner" in Hilstead,' he replied.

'That's right. Good-bye, my dear boy. I wish you'd get fatter.'

'Pooh, I'm all right.'

The landau rolled away. Wilfrid still loitered in the hall, a

singular look of doubt on his face. In a room above one of the twins was having a music lesson; a certain finger-exercise was being drummed with persistent endeavour at accuracy.

'How can she bear that morning after morning?' the young man murmured to himself.

He took his straw hat and went round to the stables. Oberon was being groomed. Wilfrid patted the horse's sleek neck, and talked a little with the man. At length he made up his mind to go and prepare for riding; Oberon would be ready for him in a few minutes.

In the porch Patty ran to meet him.

'Truant!' Wilfrid exclaimed. 'Have I caught you in the act of escape?'

'I was going to look for you,' said the child, putting her arm through his and swinging upon him. 'We want to know if you'll be back for lunch.'

'Who wants to know?'

'I and Minnie and Miss Hood.'

'O, you are Patty, then, are you?'

This was an old form of joke. The child shook her dark curls with a half-annoyed gesture, but still swung on her cousin as he moved into the house. Wilfrid passed his arm about her playfully.

'Can't you make up your mind, Wilf?' she asked.

'O yes, my mind is quite made up,' he replied, with a laugh.

'And won't you tell me?'

'Tell you? Ah, about lunch. No, I shall not be back.'

'You won't? O, I am sorry.'

'Why are you sorry, indistinguishable little maiden?' he asked, drawing out one of her curls between his fingers, and letting it spring back again into its circling beauty.

'We thought it would be so nice, we four at lunch.'

'I am warned to avoid you. The tone of conversation would try my weak head; I am not capable yet of intellectual effort.'

The little girl looked at him with puzzled eyes.

'Well, it can't be helped,' she said. 'I must go back to my lessons.'

She ran off, and Wilfrid went up to his dressing-room. When he came down, Oberon was pawing the gravel before the door. He mounted and rode away.

His spirits, which at first seemed to suffer some depression, took vigour once more from the air of the downs. He put Oberon

at a leap or two, then let the breeze sing in his ears as he was borne at a gallop over the summer land, golden with sunlight. In spite of his still worn look, health was manifest in the upright vigour of his form, and in his eyes gleamed the untroubled joy of existence. Hope just now was strong within him, a hope defined and pointing to an end attainable; he knew that henceforth the many bounding and voiceful streams of his life would unite in one strong flow onward to a region of orient glory which shone before him as the bourne hitherto but dimly imagined. On, Oberon, on! No speed that would not lag behind the fore-flight of a heart's desire. Let the stretch of green-shadowing woodland sweep by like a dream; let the fair, sweet meadow-sides smile for a moment and vanish; let the dark hill-summits rise and sink. It is the time of youth and hope, of boundless faith in the world's promises, of breathless pursuit.

Hilstead was gained long before lunch could be thought of. Wilfrid rode on, and circled back towards the hostelry famous for chops about the hour of noon. He put up his horse, and strayed about the village till his meal was ready; after he had eaten it he smoked a cigar among hollyhocks and sunflowers. Then impatience possessed him. He looked at his watch several times, annoyed to find that so little of the day was spent. When he at last set forth again, it was to ride at walking pace in the direction of home. He reached a junction of roads, and waited there for several minutes, unable to decide upon his course. He ended by throwing the reins on Oberon's neck.

'Go which way you will,' he said aloud.

Oberon paced forward to the homeward route.

'So be it. On, then! An hour will bring us to The Firs.'

The house was all but reached, when Wilfrid caught a glimpse of a straw hat moving into a heath-clad hollow a hundred yards from the road. He pressed on. At the gate stood a gardener.

'James,' he cried, leaping down, 'take the horse to the stable, will you?'

And, instead of going up to the house, he walked back in the direction he had come till he reached the hollow in which the straw hat had disappeared. Miss Hood sat on the ground, reading. She was about to rise, but Wilfrid begged her not to move, and threw himself into a reclining posture.

'I saw you as I rode past,' he said, in a friendly way. 'I suppose the twins are straying?'

'They are at Greenhaws,' was the reply. 'Mrs. Winter called for them immediately after lunch. She will bring them back early in the evening.'

'Ah!'

He plucked sprigs of heather. Miss Hood turned to her book.

'I've had a magnificent ride,' Wilfrid began again. 'Surely there is no country in England so glorious as this. Don't you enjoy it?'

'Very much.'

'I have never seen the Yorkshire moors. The scenery, of course, is of a much wilder kind?'

'I have not seen them myself,' said the governess.

'I thought you might have taken your holidays sometimes in that direction.'

'No. We used to go to a seaside place in Lincolnshire called Cleethorpes. I suppose you never heard of it?'

'I think not.'

Wilfrid continued to pluck heather, and let his eyes catch a glimpse of her face now and then. Miss Hood was a year younger than himself, and had well outgrown girlishness. She was of very slight build, looked indeed rather frail; but her face, though lacking colour, had the firmness of health. It was very broad at the forehead, and tapered down into narrowness; the eyes seemed set at an unusual distance from each other, though the nose was thin and of perfect form, its profile making but a slight angle away from the line of the brows. Her lips were large, but finely curved; the chin was prominent, the throat long. She had warm brown hair.

Few would at first sight have called her face beautiful, but none could deny the beauty of her hands. Ungloved at present, they lay on the open pages of the book, unsurpassable for delicate loveliness. When he did not venture to look higher, Wilfrid let his eyes feed on the turn of the wrist, the faint blue lines and sinuous muscles, the pencilling about the finger-joints, the delicate white and pink nails.

Miss Hood was habitually silent when in the company of others than the children. When she replied to a question it was without timidity, but in few, well-chosen words. Yet her manner did not lack cheerfulness; she impressed no one as being unhappy, and alone with the twins she was often gay enough. She

was self-possessed, and had the manners of a lady, though in her position this was rather to be observed in what she refrained from doing than in what she did. Wilfrid had, on first meeting her, remarked to himself that it must imply a certain force of individuality to vary so distinctly from the commonplace even under the disadvantage of complete self-suppression; he had now come to understand better the way in which that individuality betrayed itself.

'Shall you go to Cleethorpes this year?' was his next question.

'I think not. I shall most likely pass the holidays at home.'

'And study electricity?'

In a former conversation she had surprised him by some unexpected knowledge of the principles of electricity, and explained the acquirement by telling him that this subject was her father's favourite study. Wilfrid put the question now with a smile.

'Yes, very likely,' she replied, smiling also, but faintly. 'It gives my father pleasure when I do so.'

'You have not a keen interest in the subject yourself?'

'I try to have.'

Her voice was of singular quality; if she raised it the effect was not agreeable, owing possibly to its lack of strength, but in low tones, such as she employed at present, it fell on the ear with a peculiar sweetness, a natural melody in its modulation.

'The way in which you speak of your father interests me,' said Wilfrid, leaning his chin upon his hand, and gazing at her freely. 'You seem so united with him in sympathy.'

She did not turn her eyes to him, but her face gathered brightness.

'In sympathy, yes,' she replied, speaking now with more readiness. 'Our tastes often differ, but we are always at one in feeling. We have been companions ever since I can remember.'

'Is your mother living?'

'Yes.'

Something in the tone of the brief affirmative kept Wilfrid from further questioning.

'I wonder,' he said, 'what you think of the relations existing between myself and my father. We are excellent friends, don't you think? Strange—one doesn't think much about such things till some occasion brings them forward. Whether there is deep

sympathy between us, I couldn't say. Certainly there are many subjects on which I should not dream of speaking to him unless necessity arose; partly, I suppose, that is male reserve, and partly English reserve. If novels are to be trusted, French parents and children speak together with much more freedom; on the whole that must be better.'

She made no remark.

'My father,' he continued, 'is eminently a man of sense; if I reflect on my boyhood, I see how admirable his treatment of me has always been. I fancy I must have been at one time rather hard to manage; I know I was very passionate and stubbornly self-willed. Yet he neither let me have my own way nor angered me by his opposition. In fact he made me respect him. Now that we stand on equal terms, I dare say he has something of the same feeling towards myself. And so it comes that we are excellent friends.'

She listened with a scarcely perceptible smile.

'Perhaps this seems to you a curiously dispassionate way of treating such a subject,' Wilfrid added, with a laugh. 'It illustrates what I meant in saying I doubted whether there was deep sympathy between us. Your own feeling for your father is clearly one of devotedness. You would think no sacrifice of your own wishes too great if he asked it of you.'

'I cannot imagine any sacrifice, which my father could ask, that I should refuse.'

She spoke with some difficulty, as if she wished to escape the subject.

'Perhaps that is a virtue that your sex helps to explain,' said Wilfrid, musingly.

'You do not know,' he added, when a bee had hummed between them for half a minute, 'how constant my regret is that my mother did not live till I was old enough to make a friend of her. You know that she was an Italian? There was a sympathy taken out of my life. I believe I have more of the Italian nature than the English, and I know my mother's presence would be priceless to me now that I could talk with her. What unsatisfactory creatures we are as children, so imperfect, so deficient! It is worse with boys than with girls. Compare, for instance, the twins with boys of ten. What coarse, awkward, unruly lumps of boisterousness youngsters mostly are at that age! I dislike boys, and more than ever when I remember myself at that stage.

What an insensible, ungrateful, brainless, and heartless brat I was!'

'You must be wrong in one respect,' she returned, watching a large butterfly. 'You could not have been brainless.'

'Oh, the foundation of tolerable wits was there, no doubt; but it is just that undeveloped state that irritates me. Suppose I were now ten years old, and that glorious butterfly before me; should I not leap at it and stick a pin through it—young savage? Precisely what a Hottentot boy would do, except that he would be free from the apish folly of pretending a scientific interest, not really existing. I rejoice to have lived out of my boyhood; I would not go through it again for anything short of a thousand years of subsequent maturity.'

She just glanced at him, a light of laughter in her eyes. She was abandoning herself to the pleasure of hearing him speak.

'That picture of my mother,' he pursued, dropping his voice again, 'does not do her justice. Even at twelve years old—(she died when I was twelve)—I could not help seeing and knowing how beautiful she was. I have thought of her of late more than I ever did; sometimes I suffer a passion of grief that one so beautiful and lovable has gone and left a mere dumb picture. I suppose even my memory of her will grow fainter and fainter, founded as it is on imperfect understanding, dim appreciation. She used to read Italian to me—first the Italian, then the English—and I thought it, as often as not, a bore to have to listen to her! Thank Heaven, I have the book she used, and can now go over the pieces, and try to recall her voice.'

The butterfly was gone, but the bee still hummed about them. The hot afternoon air was unstirred by any breeze.

'How glad I am,' Wilfrid exclaimed when he had brooded for a few moments, 'that I happened to see you as I rode past! I should have wandered restlessly about the house in vain, seeking for some one to talk to. And you listen so patiently. It is pleasant to be here and talk so freely of things I have always had to keep in my own mind. Look, do look at that bastion of cloud over the sycamore! What glorious gradation of tints! What a snowy crown!'

'That is a pretty spray,' he added, holding to her one that he had plucked.

She looked at it; then, as he still held it out, took it from him. The exquisite fingers touched his own redder and coarser ones.

'Have you friends in Dunfield?' he asked.

'Friends?'

'Any real friend, I mean—any girl who gives you real companionship?'

'Scarcely that.'

'How shall you spend your time when you are not deep in electrics? What do you mean to read these holidays?'

'Chiefly German, I think. I have only just begun to read it.'

'And I can't read it at all. Now and then I make a shot at the meaning of a note in a German edition of some classical author, every time fretting at my ignorance. But there is so endlessly much to do, and a day is so short.'

'Isn't it hateful,' he broke forth, 'this enforced idleness of mine? To think that weeks and weeks go by and I remain just where I was, when the loss of an hour used to seem to me an irreparable misfortune. I have such an appetite for knowledge, surely the unhappiest gift a man can be endowed with; it leads to nothing but frustration. Perhaps the appetite weakens as one grows in years; perhaps the sphere of one's keener interests contracts; I hope it may be so. At times I cannot work—I mean, I could not—for a sense of the vastness of the field before me. I should like you to see my rooms at Balliol. Shelves have long since refused to take another volume; floor, tables, chairs, every spot is heaped. And there they lie; hosts I have scarcely looked into, many I shall never have time to take up to the end of my days.'

'You have the satisfaction of being able to give your whole time to study.'

'There is precisely the source of dissatisfaction! My whole time, and that wholly insufficient. I have a friend, a man I envy intensely; he has taken up the subject of Celtic literature; gives himself to it with single-heartedness, cares for nothing that does not connect itself therewith; will pursue it throughout his life; will know more of it than any man living. My despair is the universality of my interests. I can think of no branch of study to which I could not surrender myself with enthusiasm; of course I shall never master one. My subject is the history of humanity; I would know everything that man has done or thought or felt. I cannot separate lines of study. Philology is a passion with me, but how shall I part the history of speech from the history of thought? The etymology of any single word will hold me for

hours, to follow it up I must traverse centuries of human culture. They tell me I have a faculty for philosophy, in the narrow sense of the word; alas! that narrow sense implies an exhaustive knowledge of speculation in the past and of every result of science born in our own time. Think of the sunny spaces in the world's history, in each of which one could linger for ever. Athens at her fairest, Rome at her grandest, the glorious savagery of Merovingian courts, the kingdom of Frederick II., the Moors in Spain, the magic of Renaissance Italy—to become a citizen of any one age means a lifetime of endeavour. It is easy to fill one's head with names and years, but that only sharpens my hunger. Then there is the world of art; I would know every subtlest melody of verse in every tongue, enjoy with perfectly instructed taste every form that man has carved or painted. I fear to enter museums and galleries; I am distracted by the numberless desires that seize upon me, depressed by the hopelessness of satisfying them. I cannot even enjoy music from the mere feeling that I do not enjoy it enough, that I have not had time to study it, that I shall never get at its secret. . . . And when is one to live? I cannot lose myself in other men's activity and enjoyments. I must have a life of my own, outside the walls of a library. It would be easy to give up all ambition of knowledge, to forget all the joy and sorrow that has been and passed into nothingness; to know only the eternity of a present hour. Might one not learn more in one instant of unreflecting happiness than by toiling on to a mummied age, only to know in the end the despair of never having lived?'

He again raised his eyes to her face. It was fixed in a cold, absent gaze; her lips hardened into severity, the pose of her head impressive, noble. Athel regarded her for several moments; she was revealing to him more of her inner self than he had yet divined.

'What are your thoughts?' he asked quietly.

She smiled, recovering her wonted passiveness.

'Have you not often much the same troubles?'

'They are only for the mind which is strong enough to meet and overcome them,' she replied.

'But look, my mind has given way already! I am imbecile. For ever I shall be on the point of a break-down, and each successive one will bring me nearer to some final catastrophe—perhaps the lunatic asylum—who knows?'

'I should think,' she said gravely, 'that you suggested a truth. Very likely your mind will contract its range and cease to aim at the impossible.'

'But tell me, have you not yourself already attained that wisdom? Why should you make pretences of feebleness which does not mark you? You have a mind as active as my own; I know that perfectly well. What is your secret of contentment? Won't you help me in this miserable plight?'

'No, Mr. Athel, I have none but very ordinary powers of mind, and perhaps it is my recognition of that which keeps me contented. There is indeed one principle of guidance which I have worked out for myself——'

'Ah! And that?'

'It will not enlighten you, for it is only the choice of a natural and easy course, seeing that difficult ones are closed. The literature of learning is out of my reach, so I limit myself to the literature of beauty, and in this I try to keep to the best.'

'You are right, you are right! To know the masterpieces of literature, pure literature, poetry in its widest sense; that is the wise choice. Think; we feed ourselves with the second-hand wisdom of paltry philosophisers and critics, and Shakespeare waits outside the door with the bread of life. From Homer—— Alas! you do not read Greek?'

She shook her head.

'And you work at German! In heaven's name change your language forthwith! Why should you not know Greek? You *must* know Greek! I will give you books, I will advise you, show you the essentials to begin with. There are still a few days before you go into Yorkshire; you can work during the holidays on lines I shall set you; you can write and tell me your——'

He paused, for her face had lost its smile, and wore again that coldly respectful look which she seldom put off save in her privacy with the children. For the last quarter of an hour he had marked in her quite another aspect; the secret meanings of her face had half uttered themselves in eye and lip. His last words seemed to recall her to the world of fact. She made a slight movement and closed the book on her lap.

'Greek is more than I can undertake, Mr. Athel,' she said in a quietly decided tone. 'I must be content with translations.'

'Translations! You would not say that so calmly if you knew

what you were renouncing. Everything, everything in literature, I would give up to save my Greek. You will learn it, I know you will; some day I shall hear you read the hexameters as beautifully as you read English poetry to the girls. Will you not begin if I beg you to?'

The elbow on which he rested moved a few inches nearer to her. He saw the pearly shadows waver upon her throat, and her lips tremble into rigidity.

'My time in the holidays will be very limited,' she said. 'I have undertaken to give some help to a friend who is preparing to become a teacher, and'—she tried to smile—'I don't think I must do more work whilst at home than is really necessary.'

'No, that is true,' Wilfrid assented unwillingly. 'Never mind, there is plenty of time. Greek will be overcome, you will see. When we are all back in town and the days are dull, then I shall succeed in persuading you.'

She looked about her as if with thought of quitting her place. Her companion was drawn into himself; he stroked mechanically with his finger-tips the fronds of bracken near him.

'I suppose I shall go up again in October,' he began. 'I wish there were no necessity for it.'

'But surely it is your one desire?' the other replied in genuine surprise.

'Not to return to Oxford. A few months ago it would have been, but this crisis in my life has changed me. I don't think I shall adapt myself again to those conditions. I want to work in a freer way. I had a positive zeal even for examinations; now that seems tame—well, boyish. I believe I have outgrown that stage; I feel a reluctance to go back to school. I suppose I must take my degree, and so on, but it will all be against the grain.'

'Your feeling will most likely alter when you have thoroughly recovered your health.'

'No, I don't think it will. Practically my health is all right. You don't,' he added with a smile, 'regard me as an irresponsible person, whose feeble remarks are to be received with kind allowance?'

'No, I did not mean that.'

He gazed at her, and his face showed a growing trouble.

'You do not take too seriously what I said just now about the weakness of my mind? It would be horrible if you thought I had worked myself into a state of amiable imbecility, and was

incapable henceforth of acting, thinking, or speaking with a sound intellect. Tell me, say in plain words that is not your way of interpreting me.'

He had become very much in earnest. Raising himself to a position in which he rested on one hand, he looked straight into her face.

'Why don't you reply? Why don't you speak?'

'Because, Mr. Athel, it is surely needless to say that I have no such thought.'

'No, it is not needless; and even now you speak in a way which troubles me. Do not look away from me. What has my aunt told you about me?'

She turned her face to him. Her self-command was so complete that not a throb of her leaping heart betrayed itself in vein or muscle. She even met his eyes with a placid gaze which he felt as a new aspect of her countenance.

'Mrs. Rossall has never spoken to me of your health,' she said.

'But my father's jokes; he has a way of humorous exaggeration. You of course understand that; you don't take seriously all he says?'

'I think I can distinguish between jest and earnest.'

'For all that, you speak of the recovery of my health as if I were still far from the wholly rational stand-point. So far from my being mentally unsound, this rest has been a growing-time with me. Before, I did nothing but heap my memory with knowledge of books; now I have had leisure to gather knowledge of a deeper kind. I was a one-sided academical monster; it needed this new sense to make me human. The old college life is no longer my ideal; I doubt if it will be possible. At any rate I shall hurry over the rest of my course as speedily as may be, that I may begin really to live. You must credit what I am saying; I want you to give me distinct assurance that you do so. If I have the least doubt, it will trouble my mind in earnest.'

Miss Hood rose to her feet in that graceful effortless way of which girls have the secret.

'You attribute a meaning to my words that I never thought of,' she said, again in the distant respectful manner.

Wilfrid also rose.

'And you give me credit for understanding myself, for being as much master of my mind as I am of my actions?'

'Surely I do, Mr. Athel.'

'You are going to the house? It is nearly five o'clock; your conscience tells you that a civilised being must drink tea. I think I shall walk over to Greenhaws; I may as well save Mrs. Winter the trouble of bringing back the children.'

He hesitated before moving away.

'How little that cloud has changed its form! I should like to stay here and watch it till sunset. In a week I suppose I shall be looking at some such cloud over Mont Blanc. And you, in Dunfield.'

'No, there we have only mill-smoke.'

She smiled, and passed from the hollow to the road.

CHAPTER II.

BEATRICE REDWING.

Midway in breakfast next morning, at a moment when Mrs. Rossall was describing certain originalities of drawing-room decoration observed on the previous day at a house in town, the half-open door admitted a young lady who had time to glance round the assembled family before her presence was observed. In appearance she was very interesting. The tints of her fine complexion were warmed by exercise in the morning air, and her dark eyes brightened by pleasurable excitement; she carried her hat in her hand, and seemed to have been walking bare-headed, for there were signs of wind-play in her abundant black hair. But neither face nor attire suggested rusticity; the former was handsome, spirited, with a hint of uncommon things in its changeful radiance; the latter was the result of perfect taste choosing at will among the season's costumes. At her throat were fastened two blossoms of wild rose, with the dew still on them, and the hand which held her lace-trimmed sunshade carried also a spray of meadow-sweet.

Mr. Athel, looking up from the end of the table, was the first to perceive her.

'*Guardami ben: ben son, ben son Beatrice!*' he exclaimed, rising and moving from his place. 'But how in the world has she got here?'

'Beatrice!' cried Mrs. Rossall, following the general direction

of eyes. 'Here already! But you surely haven't come from town this morning.'

'But indeed I have,' was the reply, in a joyous voice, whose full, rich quality took the ear captive. 'Will you let me sit down just as I am? Patty, here's a rose for you, and, Minnie, another for you.' She took them from her dress. 'How do you do, Mr. Wilfrid?'

The governess was mentioned to her by name; Beatrice looked at her steadfastly for a moment.

'But how have you got here?' inquired Mrs. Rossall. 'You must have left London at an unheard-of hour; and how have you come from Dealing?'

'Clearly she has walked,' said Mr. Athel. 'Don't you see the spoils of her progress?'

'Oh yes, I have walked,' replied the girl. 'I suppose I'm in a dreadful state; towards the end I almost ran. I was so afraid lest I should miss breakfast, and you can't imagine how hungry I am. Is that oatmeal porridge you are eating, Mr. Wilfrid? Oh, do let me have some; how delicious it will be!'

'Nonsense, Beatrice,' interposed Mrs. Rossall. 'Let Mr. Athel give you some of that pâté, or will you have——'

'I've been a vegetarian for a month,' was the reply.

'You don't mean it?'

'Most strictly. No—eggs are not permitted; only the feebler school allows them. You can't think how much better I have been in body and mind since I adopted the new diet.'

'But whatever train did you start by?' pressed Mrs. Rossall.

'Half-past six. I never can sleep these short summer nights. I was up about five o'clock, and just as I was going to read, I saw the railway time-table. I looked for the first train and determined to come by it. I wrote a short note to let mother know what had become of me, then in a minute or two I got my things packed, and last of all stole out of the house to find a cab. Luckily, a policeman was just passing the door; he found one for me in no time. Not a soul was up, so I dragged the trunk out on to the landing, and then made the cabman creep upstairs like a burglar to fetch it. Of course he thought I was running away; he enjoyed the joke wonderfully; you should have seen his smile when I paid him at the station. Perhaps you'll let them fetch my luggage before lunch?'

'But won't your mother be alarmed?' asked Mrs. Rossall.

'Why should she? She knows I am very capable of taking care of myself. I wouldn't have missed this walk for anything. I only lost my way once, and then, luckily, a farmer came driving along; he told me I had half a mile more. I trebled his distance, which made it about right.'

'It's a good four miles from the station,' remarked Mr. Athel.

'Is it? If I hadn't been so hungry I shouldn't have minded as much again. You're not angry with me, Mrs. Rossall, for coming before I was expected?'

A curious note of irresponsible childishness came out now and then in her talk, as in this last question; it was the more noticeable for the air of maturity and self-possession which on the whole characterised her. She continued to talk with much vivacity, making at the same time a hearty meal. Her place at the table was between Wilfrid and Patty; on the opposite side sat Miss Hood and Minnie. As often as her eyes fell upon the governess's face, they rested there for a moment, searchingly, as if with endeavour to recall some memory.

'Who is responsible for your vegetarianism?' Wilfrid asked. 'Is Mr. Cresset preaching the doctrine?'

'No, Mr. Cresset is not preaching the doctrine,' was the reply, in a tone which evidently contained reference to previous dissensions.

'Surely there is nothing offensive in the suggestion?' remarked the young man mildly.

'Yes, there is something offensive. Your references to Mr. Cresset are always offensive.'

'You do me injustice. Aunt, I take you to witness, didn't I praise ungrudgingly a sermon of his we heard last Christmas?'

'I remember quite well,' said Beatrice; 'you regarded it as extraordinary that anything good could come from that source. Mr. Athel, I take you to witness, wasn't that his tone?'

'Patty,' interposed Mrs. Rossall, 'do change your place and sit between those two; they never can be next to each other without quarrelling.'

Breakfast drew out to unusual length. Miss Redwing was full of the season's news, and Mrs. Rossall's reviving interest in such vanities scarcely affected concealment. Mr. Athel, too, though he supported a jesting tone, clearly enjoyed listening to the girl's vivacious comments on the world which amuses itself. Wilfrid talked less than usual.

He and his father strolled together into the garden an hour later,

and found Beatrice reclining in a hammock which had recently been suspended in a convenient spot. She had one hand beneath her head, the other held a large fan, with which she warded off stray flakes of sunlight falling between the leaves.

'Isn't this exquisite?' she cried. 'Let no one hint to me of stirring before lunch-time. I am going to enjoy absolute laziness.'

'I thought you would have preferred a gallop over the downs,' said Mr. Athel.

'Oh, we'll have that this afternoon; you may talk of it now, and I shall relish it in anticipation. Or, better still, sit down and tell us old stories about Egypt, and let us forget the age we live in.'

'What is amiss with the age?' inquired Mr. Athel, who stood smoking a cigar and was in his wonted state of satisfaction with himself and the universe.

'Everything is amiss. If you had been with me yesterday in a street I was visiting, not a quarter of a mile from home—— But I'm going to forget all that now. How deliciously warm it is here in the shade! I must have a hammock in our garden at Cowes.'

'When do you go back?' Mr. Athel asked.

'In about a fortnight. It has done mother no end of good; don't you think she looks remarkably well, Mrs. Rossall? I'm afraid she finds it a little dull though.'

When his father had returned to the house, Wilfrid sat on the grass and rested his head against the arm of the low garden chair in which Mrs. Rossall was reclining. The sound of a grass-cutter alone mingled with the light rustling of the trees. It was one of those perfect summer mornings when the sun's rays, though streaming from a cloudless sky, are tempered by a gentle haze in the upper regions of the air, when the zenith has a tinge of violet and on the horizon broods a reddish mist. From this part of the garden only a glimpse of the house was visible; an upper window with white curtains, cool, peaceful. All else on every side was verdure and bloom.

'Is it possible,' Beatrice asked, when there had been silence for a few moments, 'that I can have met Miss Hood anywhere before to-day? Her face is strangely familiar to me.'

'She has never been in London before she came to us,' said Mrs. Rossall.

'But you have relatives in Dunfield, I think?' remarked Wilfrid.

'To be sure,' said his aunt; 'she comes from Dunfield, in Yorkshire. Do you think you can have met her there?'

'Ah, that explains it,' Beatrice cried eagerly. 'I knew I had seen her, and I know now where it was. She gave lessons to my uncle's children. I saw her when I was staying there the last time, three—no, four years ago. I can't recall her by her name, but her face, oh, I remember it as clearly as possible.'

'What a memory you have, Beatrice!' said Mrs. Rossall.

'I never forget a face that strikes me.'

'In what way did Miss Hood's face strike you?' Wilfrid asked, as if in idle curiosity, and with some of the banter which always marked his tone to Beatrice.

'You would like some deep, metaphysical reason, but I am not advanced enough for that. I don't suppose I thought much about her at the time, but the face has stayed in my mind. But how old is she?'

'Two-and-twenty,' said Mrs. Rossall, smiling.

'A year older than myself; my impression was that she was more than that. I think I only saw her once; she was with us at lunch one day. We spoke of her shyness, I remember; she scarcely said a word all the time.'

'Yes, she is very shy,' assented Mrs. Rossall.

'That's a mistake, I think, aunt,' said Wilfrid; 'shyness is quite a different thing from reticence.'

'Reticent, then,' conceded the lady, with a smile to Beatrice. 'At all events she is very quiet and agreeable and well-bred. It is such a good thing to have a governess who really seems well-bred; it does make it so much easier to treat her with consideration.'

'Do the children like her?' Beatrice asked.

'Very much indeed. And it's wonderful how she controls them; they are scatter-brained little creatures.'

'Will she go abroad with you?'

'Oh, no, I don't think that necessary.'

Wilfrid presently left the two to their gossip. The conversation naturally turned to him.

'How is his health?' Beatrice asked.

'He seems quite recovered. I don't think there was ever anything to occasion much alarm, but his father got frightened. I expect we shall bring him back from Switzerland as well as ever he was.'

'What ever has he done with himself the last two months?' mused the girl.

'Well, it has been rather hard to keep him occupied away from books. He has been riding a good deal, and smoking a good deal.'

'And talking a good deal?'

'Well, yes, Wilf is fond of talking,' admitted Mrs. Rossall, 'but I don't think he's anything like as positive as he was. He does now and then admit that other people may have an opinion which is worth entertaining. Celia Dawlish was with us a fortnight ago; she declared him vastly improved.'

'She told him so?'

'No, that was in private to me.'

'But I think Celia and he always got on well together,' said Beatrice in an idly meditative tone, moving the edge of her fan backwards and forwards a few inches above her face.

A few minutes later, after a silence, she said,

'Do you know what I am thinking?'

'What?' asked Mrs. Rossall, with an air of interest.

'That if I were to close my eyes and keep quiet I should very soon be fast asleep.'

The other laughed at the unexpected reply.

'Then why not do so, dear? It's warm enough; you couldn't take any harm.'

'I suppose the walk has tired me.'

'But if you had no sleep last night? How is it you can't sleep, I wonder? Is it the same when you are at Cowes?'

'No, only in London. Something troubles me; I feel that I have neglected duties. I hear voices, as distinct as yours now, reproving me for my idle, frivolous life.'

'Nonsense! I am sure you are neither idle nor frivolous. Do doze off, if you can, dear, I'll go and get something to read.'

'You won't be angry with me?' the girl asked, in the tone of an affectionate weary child.

'I shall if you use ceremony with me.'

Beatrice sighed, folded her hands upon the fan, and closed her lids. When Mrs. Rossall returned from the house with a magazine and a light shawl, the occupant of the hammock was already sound asleep. She threw the shawl with womanly skill and gentleness over the shapely body. When she had resumed her seat, she caught a glimpse of Wilfrid at a little distance; her beckoned summons brought him near.

'Look,' she whispered, pointing to the hammock. 'When did you see a prettier picture?'

The young man gazed with a free smile, the expression of critical appreciativeness. The girl's beauty stirred in him no mood but that. She slept with complete calm of feature; the half-lights that came through the foliage made an exquisite pallor on her face, contrasting with the dark masses of her hair. Her bosom rose and fell in the softest sighing; her pure throat was like marble, and her just parted lips seemed to need a protector from the bees. . . . .

While she sleeps, let us learn a little more of her history. Some five-and-twenty years previously, Alfred Redwing was a lecturer on Greek and Latin at a small college in the north of England, making shift to live on a beggarly stipend. Handsome, pleasing, not quite thirty, he was well received in such semblance of society as his town offered, and, in spite of his defects as a suitor, he won for his wife a certain Miss Baxendale, the daughter of a well-to-do manufacturer. She brought him at once a few hundreds a year, and he pursued his college work in improved spirits. His wife had two brothers; one had early gone to America, the other was thriving as a man of business in the town of Dunfield. With Laurence Baxendale, who dated his very occasional letters from various parts of the United States, the family might be said to have parted for good; before leaving England he had got on ill-terms with his father and brother, and it was only a persistent affection for his sister that caused him to give any sign of himself year after year. When this sister had been Mrs. Redwing for about two years, she one day received an intimation from solicitors that Laurence was dead and had left her the whole of a very considerable fortune, the product, mainly, of dealings in lumber. Mr. and Mrs. Redwing in fact found themselves possessed of nearly fourteen thousand a year, proceeding from most orderly investments. This would naturally involve a change in their mode of life. In the first place they paid a visit to America; then they settled in London, where, about the same time, their only child, Beatrice, was born. A month after the child's coming into the world, the father withdrew from it,—into a private lunatic asylum. He had not been himself from the day when he heard of the fortune that had come to him; such an access of blessedness was not provided for in the constitution of his mind. Probably few men of his imaginative temperament and hard antecedents

could have borne the change without some little unsettling of mental balance; we are framed to endure any amount of ill, but have to take our chance in the improbable event of vast joy befalling us. Poor Redwing conceived a suspicion that his wife desired to murder him; one night as she was following him into their bedroom, he suddenly turned round, caught hold of her with violence, and flung her to the ground, demanding the knife which he protested he had seen gleam in her hand. It was no longer safe to live with him; he was put under restraint, and never again knew freedom. In less than a year he died, a moping maniac.

Mrs. Redwing was an invalid thenceforth; probably it was only the existence of her child that saved her life. An affection of the heart in course of time declared itself, but, though her existence was believed to hang on a thread, she lived on and on, lived to see Beatrice grow to womanhood. She kept a small house in London, but spent the greater part of the year at home or foreign health-resorts. Her relatives had supposed that she would return to her own country, but Mrs. Redwing had tastes which lacked gratification in a provincial manufacturing town. Without having achieved much positive culture, she had received from her husband an impulse towards the development of certain higher possibilities in her nature, and she liked the society of mentally active people. The state of her health alone withheld her from a second marriage; she was not a very patient invalid, and suffered keenly in the sense of missing the happiness which life had offered her. In the matter of her daughter's education she exercised much care. Doctrinal religion had a strong hold upon her, and it was her solicitude that Beatrice should walk from the first in the ways of Anglican salvation. She dreaded the 'spirit of the age.' With a better judgment in pure literature than falls to the lot of most women—or men either—she yet banished from her abode, wherever it might be, anything that remotely savoured of intellectual emancipation; her æsthetic leanings she deemed the great temptation of her life, for she frankly owned to her friends that many things powerfully attracted her, which her conscience bade her shun as dangerous. Her generosity made her a shining light in the world which busies itself in the dispensing or receiving of ecclesiastical charity. The clerical element was very strong in the circle that surrounded her. At the same time her worldly tastes did not go altogether ungratified. She was very

fond of music, and her unlimited powers in the provision of first-rate musical entertainment brought to her house acquaintances of a kind that would not otherwise have been found there. The theatre she tabooed, regarding this severity as an acceptable sacrifice, and not troubling to reflect what share her ill-health had in rendering it a fairly easy one. In brief, she was a woman of a genial nature, whose inconsistencies were largely due to her inability to outgrow early conditions.

Beatrice inherited her mother's mental restrictions, but was endowed with a subtlety of nature, which, aided by her circumstances, made her yet more a being of inconsistencies and contradictions. In religion it was not enough for her to conform; zeal drove her into the extremest forms of ritualistic observance. Nor did care for her personal salvation suffice; the logic of a compassionate nature led her on to various forms of missionary activity; she haunted vile localities, ministering alike to soul and body. At the same time she relished keenly the delights of the masquerading sphere, where her wealth and her beauty made her doubly welcome. From praying by the bedside of a costermonger's wife, she would speed away to shine among the brightest in phantasmagoric drawing-rooms; her mother could seldom accompany her, but there was always some one ready to chaperon Beatrice Redwing. Once in the world from which thought is banished, she seemed as thoughtless as any. Her spiritual convictions put no veto even upon dancing. Yet her mood at such times was not the entire self-abandonment of the girl who is born but to waltz. In spite of the sanction of custom, she could not wholly suppress her virginal instincts, and, however unconsciously, something in her nature held itself aloof. She led a life of indecision. Combining in herself such contradictory elements, she was unable to make close friendships. Her intimacy with Mrs. Rossall, which dated from her late childhood, was not the perfect accord which may subsist between women of very different characters, yet here she gave and received more sympathy than elsewhere. It was her frequent saying that she came to Mrs. Rossall's house when she wanted to rest. Here she could be herself, could pass without interval from pietistic argument to chatter about her neighbours, could indulge in impulses of confession as with no one else, could put off the strain of existence which was the result of her conflicting impulses. But it was only during a portion of the year that she could have Mrs. Rossall's

society; at other times, though no one suspected it, she suffered much from loneliness. With her mother she was in accord on the subjects of religion and music, but even natural affection, blending with these sympathies, could not bring about complete unity; in her home there was the same lack that she experienced in the outer world. For all her versatility, she was not in appearance emotional; no one seemed less likely to be overcome by passion. Her enthusiasms fell short of the last note of sincerity. Perhaps it was on this account that she produced no strong impression, in spite of her beauty. Her personality suffered on acquaintance from defect of charm. Was it a half-consciousness of this that led her now and then into the curious affectation of childishness already remarked? Did she feel unable to rely for pleasing upon those genuine possessions which for some reason could never advantageously display themselves? . . . .

For more than an hour she slept. At her waking, she found Minnie standing by her side.

'Are your lessons over?' she asked, passing at once into full consciousness, without sign of having slept.

The child replied that they were.

'Where is Miss Hood?'

'In the summer-house.'

Beatrice rose, and they walked towards the summer-house together. It was in a corner of the garden, hidden among acacias and laurels, a circular hut in the ordinary rustic style. Patty and the governess were seated within. Beatrice entered, and took a seat with them.

'Is your memory as good as my own, Miss Hood?' she said pleasantly. 'Do you remember our meeting four years ago?'

The other regarded her with quiet surprise, and said she had no recollection of the meeting.

'Not at Mr. Baxendale's, my uncle's, one day that you lunched with us when I was staying there?'

Miss Hood had wholly forgotten the circumstance. It served, however, for the commencement of a conversation, which went on till Mrs. Rossall, finding the hammock deserted, was guided by the sound of voices to where the two girls and the children sat.

In the afternoon there was a setting forth into the country. Mr. Athel drove his sister and the children; Wilfrid and Beatrice accompanied them on horseback. The course to be pursued having

been determined, the riders were not at pains to keep the carriage always within sight.

'Why did Miss Hood decline to come?' Mr. Athel inquired, shortly after they had started.

'She gave no reason,' Mrs. Rossall replied. 'It was her choice to stay at home.'

'Of course you asked her in a proper way?'

'Why, Philip, of course I did.'

'Miss Hood never alters her mind,' remarked Patty.

'Never!' exclaimed the other twin with decision.

'An admirable characteristic,' commented their uncle, 'provided her decision is right to begin with.'

Beatrice had just led off at a gallop; Wilfrid necessarily followed her. When the pace slackened they began to talk of indifferent things. On the crest of a hill, whence the carriage could be seen far away on the white road, the girl reined in, and, turning to her companion, asked abruptly—

'What is your opinion of Miss Hood?'

'Why do you ask such a question?'

'Because I should like to know. She interests me, and you must have had opportunities enough lately of studying her character?'

'Why does she interest you?'

'I can't say. I thought you might help me to discover the reason. You have often said that you like women of strongly marked character.'

'How do you conclude that she is one?'

'I feel it; we were talking together before lunch. I don't think I like her; I don't think she has principles.'

Wilfrid laughed.

'Principles! The word is vague. You mean, no doubt, that she doesn't seem to have commonplace prejudices.'

'That's just what I wanted you to say.'

She let her horse move on. The young man followed, his eyes gazing absently before him, a smile fixed upon his lips.

Beatrice looked over her shoulder.

'Does she read the same kind of books that you do?'

'Unfortunately I read no books at all.'

She paused again, to let him get to her side.

'What a pity it can't continue!'

'What?'

'Your inability to read.'

'That is the kindest remark I have heard for a long time!' exclaimed Wilfrid, with a good-natured laugh.

'Very likely it is, though you don't mean it. When you read, you only poison your mind. It is your reading that has made you what you are, without faith, without feeling. You dissect everything, you calculate motives cynically, you have learnt to despise everyone who believes what you refuse to, you make your own intellect the centre of the world. You are dangerous.'

'What a character! To whom am I dangerous?'

'To anyone whom it pleases you to tempt, in whom you find the beginnings of disbelief.'

'In brief, I have no principles?'

'Of course you have none.'

'In other words, I am selfish?'

'Intensely so.'

It was hard to discover whether she were in earnest. Wilfrid examined her for a moment, and concluded that she must be. Her eyes were gleaming with no mock seriousness, and there was even a slight quiver about her lips. In all their exchanges of banter he had never known her look and speak quite as she did now. As he regarded her, there came a flush to her cheek. She turned her head away and rode on.

'And what moves you to visit me with this castigation at present, Miss Redwing?' he asked, still maintaining his jesting tone.

'I don't know,' she answered carelessly. 'I felt all at once able to say what I thought.'

'Then you do really think all this?'

'Assuredly I do.'

He kept silence a little.

'And you can't see,' he began, rather more seriously, 'that you are deplorably lacking in the charity which surely should be among *your* principles?'

'There are some things to which charity must not be extended.'

'Let us say, then, discretion, insight.' He spoke yet more earnestly. 'You judge me, and, in truth, you know as little of me as anyone could. The attitude of your mind prevents you from understanding me in the least; it prevents you from understanding any human being. You are consumed with prejudice, and prejudice of the narrowest, most hopeless kind. Am I too severe?'

'Not more so than you have often been. Many a time you have told me how you despised me.'

He was silent, then spoke impulsively.

'Well, perhaps the word is not too strong; though it is not your very self that I despise, but the ignorance and bigotry which possess you. It is a pity; I believe you might be a woman of quite a different kind.'

'Of pronounced character?'

'Precisely. You are neither one thing nor another. You have told me what you think of me; shall I be equally frank and speak as if you were a college friend? For at all events we *are* friends.'

'I am not sure of that.'

'Oh, but I am; and we shall be friends none the worse for ingenuousness on both sides. Look at the position in which you stand. One moment you are a woman of the world, the next you run frantic with religious zeal, another turn and you are almost an artist, at your piano; when you are tired of all these you become, or try to become, a sort of *ingénue.* In the name of consistency, be one thing or another. You are quite mistaken in thinking that I despise religious enthusiasm in itself. Become a veritable Beatrice, and I will venerate you infinitely. Give up everything to work in London slums, and you shall have my warmest admiration. But you are not sincere.'

'I am sincere!' she broke in, with more passion than he had ever imagined her capable of uttering.

'I cannot call it sincerity. It is impossible that you should be sincere; you live in the latter end of the nineteenth century; the conditions of your birth and education forbid sincerity of this kind.'

'I am sincere,' she repeated, but in a low voice, without looking at him.

'On the other hand,' he proceeded, 'surrender yourself entirely to the life of society, and I will still respect you. You are a beautiful woman; you might be inexpressibly charming. Frankly recognise your capabilities, and cultivate your charm. Make a study of your loveliness; make it your end to be a queen in drawing-rooms.'

'You insult me.'

'I can't see that I do. There is nothing contemptible in such an aim; nothing is contemptible that is thorough. Or you have the third course. Pursue music with seriousness. Become a real

artist; a public singer, let us say. No amateur nonsense; recognise that you have a superb voice, and that by dint of labour you may attain artistic excellence. You talk of getting up concerts in low parts of London, of humanising ruffians by the influence of music. Pshaw! humanise humanity at large by devotion to an artistic ideal; the other aim is paltry, imbecile, charlatan.'

He tried to see her face; she rode on, holding it averted.

'Follow any one of these courses, and you will make of yourself a true woman. By trying to be a bit of everything you become insignificant. Napoleon the Great was a curse to mankind, but one thinks more of him than of Napoleon the Little, who wasn't quite sure whether to be a curse or a blessing. There is a self in every one of us; the end of our life is to discern it, bring it out, make it actual. You don't yet know your own self; you have not the courage to look into your heart and mind; you keep over your eyes the bandage of dogmas in which you only half believe. Your insincerity blights the natural qualities of your intellect. You have so long tried to persuade yourself of the evil of every way of thinking save ecclesiastical dogmatism, that you cannot judge fairly even those to whom you are most friendly. Cannot you see that the world has outgrown the possibility of one universal religion? For good or for evil, each of us must find a religion in himself, and you have no right whatever to condemn before you have understood.'

'You cannot say that you have any religion,' she said, facing him. He saw to his astonishment that there had been tears in her eyes.

'You cannot say that I have none. The radical fault of your uninstructed way of looking at things is that you imagine mankind and the world to be matters of such simple explanation. You learn by heart a few maxims, half a dozen phrases, and there is your key to every mystery. That is the child's state of mind. You have never studied, you have never thought. Your self-confidence is ludicrous; you and such as you do not hesitate to judge offhand men who have spent a long life in the passionate pursuit of wisdom. You have no reverence. It is the fault you attribute to me, but wrongly; if you had ever brought an open mind to our conversations, you would have understood that my reverence even for your ideal is not a whit less than your own; it is only that I see it in another light. You say that I have no religion: what if I have not? Are one's final conclusions to be achieved in a year or two

of early manhood? I have my inner voices, and I try to understand them. Often enough they are ambiguous, contradictory; I live in hope that their bidding will become clearer. I search for meanings, try to understand myself, strive after knowledge.'

'You might as well have been born a pagan. One voice has spoken; its bidding is the sufficient and only guide.'

'Say rather that so it seems to you. Your inheritance of conviction is not mine; your modes of reasoning and my own have nothing in common. We inhabit different worlds.'

Beatrice let her eyes turn slowly to his face. The smile with which he met her found no reflection on her countenance; her look was that of one who realises a fatality.

'Shall we join them?' she asked in a moment, nodding towards the far-off carriage which was about to hide itself among trees.

Wilfrid mused instead of answering. She began to ride on.

'Stay one minute,' he said. 'I have been anything but courteous in my way of speaking to you, but it was better to put off idle forms, was it not?'

'Yes; I shall know henceforth what you think of me?'

'Not from this one conversation, if you mean that.'

'Well, it does not matter.'

'Perhaps not. Difference of opinion has fortunately little to do with old-standing kindness.'

'I am not sure that you are right, at all events when it has expressed itself in words of contempt.'

It was not resentment that her voice conveyed, but something which Wilfrid found it harder to bear. Her drooped eyelids and subdued tone indicated a humble pride, which the protest of her beauty made pathetic.

'We will never speak of such things again,' he said, gently. 'Let me have your forgiveness. When we join them down there, they will laugh at us and say we have been quarrelling as usual; in future I think we mustn't quarrel, we are both of us getting too old for the amusement. When you sing to us to-night, I shall remember how foolish I was even to pretend contempt.'

'You will be thinking,' she said, 'that I am a mere amateur.'

'If I do, I shall be an ungrateful wretch—and an insensible one, to boot.'

She rode down the hill without replying.

(*To be continued.*)

EVOLUTION.

Everybody nowadays talks about evolution. Like electricity, the cholera germ, woman's rights, the great mining boom, and the Eastern Question, it is 'in the air.' It pervades society everywhere with its subtle essence; it infects small-talk with its familiar catchwords and its slang phrases; it even permeates that last stronghold of rampant Philistinism, the third leader in the penny papers. Everybody believes he knows all about it, and discusses it as glibly in his everyday conversation as he discusses the points of racehorses he has never seen, the charms of peeresses he has never spoken to, and the demerits of authors he has never read. Everybody is aware, in a dim and nebulous semi-conscious fashion, that it was all invented by the late Mr. Darwin, and reduced to a system by Mr. Herbert Spencer, don't you know, and a lot more of those scientific fellows. It is generally understood in the best-informed circles that evolutionism consists for the most part in a belief about nature at large essentially similar to that applied by Topsy to her own origin and early history. It is conceived, in short, that most things 'growed.' Especially is it known that in the opinion of the evolutionists as a body we are all of us ultimately descended from men with tails, who were the final offspring and improved edition of the common gorilla. That, very briefly put, is the popular conception of the various points in the great modern evolutionary programme.

It is scarcely necessary to inform the intelligent reader, who of course differs fundamentally from that inferior class of human beings known to all of us in our own minds as 'other people,' that almost every point in the catalogue thus briefly enumerated is a popular fallacy of the wildest description. Mr. Darwin did not invent evolution any more than George Stephenson invented the steam-engine, or Mr. Edison the electric telegraph. We are not descended from men with tails, any more than we are descended from Indian elephants. There is no evidence that we have anything in particular more than the remotest fiftieth cousinship with our poor relation the West African gorilla. Science is not in search of a 'missing link'; few links are anywhere missing, and those are for the most part wholly unimportant

ones. If we found the imaginary link in question, he would not be a monkey, nor yet in any way a tailed man. And so forth generally through the whole list of popular beliefs and current fallacies as to the real meaning of evolutionary teaching. Whatever people think evolutionary is for the most part a pure parody of the evolutionist's opinion.

But a more serious error than all these pervades what we may call the drawing-room view of the evolutionist theory. So far as Society with a big initial is concerned, evolutionism first began to be talked about, and therefore known (for society does not read, it listens, or rather it overhears and catches fragmentary echoes) when Darwin published his 'Origin of Species.' That great book consisted simply of a theory as to the causes which led to the distinctions of kind between plants and animals. With evolution at large it had nothing to do; it took for granted the origin of sun, moon, and stars, planets and comets, the earth and all that in it is, the sea and the dry land, the mountains and the valleys, nay even life itself in the crude form, everything in fact, save the one point of the various types and species of living beings. Long before Darwin's book appeared evolution had been a recognised force in the moving world of science and philosophy. Kant and Laplace had worked out the development of suns and earths from white-hot star-clouds. Lyell had worked out the evolution of the earth's surface to its present highly complex geographical condition. Lamarck had worked out the descent of plants and animals from a common ancestor by slow modification. Herbert Spencer had worked out the growth of mind from its simplest beginnings to its highest outcome in human thought.

But society, like Gallio, cared nothing for all these things. The evolutionary principles had never been put into a single big book, asked for at Mudie's, and permitted to lie on the drawing-room table side by side with the last new novel and the last fat volume of scandalous court memoirs. Therefore society ignored them and knew them not; the word evolution scarcely entered at all as yet into its polite and refined dinner-table vocabulary. It recognised only the 'Darwinian theory,' 'natural selection,' 'the missing link,' and the belief that men were merely monkeys who had lost their tails, presumably by sitting upon them. To the world at large that learned Mr. Darwin had invented and patented the entire business, including descent with modification, if such notions ever occurred at all to the world-at-large's speculative intelligence.

Now evolutionism is really a thing of far deeper growth and older antecedents than this easy, superficial, drawing-room view would lead us to imagine. It is a very ancient and respectable theory indeed, and it has an immense variety of minor developments. I am not going to push it back, in the fashionable modern scientific manner, to the vague and indefinite hints in our old friend Lucretius. The great original Roman poet—the only original poet in the Latin language—did indeed hit out for himself a very good rough working sketch of a sort of nebulous and shapeless evolutionism. It was bold, it was consistent, for its time it was wonderful. But Lucretius's philosophy, like all the philosophies of the older world, was a mere speculative idea, a fancy picture of the development of things, not dependent upon observation of facts at all, but wholly evolved, like the German thinker's camel, out of its author's own pregnant inner consciousness. The Roman poet would no doubt have built an excellent superstructure if he had only possessed a little straw to make his bricks of. As it was, however, scientific brick-making being still in its infancy, he could only construct in a day a shadowy Aladdin's palace of pure fanciful Epicurean phantasms, an imaginary world of imaginary atoms, fortuitously concurring out of void chaos into an orderly universe, as though by miracle. It is not thus that systems arise which regenerate the thought of humanity; he who would build for all time must make sure first of a solid foundation, and then use sound bricks in place of the airy nothings of metaphysical speculation.

It was in the last century that the evolutionary idea really began to take form and shape in the separate conceptions of Kant, Laplace, Lamarck, and Erasmus Darwin. These were the true founders of our modern evolutionism. Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer were the Joshuas who led the chosen people into the land which more than one 'venturous Moses had already dimly descried afar off from the Pisgah top of the eighteenth century.

Kant and Laplace came first in time, as astronomy comes first in logical order. Stars and suns, and planets and satellites, necessarily precede in development plants and animals. You can have no cabbages without a world to grow them in. The science of the stars was therefore reduced to comparative system and order, while the sciences of life, and mind, and matter were still a hopeless and inextricable muddle. It was no wonder, then, that the evolution of the heavenly bodies should have been clearly appre-

hended and definitely formulated while the evolution of the earth's crust was still imperfectly understood, and the evolution of living beings was only tentatively and hypothetically hinted at in a timid whisper.

In the beginning, say the astronomical evolutionists, not only this world, but all the other worlds in the universe, existed potentially, as the poet justly remarks, in 'a haze of fluid light,' a vast nebula of enormous extent and almost inconceivable material thinness. The world arose out of a sort of primitive world-gruel. The matter of which it was composed was gas, of such an extraordinary and unimaginable gasiness that millions of cubic miles of it might easily be compressed into a common antibilious pill-box. The pill-box itself, in fact, is the net result of a prolonged secular condensation of myriads of such enormous cubes of this primæval matter. Slowly setting around common centres, however, in anticipation of Sir Isaac Newton's gravitative theories, the fluid haze gradually collected into suns and stars, whose light and heat is presumably due to the clashing together of their component atoms as they fall perpetually towards the central mass. Just as in a burning candle the impact of the oxygen atoms in the air against the carbon and hydrogen atoms in the melted and rarefied wax or tallow produces the light and heat of the flame, so in nebula or sun the impact of the various gravitating atoms one against the other produces the light and heat by whose aid we are enabled to see and know those distant bodies. The universe, according to this now fashionable nebular theory, began as a single vast ocean of matter of immense tenuity, spread all alike over all space as far as nowhere, and comparatively little different within itself when looked at side by side with its own final historical outcome. In Mr. Spencer's perspicuous phrase, evolution in this aspect is a change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, from the incoherent to the coherent, and from the indefinite to the definite condition. Difficult words at first to apprehend, no doubt, and therefore to many people, as to Mr. Matthew Arnold, very repellent, but full of meaning, lucidity, and suggestiveness, if only we once take the trouble fairly and squarely to understand them.

Every sun and every star thus formed is for ever gathering in the hem of its outer robe upon itself, for ever radiating off its light and heat into surrounding space, and for ever growing denser and colder as it sets slowly towards its centre of gravity. Our own sun and solar system may be taken as good typical working

examples of how the stars thus constantly shrink into smaller and ever smaller dimensions around their own fixed centre. Naturally, we know more about our own solar system than about any other in our own universe, and it also possesses for us a greater practical and personal interest than any outside portion of the galaxy. Nobody can pretend to be profoundly immersed in the internal affairs of Sirius or of Alpha Centauri. A fiery revolution in the belt of Orion would affect us less than a passing finger-ache in a certain single terrestrial baby of our own household. Therefore I shall not apologise in any way for leaving the remainder of the sidereal universe to its unknown fate, and concentrating my attention mainly on the affairs of that solitary little, out-of-the-way second-rate system, whereof we form an inappreciable portion. The matter which now composes the sun and its attendant bodies (the satellites included) was once spread out, according to Laplace, to at least the furthest orbit of the outermost planet—that is to say, so far as our present knowledge goes, the planet Neptune. Of course, when it was expanded to that immense distance, it must have been very thin indeed, thinner than our clumsy human senses can even conceive of. An American would say, too thin: but I put Americans out of court at once as mere irreverent scoffers. From the orbit of Neptune, or something outside it, the faint and cloud-like mass which bore within it Cæsar and his fortunes, not to mention the remainder of the earth and the solar system, began slowly to converge and gather itself in, growing denser and denser but smaller and smaller as it gradually neared its existing dimensions. How long a time it took to do it is for our present purpose relatively unimportant: the cruel physicists will only let us have a beggarly hundred million years or so for the process, while the grasping and extravagant evolutionary geologists beg with tears for at least double or even ten times that limited period. But at any rate it has taken a good long while, and, as far as most of us are personally concerned, the difference of one or two hundred millions, if it comes to that, is not really at all an appreciable one.

As it condensed and lessened towards its central core, revolving rapidly on its great axis, the solar mist left behind at irregular intervals concentric rings or belts of cloud-like matter, cast off from its equator; which belts, once more undergoing a similar evolution on their own account, have hardened round their private centres of gravity into Jupiter or Saturn, the Earth or Venus. Round these again, minor belts or rings have sometimes

formed, as in Saturn's girdle of petty satellites; or subsidiary planets, thrown out into space, have circled round their own primaries, as the moon does around this sublunary world of ours. Meanwhile, the main central mass of all, retreating ever inward as it dropped behind it these occasional little reminders of its temporary stoppages, formed at last the sun itself, the main luminary of our entire system. Now, I won't deny that this primitive Kantian and Laplacian evolutionism, this nebular theory of such exquisite concinnity, here reduced to its simplest terms and most elementary dimensions, has received many hard knocks from later astronomers, and has been a good deal bowled over, both on mathematical and astronomical grounds, by recent investigators of nebulæ and meteors. Observations on comets and on the sun's surface have lately shown that it contains in all likelihood a very considerable fanciful admixture. It isn't more than half true; and even the half now totters in places. Still, as a vehicle of popular exposition the crude nebular hypothesis in its rawest form serves a great deal better than the truth, so far as yet known, on the good old Greek principle of the half being often more than the whole. The great point which it impresses on the mind is the cardinal idea of the sun and planets, with their attendant satellites, not as turned out like manufactured articles, ready made, at measured intervals, in a vast and deliberate celestial Orrery, but as due to the slow and gradual working of natural laws, in accordance with which each has assumed by force of circumstances its existing place, weight, orbit, and motion.

The grand conception of a gradual becoming, instead of a sudden making, which Kant and Laplace thus applied to the component bodies of the universe at large, was further applied by Lyell and his school to the outer crust of this one particular petty planet of ours. While the astronomers went in for the evolution of suns, stars, and worlds, Lyell and his geological brethren went in for the evolution of the earth's surface. As theirs was stellar, so his was mundane. If the world began by being a red-hot mass of planetary matter in a high state of internal excitement, boiling and dancing with the heat of its emotions, it gradually cooled down with age and experience, for growing old is growing cold, as every one of us in time, alas, discovers. As it passed from its fiery and volcanic youth to its staider and soberer middle age, a solid crust began to form in filmy fashion upon its cooling surface. The aqueous vapour that had floated at first as steam around its

heated mass condensed with time into a wide ocean over the now hardened shell. Gradually this ocean shifted its bulk into two or three main bodies that sank into hollows of the viscid crust, the precursors of Atlantic, Pacific, and the Indian Seas. Wrinklings of the crust, produced by the cooling and consequent contraction, gave rise at first to baby mountain ranges, and afterwards to the earliest rough drafts of the still very vague and sketchy continents. The world grew daily more complex and more diverse; it progressed, in accordance with the Spencerian law, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, and so forth, as aforesaid, with delightful regularity.

At last, by long and graduated changes, seas and lands, peninsulas and islands, lakes and rivers, hills and mountains, were wrought out by internal or external energies on the crust thus generally fashioned. Evaporation from the oceans gave rise to clouds and rain and hailstorms; the water that fell upon the mountain tops cut out the valleys and river basins; rills gathered into brooks, brooks into streams, streams into primæval Niles, and Amazons, and Mississippis. Volcanic forces uplifted here an Alpine chain, or depressed there a deep-sea hollow. Sediment washed from the hills and plains, or formed from countless skeletons of marine creatures, gathered on the sinking bed of the ocean as soft ooze, or crumbling sand, or thick mud, or gravel and conglomerate. Now upheaved into an elevated table-land, now slowly carved again by rain and rill into valley and watershed, and now worn down once more into the mere degraded stump of a plateau, the crust underwent innumerable changes, but almost all of them exactly the same in kind, and mostly in degree, as those we still see at work imperceptibly in the world around us. Rain washing down the soil; weather crumbling the solid rock; waves dashing at the foot of the cliffs; rivers forming deltas at their barred mouths; shingle gathering on the low spits; floods sweeping before them the countryside; ice grinding ceaselessly at the mountain top; peat filling up the shallow lake—these are the chief factors which have gone to make the physical world as we now actually know it. Land and sea, coast and contour, hill and valley, dale and gorge, earth-sculpture generally—all are due to the ceaseless interaction of these separately small and unnoticeable causes, aided or retarded by the slow effects of elevation or depression from the earth's shrinkage towards its own centre. Geology, in short, has shown us that the world is what it is, not by virtue

of a single sudden creative act, nor by virtue of successive terrible and recurrent cataclysms, but by virtue of the slow continuous action of causes still always equally operative.

Evolution in geology leads up naturally to evolution in the science of life. If the world itself grew, why not also the animals and plants that inhabit it? Already in the eager active eighteenth century this obvious idea had struck in the germ a large number of zoologists and botanists, and in the hands of Lamarck and Erasmus Darwin it took form as a distinct and elaborate system of organic evolution. Buffon had been the first to hint at the truth; but Buffon was an eminently respectable nobleman in the dubious days of the tottering monarchy, and he did not care personally for the Bastille, viewed as a place of permanent residence. In Louis Quinze's France, indeed, as things then went, a man who offended the orthodoxy of the Sorbonne was prone to find himself shortly ensconced in free quarters, and kept there for the term of his natural existence without expense to his heirs or executors. So Buffon did not venture to say outright that he thought all animals and plants were descended one from the other with slight modifications; that would have been wicked, and the Sorbonne would have proved its wickedness to him in a most conclusive fashion by promptly getting him imprisoned or silenced. It is so easy to confute your opponent when you are a hundred strong and he is one weak unit. Buffon merely said, therefore, that if we didn't know the contrary to be the case by sure warrant, we might easily have concluded (so fallible is our reason) that animals always varied slightly, and that such variations, indefinitely accumulated, would suffice to account for almost any amount of ultimate difference. A donkey might thus have grown into a horse, and a bird might have developed from a primitive lizard. Only we know it was quite otherwise! A quiet hint from Buffon was as good as a declaration from many less knowing or suggestive people. All over Europe, the wise took Buffon's hint for what he meant it; and the unwise blandly passed it by as a mere passing little foolish vagary of that great ironical writer and thinker.

Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of his grandson, was no fool; on the contrary, he was the most far-sighted man of his day in England; he saw at once what Buffon was driving at; and he worked out 'Mr. Buffon's' half-concealed hint to all its natural and legitimate conclusions. The great Count was always plain Mr. Buffon to his English contemporary. Life, said Erasmus

Darwin, nearly a century since, began in very minute marine forms, which gradually acquired fresh powers and larger bodies, so as imperceptibly to transform themselves into different creatures. Man, he remarked, anticipating his descendant, takes rabbits or pigeons, and alters them almost to his own fancy, by immensely changing their shapes and colours. If man can make a pouter or a fantail out of the common sort, if he can produce a piebald lop-ear from the brown wild rabbit, if he can transform Dorkings into Black Spanish, why cannot nature, with longer time to work in, and endless lives to try with, produce all the varieties of vertebrate animals out of one single common ancestor? It was a bold idea of the Lichfield doctor—bold, at least, for the times he lived in—when Sam Johnson was held a mighty sage, and physical speculation was regarded askance as having in it a dangerous touch of the devil. But the Darwins were always a bold folk, and had the courage of their opinions more than most men. So even in Lichfield, cathedral city as it was, and in the politely somnolent eighteenth century, Erasmus Darwin ventured to point out the probability that quadrupeds, birds, reptiles, and men were all mere divergent descendants of a single similar original form, and even that 'one and the same kind of living filament is and has been the cause of organic life.'

The eighteenth century laughed, of course. It always laughed at all reformers. It said Dr. Darwin was very clever, but really a most eccentric man. His 'Temple of Nature,' now, and his 'Botanic Garden,' were vastly fine and charming poems—those sweet lines, you know, about poor Eliza!—but his zoological theories were built of course upon a most absurd and uncertain foundation. In prose, no sensible person could ever take the doctor seriously. A freak of genius—nothing more; a mere desire to seem clever and singular. But what a Nemesis the whirligig of time has brought around with it! By a strange irony of fate, those admired verses are now almost entirely forgotten; poor Eliza has survived only as our awful example of artificial pathos; and the zoological heresies at which the eighteenth century shrugged its fat shoulders and dimpled the corners of its ample mouth, have grown to be the chief cornerstone of all accepted modern zoological science.

In the first year of the present century Lamarck followed Erasmus Darwin's lead with an open avowal that in his belief all animals and plants were really descended from one or a few common ancestors. He held that organisms were just as much

the result of law, not of miraculous interposition, as suns and worlds and all the natural phenomena around us generally. He saw that what naturalists call a species differs from what naturalists call a variety, merely in the way of being a little more distinctly marked, a little less like its nearest congeners elsewhere. He recognised the perfect gradation of forms by which in many cases one species after another merges into the next on either side of it. He observed the analogy between the modifications induced by man and the modifications induced by nature. In fact, he was a thoroughgoing and convinced evolutionist, holding every salient opinion which Society still believes to have been due to the works of Charles Darwin. In one point only, a minor point to outsiders, though a point of cardinal importance to the inner brotherhood of evolutionism, he did not anticipate his more famous successor. He thought organic evolution was wholly due to the direct action of surrounding circumstances, to the intercrossing of existing forms, and above all to the actual efforts of animals themselves. In other words, he had not discovered natural selection, the cardinal idea of Charles Darwin's epoch-making book. For him, the giraffe had acquired its long neck by constant reaching up to the boughs of trees; the monkey had acquired its opposable thumb by constant grasping at the neighbouring branches; and the serpent had acquired its sinuous shape by constant wriggling through the grass of the meadows. Charles Darwin improved upon all that by his suggestive hint of survival of the fittest, and in so far, but in so far alone, he became the real father of modern biological evolutionism.

From the days of Lamarck to the day when Charles Darwin himself published his wonderful 'Origin of Species,' this idea that plants and animals might really have grown, instead of having been made all of a piece, kept brewing everywhere in the minds and brains of scientific thinkers. The notions which to the outside public were startlingly new when Darwin's book took the world by storm, were old indeed to the thinkers and workers who had long been familiar with the principle of descent with modification and the speculations of the Lichfield doctor or the Paris philosopher. Long before Darwin wrote his great work, Herbert Spencer had put forth in plain language every idea which the drawing-room biologists attributed to Darwin. The supporters of the development hypothesis, he said seven years earlier—yes, he called it the 'development hypothesis' in so many words—'can show that

modification has effected and is effecting great changes in all organisms, subject to modifying influences.' They can show, he goes on (if I may venture to condense so great a thinker), that any existing plant or animal, placed under new conditions, begins to undergo adaptive changes of form and structure; that in successive generations these changes continue, till the plant or animal acquires totally new habits; that in cultivated plants and domesticated animals changes of the sort habitually occur; that the differences thus caused, as for example in dogs, are often greater than those on which species in the wild state are founded, and that throughout all organic nature there *is* at work a modifying influence of the same sort as that which they believe to have caused the differences of species—'an influence which, to all appearance, would produce in the millions of years and under the great variety of conditions which geological records imply, any amount of change.' What is this but pure Darwinism, as the drawing-room philosopher still understands the word? And yet it was written seven years before Darwin published the 'Origin of Species.'

The fact is, one might draw up quite a long list of Darwinians before Darwin. Here are a few of them—Buffon, Lamarck, Goethe, Oken, Bates, Wallace, Lecoq, Von Baer, Robert Chambers, Matthew, and Herbert Spencer. Depend upon it, no one man ever yet of himself discovered anything. As well say that Luther made the German Reformation, that Lionardo made the Italian Renaissance, or that Robespierre made the French Revolution, as say that Charles Darwin, and Charles Darwin alone, made the evolutionary movement, even in the restricted field of life only. A thousand predecessors worked up towards him; a thousand contemporaries helped to diffuse and to confirm his various principles.

Charles Darwin added to the primitive evolutionary idea the special notion of natural selection. That is to say, he pointed out that while plants and animals vary perpetually and very indefinitely, all the varieties so produced are not equally adapted to the circumstances of the species. If the variation is a bad one, it tends to die out, because every point of disadvantage tells against the individual in the struggle for life. If the variation is a good one, it tends to persist, because every point of advantage similarly tells in the individual's favour in that ceaseless and viewless battle. It was this addition to the evolutionary concept, fortified by Darwin's powerful advocacy of the general principle of

descent with modification, that won over the whole world to the 'Darwinian theory.' Before Darwin, many men of science were evolutionists; after Darwin, all men of science became so at once, and the rest of the world is rapidly preparing to follow their leadership.

As applied to life, then, the evolutionary idea is briefly this—that plants and animals have all a natural origin from a single primitive living creature, which itself was the product of light and heat acting on the special chemical constituents of an ancient ocean. Starting from that single early form, they have gone on developing ever since, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, assuming ever more varied shapes, till at last they have reached their present enormous variety of tree and shrub, and herb and seaweed, of beast and bird, and fish and creeping insect. Evolution throughout has been one and continuous, from nebula to sun, from gas-cloud to planet, from early jelly-speck to man or elephant. So at least evolutionists say—and of course they ought to know most about it.

But evolution, according to the evolutionists, does not even stop there. Psychology as well as biology has also its evolutionary explanation: mind is concerned as truly as matter. If the bodies of animals are evolved, their minds must be evolved likewise. Herbert Spencer and his followers have been mainly instrumental in elucidating this aspect of the case. They have shown, or they have tried to show (for I don't want to dogmatise on the subject), how mind is gradually built up from the simplest raw elements of sense and feeling; how emotions and intellect slowly arise; how the action of the environment on the organism begets a nervous system of ever greater and greater complexity, culminating at last in the brain of a Newton, a Shakespeare, or a Mendelssohn. Step by step, nerves have built themselves up out of the soft tissues as channels of communication between part and part. Sense-organs of extreme simplicity have first been formed on the outside of the body, where it comes most into contact with external nature. Use and wont have fashioned them through long ages into organs of taste and smell and touch; pigment spots, sensitive to light or shade, have grown by infinite gradations into the human eye or into the myriad facets of bee and beetle; tremulous nerve-ends, responsive sympathetically to waves of sound, have tuned themselves at last into a perfect gamut in the developed ear of men and mammals. Meanwhile corresponding percipient centres have grown up in the brain, so that the

coloured picture flashed by an external scene upon the eye is telegraphed from the sensitive mirror of the retina, through the many-stranded cable of the optic nerve, straight up to the appropriate headquarters in the thinking brain. Stage by stage the continuous process has gone on unceasingly, from the jelly-fish with its tiny black specks of eyes, through infinite steps of progression, induced by ever-widening intercourse with the outer world, to the final outcome in the senses and the emotions, the intellect and the will, of civilised man. Mind begins as a vague consciousness of touch or pressure on the part of some primitive, shapeless, soft creature; it ends as an organised and co-ordinated reflection of the entire physical and psychical universe on the part of a great cosmical philosopher.

Last of all, like diners-out at dessert, the evolutionists take to politics. Having shown us entirely to their own satisfaction the growth of suns, and systems, and worlds, and continents, and oceans, and plants, and animals, and minds, they proceed to show us the exactly analogous and parallel growth of communities, and nations, and languages, and religions, and customs, and arts, and institutions, and literatures. Man, the evolving savage, as Tylor, Lubbock, and others have proved for us, slowly putting off his brute aspect derived from his early ape-like ancestors, learned by infinitesimal degrees the use of fire, the mode of manufacturing stone hatchets and flint arrowheads, the earliest beginnings of the art of pottery. With drill or flint he became the Prometheus to his own small heap of sticks and dry leaves among the tertiary forests. By his nightly camp-fire he beat out gradually his excited gesture-language and his oral speech. He tamed the dog, the horse, the cow, the camel. He taught himself to hew small clearings in the woodland, and to plant the banana, the yam, the bread-fruit, and the coco-nut. He picked and improved the seeds of his wild cereals till he made himself from grass-like grains his barley, his oats, his wheat, his Indian corn. In time, he dug out ore from mines, and learnt the use first of gold, next of silver, then of copper, tin, bronze, and iron. Side by side with these long secular changes, he evolved the family, communal or patriarchal, polygamic or monogamous. He built the hut, the house, and the palace. He clothed or adorned himself first in skins and leaves and feathers; next in woven wool and fibre; last of all in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. He gathered into hordes, tribes, and nations; he chose himself a king, gave himself laws, and built up great empires in Egypt, Assyria, China,

and Peru. He raised him altars, Stonehenges and Karnaks. His picture-writing grew into hieroglyphs and cuneiforms, and finally emerged, by imperceptible steps, into alphabetic symbols, the raw material of the art of printing. His dug-out canoe culminates in the iron-clad and the 'Great Eastern;' his boomerang and sling-stone in the Woolwich infant; his boiling pipkin and his wheeled car in the locomotive engine; his picture-message in the telephone and the Atlantic cable. Here, where the course of evolution has really been most marvellous, its steps have been all more distinctly historical; so that nobody now doubts the true descent of Italian, French, and Spanish from provincial Latin, or the successive growth of the trireme, the 'Great Harry,' the 'Victory,' and the 'Minotaur' from the coracles or praus of prehistoric antiquity.

The grand conception of the uniform origin and development of all things, earthly or sidereal, thus summed up for us in the one word evolution, belongs by right neither to Charles Darwin nor to any other single thinker. It is the joint product of innumerable workers, all working up, though some of them unconsciously, towards a grand final unified philosophy of the cosmos. In astronomy, Kant, Laplace, and the Herschels; in geology, Hutton, Lyell, and the Geikies; in biology, Buffon, Lamarck, the Darwins, Huxley, and Spencer; in psychology, Spencer, Romanes, Sully, and Ribot; in sociology, Spencer, Tylor, Lubbock, and De Mortillet—these have been the chief evolutionary teachers and discoverers. But the use of the word evolution itself, and the establishment of the general evolutionary theory as a system of philosophy applicable to the entire universe, we owe to one man alone—Herbert Spencer. Many other minds —from Galileo and Copernicus, from Kepler and Newton, from Linnæus and Tournefort, from D'Alembert and Diderot, nay, even, in a sense, from Aristotle and Lucretius—had been piling together the vast collection of raw material from which that great and stately superstructure was to be finally edified. But the architect who placed each block in its proper niche, who planned and designed the whole elevation, who planted the building firmly on the rock and poised the coping-stone on the topmost pinnacle, was the author of the 'System of Synthetic Philosophy,' and none other. It is a strange proof of how little people know about their own ideas, that among the thousands who talk glibly every day of evolution, not ten per cent. are probably aware that both word and conception are alike due to the commanding intelligence and vast generalising power of Herbert Spencer.

CASS.

CHAPTER I.

There have been changes at the Hard since 1860. The boatmen have easier times and are less jovial; the steamers bluster in with an air of proprietorship, lie by and shriek shrilly, take up their cargoes of excursionists and baskets and bluster out again, with much hauling of ropes, much shouting and counter-shouting, and oaths tempered to the ears of polite pleasure parties. In the year 1860 the boatmen watched their rivals jealously and were eloquent in the language of abuse. Their rivals have multiplied; the boatman of to-day is gloomy and has no longer the spirit to rail. It is still a place of mysterious charm to the ragged, shoeless, cheerful town urchins who congregate near the water's edge. The shops do a brisk trade still in boiled beef and ham, buns and pasties, flannels and printed cottons, shell-fish, nautical instruments, and beer and stout drunk on the premises; and still, indoors and out of doors, the wholesome odours of rope and tar and seaweed pervade everything. But the shops nearest the sea have gone; after the fire in 1860 they pulled down the two old houses and built again on their sites. And Cass, who used to stand there, with her brown arms bare to the elbow, her hands on her hips, fearless as the sailors, and as ready with her laugh and jest and abuse—Cass is gone with the old houses and the old times.

Cass was the beauty of the Hard, and knew it, and enjoyed the knowledge. She enjoyed it as a prince enjoys his title and an old poet his renown; she would have scorned to let admiration flutter her. She sat on the doorstep of the shop when she was a child, and looked up into the faces of strange ladies and gentlemen who pointed her out to one another suddenly as they passed, and was unabashed when they stopped to survey her closely. She looked steadily up at them with fearless eyes and rare blushes. The fine gentlemen smiled at her; the fine ladies lifted their gowns a little and bent down to question her in simple language.

'And what is your name, little girl?'

'Cass Brady. What's yourn?' she said, and looked at her friends the boatmen to approve and applaud her coolness.

The gentlemen would laugh as they strolled on; the ladies would murmur something gently about manners. Cass had sharp ears and a clear young voice. Her voice would follow the strangers on their way.

'Manners! An' where's yer own? Manners's good as yourn any day, I reckon. When I pays me penny a week I won' come your way. No fear!' And the boatmen applauded loudly.

'Give 'em as good as they brought,' said Cass.

'Trust you,' said the men admiringly.

Cass was pretty at eight years old and prettier at eighteen. Her skin was as warm a brown as that of the young Italian girls who sang in the streets in picturesque dress; her eyes were as brown as theirs and brighter and more fearless; her hair grew low and swept back in big waves from her brow; her teeth were white, her lips rosy without being sensual; her head was well poised, her figure strongly yet slenderly knit. If she laughed and talked too loudly for the public street, if her repartee was sometimes more rough than decorous, her audience was not critical on these points. The old men grinned at her benignly; the young men liked a girl who could hold her own, cap jest with jest, turn the satire against the satirist, laugh indifferently at compliments, and whistle and hum unmoved when the chapel preacher and the temperance missionary came down to the Hard to proselytise.

The shop, the doorway of which Cass loved, was a shop that sold cooked meats, hot and cold, potatoes browned at the top, moist with gravy beneath, steaming tea and coffee, home-made cake of a rich and weighty kind, and many other delicacies—a shop which described itself vulgarly as an 'eating-house.' A hard-featured, grey-complexioned woman sat behind the counter, served her customers deliberately with no unbecoming eagerness, and served all alike without favour, meting out the exact proportion of butter to each slice of bread, the just amount of fresh mustard to each plate. Her lips were straight, and opened and shut without lending much expression to her face; her eyes rested shrewdly but without interest on her customers and acquaintances, on Emily, her gentle niece, and on Cass, her daughter. She was a woman who had seen trouble, and her troubles had made her stolid.

Mrs. Brady's was a well-populated house; every room had its lodger, some more than one. The lodgers were for the most part old, lonely, weather-beaten men who turned in at night and out

in the morning and made little work. They took their breakfasts, and sometimes teas and suppers, in two dark little rooms behind the shop, where the tables had oilcloth covers which could be washed down and dried on the spot, at a moment's notice, without expense. Emily, in a patient, gentle way, brought the meals; Cass came in and out and brought laughter to season the meals, and heard complimentary comments on her bright eyes, her pretty lips and complexion, and was in no way disconcerted. And when Jim Cross, the youngest lodger, with whom Cass for the last four years had been 'keeping company,' looked up sternly and disapprovingly, Cass stayed longer and laughed more gaily to prove her freedom.

Things were going wrong between Jim and Cass. Perhaps some one was making mischief secretly; perhaps the 'preachings' Jim had attended lately and his new, severe religious views made him clearer-sighted about Cass and the ungodly bent of her nature; perhaps—it is useless speculating—things were going wrong, and Cass was unconciliating and too proud to attempt to set them right. And at last they reached a crisis.

It was late in winter. The short afternoon was almost over, and the gas, just lighted in the public-house next door to the Bradys, shone out through the red curtains and made the wet street darker and colder. Cass looked out at the grey water and the moored boats and shivered, and up at the starless sky and shivered again. There was no one to talk to and nothing to look at: the Hard was deserted. Presently a sailor passed Cass, and said, 'Good night, me dear,' familiarly.

'Good night,' said Cass, friendly ever, whether to friend or stranger. 'How long have I been yer dear?'

Her mother, sewing in the shop, raised her eyes from her work just then, and called to her in flat, level tones to come indoors; and Cass at her leisure obeyed.

'What be doin' there? You'm a'ways in th' streets,' said her mother. And the remonstrance was spoken, not querulously, not anxiously, in a dull, grim, even way of her own. 'Take an' bide in, can't 'ee? 'S no good to be got in th' streets. An' Jim don' like to see 'ee. Get an apern an' sit down decent.'

Cass had some rudimentary notion of filial deference, but none of wifely. She opened a drawer in the counter and took an apron and some needlework therefrom, and donned the former as a symbol of decency whilst she threaded a needle with a yard of

white cotton. So much was in deference to her mother's prejudices; but she protested against her lover's.

'If Jim don' like my ways,' she said, leaning against the wall to sew, and putting visible stitches into some cotton garment, and speaking with a little jerk between the stitches, 'he can find one whose ways he do like. I ain't so bent on marryin' with Jim.'

'He's a stiddy man,' said Mrs. Brady cheerlessly, in an absent-minded way, as one who speaks in the present with her thoughts in the past. 'They'm none so easy found.'

'If Jim thinks I care,' said Cass inconsequently but fiercely, 'I don't. Jim's took up with th' preachin' now'—jerk, and a bigger stitch than usual in the white calico—'he'd bes' marry one o' *they*.'

Mrs. Brady was sewing too, slowly and monotonously, with an action as unlike her daughter's as was possible. 'There was yer father,' she said; 'he'd niver a good word fur th' chapel folk; an' as fur stiddiness, he drinked 'nself to death, an' that you know.'

There was a moral somewhere connected with these reminiscences, but Mrs. Brady was too depressed to point it clearly. Cass pursued her own line of thought unchecked.

'There's Em'ly,' she said. 'If he wants a saint he'd bes' take up with Em'ly. *I*'m willin'.'

Conversation between Cass and her mother tended to become soliloquy. Mrs. Brady took up the thread of her own reflections. 'The life I led with 'n!' she said. 'If th' Lord 'd sin fit to take 'n twenty years afore He did, 'twould been all fur th' best, an' I'd been thankful. But there! *I* lived with 'n; nobody else knew 'n in same way. But Jim, he's a stiddy man.'

Cass smiled a little involuntarily and drew out her cotton with more gentleness. It was not unpleasing to her to hear Jim's praises sung.

'An' serious-thinkin',' added her mother. 'He was fond o' 'ee—a while back he was. Em'ly's quieter spoken an' not so took up wi' th' men.'

If there were gaps in her mother's train of reasoning, Cass was quick-witted and filled them up. She was seized with a sudden restlessness and took her needlework to the door, where, however, it was too dark to sew. The wind swept in coldly from the sea, and blew about her hair and her dress, and increased her restlessness. She put up her arms and clasped her hands behind her head, and looked up the street, where the lights seemed

brighter. Presently came a step she knew, and she turned quickly and looked out at sea into the darkness.

The step was firm and heavy—not a slothful and not a hurried step—the step of a man with goodly length and strength of limb. It stopped where Cass was standing in the doorway.

'Oh, it's you,' she said, looking round for a moment and looking away again. 'It's dull to-night—not a soul about.'

The man before her was a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow, who wore a blue, darned fisherman's jersey, and whose face and throat and brawny hands and wrists were tanned with sea air and sun. His eyes were frank, straight-glancing, uncompromising. His lips were firm and a little stern. Both eyes and lips looked as though they seldom smiled.

'Come indoors, Cass,' he said, and he spoke authoritatively and a little wearily.

'Are you goin' in? I shan't, then,' said Cass. 'It's duller still indoors.'

Jim took off his woollen cap and shook the rain from it, and did not speak.

'Em'ly's indoors,' continued Cass; 'you can go an' sit wi' her. She's fitter company 'n me. I ain't no saint, an' I don' set up to be.'

'There's nothin' to be proud of in that, Cass,' said the man with a grave, perhaps irritating forbearance.

'I don' know,' said Cass. 'They'm a poor set, a poor pasty-face' lot—if Em'ly's a pattern. I'd be ashamed to look on the men like that, as though I was afeard on 'm—as though I expected 'm to make love to me if I didn' turn down me eyes an' look ugly. I'd be ashamed to look a man in th' face if I couldn' have me laugh with 'n nat'rel, an' cheek 'n back when he cheeked me.'

The rain came down in a thick, heavy drizzle. The tide splashed dismally against the stones of the Hard. Cass, with her hands behind her head, stood looking out and humming as though a cheerful sun were shining on a merry world. The song she hummed was a bit of a vulgar little pantomime song which the street boys had been whistling all the winter. Jim looked down on her, and in his mind was the picture of a different woman, gentler, softer-voiced, with quieter, more retiring ways, with graver thoughts and less worldly smiles and laughter.

'I don' know 'bout all that, Cass,' he said coldly; 'but I know

this—an' I say this—I'd like the girl I'm marryin' to be a modest an' good woman, who'd mind her home an' bide there, an' bring up her childern to think of other things than flirtin' an' finery an' play-goin'. An' there's where a man who married Em'ly 'd be sure. An' if you, Cass——'

But Cass interrupted him. She turned upon him suddenly, her face crimson, her eyes flashing.

'You'd bes' be off wi' me now,' she said. 'You'm tired of it—an'—an'—I'm tired of it. We'd best have done wi' one another.'

'Maybe we'd best,' said Jim slowly.

Cass laughed; but the laugh had in it more of bravado than of mirth or indifference.

'That's settled, then,' she said. 'You'm free now to take up wi' Em'ly. *I*'m willin'; *I* shan' grieve.

CHAPTER II.

It was a week or two later. March was nearly over; the clouds put on their white spring dress, and sailed by happily across skies that were blue again; the water danced and sparkled in the sunshine, beat merrily against the grey old stones of the Hard, and rejoiced in the good time coming. Excited children appeared, stumbling over the stones, talking vociferously to basket-laden, umbrella-laden, shawl- and wrap- and cloak-laden elders. Fine ladies in wide crinolines came tripping daintily by. Lazy young men, with their hands in their pockets, sauntered down with an air of indifference. The Hard was gay again.

Cass was the gayest of the gay. She found funds of mirth in everyone's everyday jokes; she stood in the doorway and took an unflagging interest in everything that passed around her, raised the laugh against the careful pleasure-seeker who stayed to bargain with the boatmen, sent the shaft of satire after the parsimonious who departed, joined volubly in every conversation, took a decided side in every quarrel, and proved to the meanest intelligence that her heart was light and her interest in life keen.

If she suffered she made no sign. She had a creed of womanly virtues—a creed with strange omissions and certain out-of-date beliefs writ large. To love a man who scorned her love was a shameful thing—a thing to be hustled away out of sight, ignored,

laughed down, forgotten as soon as possible. That her face crimsoned when Jim looked at her, that her pulses throbbed when he touched her hand by chance in passing, that her heart sank and all her being seemed to ache when he turned away from her and lowered his voice to speak gently to Emily, made her weep as bitter tears of shame at night as any repentant Magdalene might have shed.

It was a clear, bright, breezy night at the end of March. The shutters of the shop had been shut two hours ago. The last of the lodgers had stumbled away to bed, stopping a moment at the bottom of the dark stairs to strike a match and light a pipe to bear him company. Mrs. Brady looked, in a dull-eyed, listless way, at the crumb-littered table and the dirty plates and glasses in the little back room, and noticed that Cass had a duster in her hand and that Emily was bringing water. She was full of housewifely cares, with no housewifely enthusiasm in the cares.

'Put them bits by on a plate, Cass,' she directed. 'An' there's the cheese; don' let it bide out; th' mice gets to it. You needn' empty th' jug; th' milk 'll be good by th' mornin'.' And after looking on for a moment at the girls' work she slowly lighted a candle and went her way.

Emily was washing up the supper things. Cass held a damp, unlovely cloth, and wiped the plates and forks as Emily took them, one by one, from the water. For some minutes there was no sound in the room but the clatter of plate touching plate and the hiss of the gas turned low. Cass stood upright at her task; Emily stooped a little, with an air of weariness or weakness which was habitual to her.

Neither had spoken. Emily looked as she always looked—her thin little face almost colourless, her eyes cast down, her light hair drawn tightly back into a hard little hairpinned knot behind, her print gown limp, her manner gentle, deprecating. There was no obvious change in her to-night. Yet, before many minutes had passed, it somehow became clear to Cass that Emily was excited—that something unusual had happened—that Emily had something on her mind that she desired to tell.

'They'm most done,' said Emily at last. Although the remark referred to the dishes, Cass understood that it was in some way preparatory to a more important communication. It broke the silence.

But it was not a remark that called for answer or comment.

'There's th' tumblers,' added Emily gently after a minute.

'Yes,' said Cass.

'Best change th' water,' said Emily waveringly.

Cass, without a word, took the bowl and changed the water rapidly.

'It's funny,' said Emily in a timid and reflective tone, as she dipped the first glass in the clean water and bathed away the traces of rum and sugar, 'it's funny to think how all days is th' same—layin' meals, washin' up, brushin' an' cleanin' an' makin' beds—an' yet how differ'nt—sort o' differ'nt—some days seems.'

Cass was wiping a glass with needless vigour. Somehow she knew beforehand what was coming. Emily raised two light, timid, pathetic eyes, and looked at her with a sort of deprecating glance.

'I'd like to tell 'ee somethin', Cass; but you'll be angered wi' me.'

'Not I,' said Cass shortly. 'Angered? Not likely!'

But the assurance did not convey much encouragement. Emily bent again to her work in silence.

'It's you an' Jim, I s'pose,' said Cass after a minute, as the silence lasted.

'Yes. Don' be angered, Cass—don' be vexed—not 'long wi' me. He wouldn' take "no;" an' I *did* say "No" to 'n at first. An' he was a'ways differ'nt to th' other men—kind about things—an' serious, an' no nonsense an' jeerin'. On'y I was afeard you might—might take it unkind, Cass—an' be angered.'

There was a long pause. Cass was striving after impressiveness, eager to tell her lie with force, with truthlike intensity. She put both hands on the table, and, leaning on the downturned palms, bent across and looked steadily and calmly at Emily, whose eyes fell.

'You'm in love wi' Jim,' she said, 'an' you think all th' world's in love th' same. If I'd been in love wi' 'n, Em'ly, should I have cast 'n up? Tell me that. Do I *look* as if I was frettin'? do I? Why, I threw 'n up meself. I—I was tired o' his preachin' ways; we'd been keepin' company long enough, an' I was tired of it. It's all one to me what he does, an' where he goes, an' who he marries. An' I'm glad he's took up wi' you; you'm made fur 'n—just his sort—an' you've set yer mind on 'n fur th' last two year. It's naught to me—an' I'm glad. Don' talk o' my bein' angered. Angered? What about? Might marry a dozen wives

fur all 'twould fret me—might be brought in drowned to-morrow an' I shouldn' fash meself.'

Emily was crying in a nervous, feeble way. When Cass stood dramatically and spoke forcibly, Emily was always a little frightened. Perhaps, too, the picture of Jim with eleven rival wives and the reminder of the daily jeopardy of Jim's life at sea seemed malevolent.

'I'm goin' to bed,' said Cass in a gentler tone. Tears, in spite of herself, always softened her; her instinct, like a man's, was to run away from them. 'You'd bes' come too, Em.'

Emily followed obediently, wiping her eyes in the sleeve of her cotton gown and crying still because she had once begun. Cass looked at her uneasily, feeling conscience-stricken, as though in cowardly fashion she had struck a child.

'I'm glad if you'm happy, Em,' she said. 'Not carin' fur Jim meself, I *can* be glad, you see.'

'An' you don' care fur 'n?' said Emily dubiously. She was not shrewd at gauging others' feelings; but indifference to Jim seemed an incredible, an impossible thing. She was not sure now that she had wished Cass to be thus indifferent; she had thought, perhaps hoped, that Cass would envy her a little. 'Didn' you *ever* care?' she added. 'Did you like th' other men jus' th' same? He isn' like th' other men, Jim isn'; he doesn' think o' drinkin' an' spendin' an' layin' out all his money on hisself in plays an' drink. He's a chapel man, Jim is.'

'He's a saint,' said Cass.

Emily was following wearily up the stairs, and for a moment or two was silent. 'You don' speak very kind o' Jim,' she said presently, in a tone of querulous, vague resentment.

Cass laughed a little as she reached her door. 'You'm able to do that yerself, Em,' she said. 'Speak kind an' *do* kind; that's fur you. What I say an' do 's no odds.'

She entered the room where her mother was sleeping and shut the door behind her, and Emily went on to her little cupboard-like bedroom near the sky. Sleep came quickly to neither to-night. Emily was too happy to go prosaically to bed; she was tired with the day's running to and fro, but sleep was far from her eyes. She sat at the foot of her bed and leant her head against the wall, and in slow, happy fashion her thoughts rehearsed the interview of an hour or two ago—what Jim had said, what she had answered, at what point in the interview Jim's

grave grey eyes had smiled at her; how she had looked down at her cotton gown and wished she had starched it on Monday; how Jim had kissed her and she had hastily pulled down her sleeves from her elbows to her wrists with a feeling that it was not seemly to be courted thus, without her holiday attire, with bare arms and turned-up gown; how Jim had kissed her again and she had cried for happiness, and had continued to cry because it proved so sweet to be comforted. Her pale little lips relaxed in smiles at the pleasant memories. On Sunday she would wear her best drab gown, with the zigzag trimming at the bottom. On Monday—but there her thoughts became confused and passed slowly into dreams in which ambition was not bounded by sordid probability, and her best gown was lilac silk and her crinoline of fashionable dimensions.

Cass even then was wakeful. She lay still, with her hands clasped above her head upon the pillow, careful not to move, lest her mother should awake and wonder at her sleeplessness. The tide down below was beating in noisily against the stones, but the sound was hushed in the distance, and Cass was used to the long, monotonous, muffled splash. Her bed faced a window, and now and then when the clouds parted the moonlight shone coldly in. The clouds travelled up swiftly, shut out the light, and rolled by towards the west. The wind had risen; she listened to it as it whistled mournfully along the bare passages of the house. And at last she slept.

It was dark when she awoke. She awoke suddenly, and sat upright, with a quick, vague sense of danger. She held her breath for a moment and listened, scarcely knowing why she listened and what she feared. Next moment, above the splash of the tide and the whistling of the wind, came a strange sound as of glass loudly cracking in some room below. Cass sprang out of bed and ran out upon the landing. The air that met her seemed hot and stifling. At that moment the clouds rolled back and the moonlight streamed in through the staircase window, and she saw that staircase and passages were filled with smoke which came up in dense volumes from some room below. Crying loudly the alarm of 'Fire!' she ran back to her mother to awaken her. Her mother was awake; in another moment all the house seemed to be awake: doors were opening, footsteps hurrying through the passages, friends calling to friends, those who slept below calling lustily the alarm to those who slept above.

A moment's pause in her mother's room, and Cass fled upstairs. The Babel was great, but the men slept soundly and some might still be sleeping. One of the younger men, Dan Earthy, was just before her, speeding upwards on the same errand. He ran up the narrow staircase to the garrets, and Cass passed hurriedly from door to door on the floor below. The doors were open; no one answered when she called. She heard Dan Earthy's voice above, and heard him descending again. The open doors seemed to shut out the moonlight; she had to grope her way back through the passage to the stairs.

On the landing and the stairs below, as she ran down, all was noise, rush, confusion. Everyone was escaping. Only, through the smoke, Jim was coming up. He was breathless; he looked at Cass and looked beyond her. Cass understood. In a moment, at the first sight of him, two thoughts had flashed through her mind. Emily slept in one of the garret rooms; Jim had not seen her. Dan Earthy must have passed her door and overlooked it; his call had not aroused her, and Jim was daring danger to awaken her. There was peril in the errand; his face betrayed it. Before he reached her she spoke.

'Go back, Jim. Safe—she's safe. Em's gone. I saw her go.'

He turned at once. There was a little lad, belonging to one of the watermen, on the landing just below him; he caught the child in his arms and ran down with him through the smoke. Without a moment's pause Cass turned too, and ran back to the topmost story, to Emily's room.

The moon was hidden again behind the clouds, and the passages were dark. Cass called as she mounted the steep stairs, but there was no answer from above. The smoke that ascended with her seemed denser than ever—stifling, blinding, suffocating. She went swiftly on, bruising herself against a jutting angle of the wall and a wooden chest standing in the passage. The door of Emily's room was open. She entered and called again. But the room was empty. Emily was gone. She had been sleeping lightly, had been the first to hear the alarm, the first of all to escape. Cass looked around, and turned again to retreat.

Two houses were destroyed in that fire in 1860. And one life was lost. 'One life only,' said the local papers next day. The houses had been so old, the alarm so late, the spread of the fire so

rapid after the alarm, that there seemed almost room for congratulation in that 'one life only.'

Only Cass had failed to escape. Why she had failed remained a mystery. Strangers, who had not known Cass, offered an explanation which to themselves was satisfactory. It was a simple matter enough. She had not estimated the danger and had gone back to her room to save some bit of finery—some favourite necklace or bonnet or gown. Draw a moral—preach a sermon—let the Vanity of Woman be the text!

The boatmen derided the conjecture. They had known Cass better.—Only one of them leant to the strangers' theory. That was Jim.

OUR SMALL IGNORANCES.

A GREAT deal of the charm of polite conversation consists not in what is said but in what is implied, not in expressions but in allusions. A light reference to some classical story, a quick glance at some page of history, a half-line from some loved poem, gives not only grace to the remarks of the speaker but zest to the attention of his audience. Seldom does a verse or a couplet fail to 'bring down the House' of Commons; reporters never omit to write '(hear)' after a line from Virgil, Shakespeare, or Milton. And the listener who says to himself, 'Ah, the Georgics, Hamlet, or L'Allegro,' feels himself to be as cultured a person as he who has uttered the quotation.

We resent the impertinence of foot-notes and even of inverted commas when an allusion is made in print and we understand it; such helps to memory or to knowledge are reflections on our culture; and yet when we make close inquiry of ourselves, we are shocked to find how ignorant we are concerning even common allusions. Many persons seem to think it quite safe to conclude that any quotation is taken from either the Bible or Shakespeare. Again, others, when they hear a very melodious line, set it down at once as 'Tennyson.' How many of us know who wrote the beautiful axiom, 'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb'? and how many can name the source of 'barbaric gold and pearl,' and 'thick as leaves in Vallombrosa'? Not long ago I wished to verify the hackneyed line, 'When wild in woods the noble savage ran;' several volumes of reference failed me, and no friend could help; until I saw the words on an American advertisement of the Yosemite Valley, with the reference 'Conquest of Granada,' and then further search made me aware that the 'Conquest of Granada' was a poem by Dryden.

In the year 1881 a volume called 'Petites Ignorances de la Conversation,' by Charles Rozan, was published by P. Ducrocq, of Paris; and in 1887 'Quizzism and its Key,' by Albert P. Southwick, appeared in its sixth edition at Boston; and in the same year the second edition of 'Queer Questions and Ready Replies,' by S. Grant Oliphant, shone out to enlighten the same city. The two American books are in every way very similar; the French

one is not altogether unlike them. Much information for English readers may be gathered from all three, and much in all three is quite useless for us. For instance, the very first of the 'Queer Questions' does not rouse in us much thirst for the 'Ready Reply:' 'What town in Vermont was taken by the Confederates during the late Civil War?' The reply is shortly 'St. Albans,' and half a page of history is given with it. Opening 'Quizzism' at random I read the question: 'What general has two graves?' The answer states that General Wayne's remains were exhumed at Erie seventy-six years ago, and some of them re-interred at Radnor; so that he is said to have two graves. At p. 120 of the 'Petites Ignorances' I find a disquisition on the proverbial expression, 'Les enfants vont à la moutarde;' it is too long to quote here, and, having no equivalent in English, is not of much interest. But as I turn over the leaves of the three little books I find a great deal of information which, like sunshine in a shady place, shows me my own ignorances and negligences.

Every cottage, thanks to America, possesses its clock, and, thanks to Waterbury, almost every pocket its watch. But why are the dials divided into twelve divisions of five minutes each? Hear Mr. S. Grant Oliphant: 'We have sixty divisions on the dials of our clocks and watches because the old Greek astronomer, Hipparchus, who lived in the second century before Christ, accepted the Babylonian system of reckoning time—that system being sexagesimal. The Babylonians were acquainted with the decimal system, but for common or practical purposes they counted by *sossi* and *sari*, the *sossos* representing sixty, and the *saros* sixty times six—thirty-six hundred. From Hipparchus that mode of reckoning found its way into the works of Ptolemy about 150 A.D., and hence was carried down the stream of science and civilisation, and found its way to the dial-plates of our clocks and watches.

The language and literature of America, being so closely related to that of England, present few difficulties to us except in the colloquialisms of recent times; continental idioms and proverbs, based chiefly on local customs and incidents, are often quite inexplicable by us. But there are many Americanisms very puzzling to Englishmen; and, again, many Gallicisms which at once reveal an affinity to expressions of our own.

We use *Uncle Sam* as a facetious name for the United States; Mr. S. Grant Oliphant explains its origin thus: 'Uncle Sam Wilson' was the government inspector of supplies at Troy in the

war of 1812. Those edibles of which he approved were labelled *U. S.*, then a new sign for *United States*; the workmen supposed that these letters were the initials of 'Uncle Sam,' and the mistake became a joke and a lasting one. So 'Brother Jonathan' had a simple origin: Washington thought very highly of the judgment of Jonathan Trumbull the elder, then governor of Connecticut, and constantly remarked, 'We must consult Brother Jonathan.' The name soon became regarded as a national sobriquet. Mr. Southwick, in 'Quizzism,' gives some curious information about the term *Yankee*; of course, we all know that it is the word *English* as pronounced by the American Indians, but we do not all know that 'in a curious book on the "Round Towers of Ireland" the origin of the term *Yankee-doodle* was traced to the Persian phrase *Yanki-dooniah*, or *Inhabitants of the New World.* Layard, in his book on "Nineveh and its Remains," also mentions *Yanghidunia* as the Persian name of America.' The song *Yankee Doodle*, Mr. Southwick tells us, is as old as Cromwell's time; it was the Protector himself who 'stuck a feather in his hat' when going to Oxford; the bunch of ribbons which held the feather was a *maccaroni*. We know that *maccaroni* was a cant term for a dandy, that feathers were worn in the hats of Royalists, and that Oxford was a town of the highest importance during the Civil War. I do not quite see how round towers, the Persian language, and Old Noll come to be so intimately connected, even though, as Mr. Southwick tells, the song was at first known as *Nankee Doodle.*

America must not, as some of her sons have done, imagine that the dollar-mark $ stands for U. S., the S. being written upon the U. For both the dollar and the sign for it were in use long before there were any United States. Both Mr. Southwick and Mr. Oliphant give the very probable origin indicated by the design on the reverse of the Spanish dollar—the Pillars of Hercules with a scroll round each pillar, the scrolls perhaps representing the serpents which Hercules strangled while yet he was a child in his cradle. There is also another theory that the dollar-mark is a form of the figure 8, because in old times the dollar was a piece of eight reals. The expression 'almighty dollar' was first used by Washington Irving in his sketch of a 'Creole Village,' 1837.

Filibustering is a slang American term, corresponding to our *obstruction* in Parliamentary language, and appears to have had a short but adventurous career, starting as the English *flyboat*,

then becoming the Spanish *filibote*, or pirate-ship, next getting naturalised on the Vly, a small river in Holland, and then invading Cuba under Lopez in 1851, and in the form of *filibosters* appearing as the designation of his followers.

In all countries there is a large literature clustering around the name, history, character, and qualities of his Satanic Majesty, the Prince of Darkness. One of his synonyms is *Old Harry*, which, Mr. Oliphant says, may be a corruption of the Scandinavian *Hari*, one of the names of Odin, or another form of *Old Hairy*. *Old Nick* is derived from the name of the river-god *Nick* or *Neck*, though Butler, the author of 'Hudibras,' says that it comes from *Niccolo* Machiavelli! And *Old Scratch* must be taken to be derived from *Scrat*, a 'house or wood demon of the ancient North.' M. Rozan is strong on all diabolical points; 'diable à quatre,' he says, has come down from the old Miracle Plays in which, at first, one demon was enough; but enterprising managers soon added a second, and finally some Irving or Harris of the day crowded his stage with four devils. Sainte-Beuve calls Henry IV. 'ce diable-à-quatre.' The French kings were choice in their oaths; each had his own. We remember how, in 'Quentin Durward,' Louis XI. iterates 'Pasques Dieu!' even to weariness. Henry IV. took a certain portion of the person of St. Gris under his special protection. Who St. Gris was appears very doubtful: perhaps St. Francis, founder of the Grey Friars; perhaps an imaginary saint invented as the patron of drunkards, as St. Lâche was invented for the lazy, and Ste. Nitouche for hypocrites. Had Henry IV. been an Italian, he would have invoked the *corpo di Bacco* rather than the *ventre St. Gris*. To swear by some portion of the Deity or of a saint was the fashionable and æsthetic thing in the Middle Ages; true, our forefathers said *pardy*, which was *par Dieu*, but they also said *tudieu* (which is tête-Dieu), *corbleu* (corps-de-Dieu), *ventre-bleu* (ventre de Dieu), *sam-bleu* (sang-de-Dieu), and *morbleu* (morte-de-Dieu). So in English they said *Zounds* (God's wounds), *'Sblood* and *'Sdeath* (God's blood and God's death). Henry IV. of France is said to have introduced the curious oath *jarnicoton!* into polite conversation; he had been in the habit of saying *je renie Dieu* (I deny or blaspheme God); his confessor, the Father Coton, a Jesuit, who refused a cardinal's hat, expostulated with the royal penitent and begged him rather to use the words *je renie Coton*; hence arose the new expression. M. Rozan tells this story, and many others, with a delightful touch of

humour, which, strange to say, is totally wanting in the American books. The transition of *Mort-Dieu* into *Morbleu* is seen in the following epitaph by Benserade, a wit and poet much esteemed in his own day at the court of Louis XIV., but whose works have long been justly consigned to oblivion; the exception may be this stanza:

> Ci-gît, oui, par la morbieu!
> Le Cardinal de Richelieu;
> Et ce qui cause mon ennui,
> Ma pension gît avec lui.

M. Rozan also gives another short poem called the 'Epithéton des quatre rois:'

> Quand la Pasque Dieu decéda, (Louis XI.)
> Le Bon Jour Dieu lui succéda; (Charles VIII.)
> Au Bon Jour Dieu deffunct et mort
> Succéda le Dyable m'emport. (Louis XII.)
> Luy decéda, nous voyons comme
> Nous duist la Foi de Gentil Homme. (François I.)

(The word *duist* is part of *duire*, an obsolete verb, meaning *to suit.*) We say *deuce* as a mild form of *devil*, and the French say *diantre* as a mild form of *diable.* But not even M. Rozan can explain why the lovely freshness of early girlhood is called the *beauté de diable.* One would naturally suppose that the innocence of youth was utterly unlike any beauty which the author of evil could impart, and to him one would rather attribute the charms, if any, of rouged cheeks, dyed hair, stuffed bust, and self-possessed manners. There is an old French proverb, *Le diable était beau quand il était jeune*, which may be in some way connected with this curious phrase, but I hardly see in what the link can consist.

One of Mr. Oliphant's 'Queer Questions' is this: 'What was the origin of the expression "Printer's Devil"?' He answers it thus: 'Aldus Manutius (1440–1515), the celebrated Venetian printer and publisher, had a small black slave whom the superstitious believed to be an emissary of Satan. To satisfy the curious, one day he said publicly in church, "I, Aldus Manutius, printer to the Holy Church, have this day made public exposure of the printer's devil. All who think he is not flesh and blood, come and pinch him." Hence in Venice arose the somewhat curious sobriquet "Printer's Devil."'

I must remark, *en passant*, that 1549 is more probably the year of the birth of Aldus Manutius the elder. If Venice saw the

first Printer's Devil, it also saw the first modern newspaper, which was published in that city; a 'gazetta,' a small coin worth one farthing, was paid for the privilege of reading it. The name of this ancestor of journals was the 'Notizie Scritte,' and it appeared about 1536. The 'Gazette de France' came into being in 1631, but had a forerunner, the 'Mercure François;' the 'London Gazette' dates from 1666, and followed on the 'Public Intelligencer.' The 'Acta Diurna' of Rome were first published about the year B.C. 623 (Mr. Southwick says 691). They were hung up in some public place, and must have been rallying points for the quidnuncs of the city. They contained the political speeches of the day, the law reports, police news, lists of births, marriages, divorces, and funerals, and advertisements of the public games. Private persons made copies of these 'Acts' to send to their friends in the country. We can hardly call such a news-sheet by the name of newspaper, but there is in existence a weekly journal of great antiquity. It is said to have first appeared in A.D. 911, and is called the 'King Pau,' or chief-sheet, and is published at Pekin. In its early days it was irregular in its dates of publication, but in 1351 became hebdomadal, and in 1882 assumed a new shape. Three editions are published in the day, containing matter of different kinds, and are called respectively the 'Business,' the 'Official,' and the 'Country' sheets. Their combined circulation amounts to about fourteen thousand. M. Rozan, in one of his sly notes, quotes Eugène Hattins' opinion that 'gazette' as the name of a newspaper is derived from *gazza*, a magpie.

Strangely as names of things have come down to us, even more strangely have come names of persons. The Wandering Jew is one of those mysterious characters which never fail to interest us in whatever form they present themselves—history, romance, or opera. He is said to have been a Jew named Ahasuerus, who refused to allow the Lord Jesus Christ to rest before his house when carrying His cross to Calvary. In 1644, Michob Ader, a very extraordinary person, appeared in Paris and said that he was the Wandering Jew, having been usher of the Court of Judgment of Jerusalem when sentence was given against the Messiah. He was an astoundingly well-informed man, and no one convicted him of the imposture which all knew him to be practising. Eugène Sue founded, as is well known, a powerful romance on the story of 'Le Juif errant.'

John O'Groat is reported by Mr. Southwick to have been a

Dutchman who settled himself at the most northern point of Scotland in the reign of James IV. He had nine sons who strove for precedency, and to settle their dispute he made nine doors to his house so that none should go out or come in before another.

The 'Roi d'Yvetot' is another personage either historical or mythological, perhaps both, for there is no distinct line of demarcation between the two. M. Rozan says that the king and the kingdom of Yvetot have been matter of discussion since the time of Louis XI.; that François I. called the lady of that place 'reine;' that Henry IV. said, 'If I lose the kingdom of France, I will at least be king of Yvetot;' that Béranger made a pretty song on this subject; therefore certainly there must have been such a monarch. The story runs that the Lord of Yvetot, Walter or Gautier, was much loved by Clotaire, 'but whispering tongues can poison truth,' and they succeeded in depriving Walter of the affection of his sovereign. He was compelled to fly; but, having provided himself with letters from the Pope, he returned to Soissons, hoping to recover the good graces of his master. He presented himself before the king in the cathedral on Good Friday. Clotaire, forgetting day, place, and example, drew his sword and plunged it into the heart of Walter. Then remorse and the Pope, St. Agapet, together forced Clotaire to expiate his crime by raising the lordship of Yvetot into a kingdom for the heirs and successors of Walter. I may supplement M. Rozan's information by mentioning that the title 'roi' of Yvetot was not used until the fourteenth century, whereas Clotaire lived in the sixth; it was officially recognised by Louis XI., François I., and Henri II. When the estate passed by marriage into the Du Bellay family, the title 'roi' gave place to that of 'prince souverain,' which also died out in course of time.

Another Middle-Age expression is 'A Roland for an Oliver.' These two heroes were paladins of Charlemagne, who fought in single combat during five consecutive days on an island in the Rhine, without either gaining the least advantage. Again, who was Rodomont, who has bequeathed us his name in *rodomontade*? We are told by M. Rozan that he was a king of Algiers, brave, but haughty and insolent, whom the Count of Boiardo in 'Orlando Innamorato' and Ariosto in 'Orlando Furioso' have made popular. A man who talks much of his own daring is said in French 'faire le Rodomont;' and we English have made a substantive which

we use in common parlance, knowing little of the hero of romance who uttered the first rodomontade.

Roger Bontemps is a character often alluded to, but, I venture to say, little known in England. Ménage, as quoted by M. Rozan, thinks that the expression 'has come from some one named Roger who diverted himself, or, in fact, gave himself a good time.' This derivation is too simple and self-apparent to be quite satisfying, so we will seek for another. Jean Baillet, Bishop of Auxerre, had a secretary who was both priest and poet, whose name was Roger de Collerye, and who was surnamed from his merry disposition *Bontemps*. The partisans of this derivation quote a ballad which begins thus:

> Ce qui m'aymera si me suyve !
> Je suis Bon Temps, vous le voyez, &c.

On the other hand, the reverend fathers of Trévoux have exhumed a lord of the house of Bontemps which was very illustrious in the country of Vivarais, in Languedoc then, now in the department of the Ardèche; this family of Bontemps always gave the name of Roger to its senior member (a somewhat curious fact, as death must occasionally have carried off the chief; perhaps every Bontemps was christened Roger as every Count Reuss is christened Henry). There arose a Roger Bontemps whose gay humour, hospitality, valour, and other mediæval virtues were so well known that his name was the synonym for a good fellow, and afterwards became corrupted into meaning an idle and dissipated scamp. M. Rozan, with his knowing smile, adds that Le Duchat and Pasquier found yet other origins for the term; the one asserting that it comes from *réjoui bontemps*, the other deriving it from *rouge bontemps*, because, says Pasquier, 'red colour in the face denotes a certain quality of gaiety and light-heartedness.'

'The real Simon Pure' is a gentleman of whom we in these degenerate days know too little. Here is Mr. Oliphant's history of him: 'He was a Pennsylvanian Quaker in Mrs. Centlivre's comedy, "A Bold Stroke for a Wife." This worthy person "being about to visit London to attend the quarterly meeting of his sect, his friend, Aminadab Holdfast, sends a letter of recommendation and introduction to another Quaker, Obadiah Prim, a rigid and stern man, who is guardian of Anne Lovely, a young lady worth 30,000*l*. Colonel Feignwell, another character in the same play, who is enamoured of Miss Lovely and her handsome fortune, availing himself of an accidental discovery of Holdfast's letter and

of its contents, succeeds in passing himself off on Prim as his expected visitor. The real Simon Pure calling at Prim's house is treated as an impostor, and is obliged to depart in order to hunt up witnesses who can testify to his identity. Meanwhile Feignwell succeeds in getting from Prim a written and unconditional consent to his marriage with Anne. No sooner has he obtained possession of the document than Simon Pure reappears with his witnesses, and Prim discovers the trick that has been put upon him.' Here endeth Mr. Oliphant's information. Whoever desires to know whether of the twain suitors obtained the hand of the lady must consult Mrs. Centlivre's play itself.

We all live in a very wholesome dread of Mrs. Grundy. She first saw the light, it is said, in Thomas Morton's 'Speed the Plough.' 'In the first scene Mrs. Ashfield shows herself very jealous of neighbour Grundy, and Farmer Ashfield says to her, "Be quiet, woolye? Allways ding-dinging Dame Grundy into my ears: What will Mrs. Grundy zay? What will Mrs. Grundy think?"'

Who was Philippine, and why do we wish her 'bon jour'? Yesterday we dined at a friend's house and were happily placed beside a charming young lady. At dessert we cracked an almond in its shell, and on opening it found that it contained a double kernel, one half of which we bestowed on our neighbour, the other half we ourselves devoured. This morning, all unsuspicious of evil, we met our fair friend in the street; she exclaimed, 'Bon jour, Philippine!' and we, albeit our name is not Philippine, nor even Philippe, are bound by every law of honour and society to make a suitable present to the lady. Having been thus caught, we anxiously inquire who and what is or was this Philippine? Now, M. Rozan goes quite deeply into the subject. He says that the game is not unknown in France, though less practised than in Germany. A reference to a German dictionary shows that they have a word, *Vielliebchen*, which corresponds to Philippine. 'Guten Morgen, Vielliebchen,' was the original phrase; it gradually glided into 'Guten Morgen, Philippchen;' the French took it over and made it 'Bon jour, Philippine.' M. Rozan says that *Vielliebchen* is pronounced almost precisely the same as *Philippine*! It seems to us barbarous English astonishing that the delicate ear of a Frenchman, whose refinements of pronunciation are hopeless to us, can yet hear no difference between those two words: the soft French with its final and just indicated *e*,

and the harsh German with *b* in the place of one *p*, the guttural *ch* for another *p*, and *en* instead of *ine*! This must be one of M. Rozan's quiet jokes at the expense of his own countrymen; he says that Philippine 'rime exactement avec l'expression des Allemands.' The French ear detects a difference between the acute, grave, and circumflex accents on the letter *e*; thus *téte*, *tète*, and *tête* would each have its own special sound. We English think we do well if we distinguish the circumflex from the grave.

It is told of M. Arsène Houssaye (commonly called *Saint-Arsène* because he was the refuge and patron of young authors) that Monselet came to him with a manuscript; said M. Houssaye to the young writer, soon to be famous, 'If I were you, instead of Monselet, I should sign myself Monselé; it is softer.' Monselet, horrified and irate, exclaimed, 'Monselé? Like Franjolé? No, thank you!' Now, I am afraid that to English ears the final *let* and *lé* sound almost identical. Yet M. Rozan asserts that to French ears *Vielliebchen* is exactly like Philippine! The surname of St.-Arsène appears to have been either Houssaye *or* Housset!

Various animals have become famous and left their names as proverbs or puzzles. I do not now allude to such as Bucephalus, the horse of Alexander, but rather to such as Rosinante, the charger of Don Quixote; not to the dog of Montargis, but the dog of Lance. The Kilkenny cats are doubtless entirely historical, but who was the equally famous cat who was let out of the bag? She was not unlike the pig in a poke (*poche* = pocket). If a foolish bumpkin bought a pig in a poke, well and good; if he opened the pocket or bag and a cat jumped out, he discovered the trick played on him, and was off his bargain.

There is a certain cow whose death has insured her a long literary life. The event is chronicled in verse, which runs somewhat in this style:

> There was a man who bought a cow,
>   And he had no food to give her,
> So he took up his fiddle and played her a tune:
>   'Consider, my cow, consider,
> This is not the time for grass to grow—
>   Consider, my cow, consider.'

This is said to have been the famous tune of which the old cow died, but long experience has convinced me that an obvious derivation is seldom the correct one, and I would rather put forward

another. Among the inspiriting airs often performed on the melodious and richly modulated bagpipe is one known as 'Nathaniel Gow's Lament for his Brother,' and when listening to it I have felt an internal conviction that it, and no other, is the 'tune the old Gow died of.'

'The high horse' is another animal whose history is worth investigating; the French call him 'le grand cheval.' In the days of chivalry each knight had two horses, the palfrey and the charger. The palfrey (*palefroi*, from the Latin *paraveredus*, post-horse) was the steed ordinarily used for show and hack work, and the charger (*destrier*, which the squire led by his right hand, *ad dexterum*) was the war-horse. When the knight mounted his high horse, he was known to be angry, proud, indignant, and quarrelsome; and when we moderns are 'on the high horse' we are certainly in no amiable mood.

Nor is an *unlicked cub* a very amiable creature; in French he is frankly called an 'ours mal léché.' The English *cub* is a young bear, the French *ours* may be of any age; indeed, we may designate a surly old man as a *bear*. The following is quoted from Balzac: 'This Léchard was an old journeyman pressman, who was called in printer's slang an *ours*; the pressman (*pressier*) has a to-and-fro movement as he carries the ink to the press, which resembles the movement of a bear.'

Avoir des rats dans la tête is a phrase which corresponds to our expression *to have a bee in his bonnet*. The Abbé Desfontaines, best known as the opponent of Voltaire, says that 'this expression comes from *ratum*, which means a thought, a resolution, an intention.' *Rat* from *ratum* was naturally confounded with *rât*, the unpleasant animal, and hence arose what has become an obscure proverbial phrase. M. Rozan quotes, but specially adds that he does not endorse, the punning remark: 'Les femmes ont des souris à la bouche et des rats dans la tête.'

Let me for a few minutes leave the animals and consider that word *calembour*, which appears to have encountered as much contumely in France as its equivalent in England. It has been said among us that the man who would make a pun would pick a pocket, and across the Channel have been debated the questions, 'Is one a fool because one makes a pun?' and 'Must one necessarily make puns if one is a fool?' These are weighty questions, and are yet unanswered. As to the derivation of the word *calembour* there are various theories. It is a modern word, not known until the

eighteenth century. At the Court of Versailles there was a Count von Kallemberg, ambassador from the German Empire; his broken French resulted in such odd combinations of words that after a time every incongruous union of symphonious syllables came to be called by his name. Then there was also an Abbé Calemberg, an amusing figure in German stories; he was the father of the *calembour*. M. Victorien Sardou has conclusively shown that the word comes from, or rather is, *calembour*, a sweet-scented Indian wood. M. Darmesteter, the *savant*, is certain that *calembour* comes from *calembourdaine*, another form of *calembredaine*, fib, quibble, subterfuge. Of these various derivations the French punster may take his choice. But now, *revenons à nos moutons*.

The story of the sheep is to be found among the jests of Pathelin. Guillaume, a draper, has been robbed by Pathelin, a lawyer, of six ells of cloth, and by Agnelet, his shepherd, of twenty-six sheep. Guillaume intends to make it a hanging matter for the shepherd, but when he comes into court to accuse him he finds that Pathelin, who stole the cloth, is the lawyer employed to defend Agnelet. With his head running upon both his sheep and his cloth he makes a delightful confusion of the two losses; the judge says—

> Sus, revenons à nos moutons,
> Qu'en fut-il?

and the draper replies—

> Il en a pris six aunes,
> De neuf francs.

The judge is much puzzled, and continually entreats Guillaume to return to his sheep.

Another famous animal is the *poulet*, when in the form of a pretty pink note or a delicate 'correspondence card.' Many a good story is to be traced to Madame de Sévigné, whom we do not read much, though we read a great deal about her. Some one wrote her a note, and begged her not to show it to any human being; but at the end of several days she did show it, with the remark, 'If I had brooded over it any longer, I should have hatched it!' This was a *calembour*, of course, but it does not solve the difficulty of the derivation of *poulet* in the sense of *billet*.

From fowl to fish is not a very long stride. The *poisson d'avril* is as popular in France as the April Fool is with us. Why we use our expression is not difficult to understand, but

why our neighbours should call that person a fish who falls into the trap of a practical joke on the first of April is very mysterious. Francis, Duke of Lorraine, whom Louis XIII. held prisoner at the Castle of Nancy, contrived to escape on a first of April by swimming across the river Meurthe, which gave rise to a saying among the people of Lorraine that the French had had a fish in custody. But as the escape of this Duke of Lorraine is only spoken of in explanation of the *poisson d'avril*, and as Louis XIII. never had a Duke of Lorraine as his prisoner, the story is somewhat hard to believe. The reason assigned by graver authorities than popular legends is that the first of April is the day on which the sun enters the zodiacal sign of the Fishes. But unfortunately *Pisces* is the sign for February. I may perhaps be allowed to bring forward my own solution of this difficult question of origin. I would refer both the fish and the fool to St. Benedict, whose festival is March 21, a date which, when the change was made from the Old to the New Style, became April 1. It is recorded that a holy priest at a distance, one Easter Day, became miraculously aware, as he was preparing his own good dinner, that St. Benedict was faint with hunger, thinking that the Lenten fast was not yet over. Of course the priest hastened to share his meal with the saint; he doubtless threw to the birds the fish which lay in St. Benedict's larder, and probably applied the English term which we have been considering to the saint himself. This derivation is strengthened by the fact that March 21 is the earliest day on which Easter Eve can fall.

À propos de bottes, or *à propos de poissons*, we may glance at the land of *Cocagne*, where plenty reigns, whose streets are paved with gold, and where all men may eat, drink, and be merry. This land is said to have been the ancient duchy of Lauraguais in Languedoc. In that country were made conical cakes known as *coquaignes de pastel*, or shells of woad. The dye of the woad was very valuable, and thus the land of the *coquaigne* came to mean a land of prosperity and plenty. But if that derivation does not please us we may accept another. *Cuccagna* was a district in Italy, between Rome and Loretto, where living was cheap; there was a poet named Martin Coccaie, who wrote of this delightful country. The word also signified a loaf or cake, and came from *coquere*, to cook. There are other derivations, but I think I have cited enough.

It can scarcely be doubted that our word Cockney comes from

the French *cocagne*; to the rustic mind the capital, whether Paris or London, is the abode of plenty; London is the English *cocagne*, and the inhabitant of Cocagne is the Cockney. I am aware that there is a legend of a Londoner who visited the country for the first time, and next morning was awakened by the crowing of chanticleer. He is said to have exclaimed later in the day to his host, 'This morning I heard a cock neigh!' But I pass over the origin of the word as too derogative of the intelligence of Londoners.

I used above the expression *à propos de bottes*, and as I am bound in this paper to mind my *p*'s and *q*'s I will endeavour to throw some light on that subject. It is an abbreviation of 'à propos de bottes, combien l'aune de fagots?' Now this is an absurd question, on the face of it, for faggots are not sold by the ell. But then *aune* is also the French for *elder tree*, the timber of which might be sold by the ell, and afterwards split up into faggots; and again, *se fagoter* is to dress in a slovenly manner—as we say, to *look like a bundle of rags*, and rags might be sold by the ell. Wonderful combinations of ideas are evolved from proverbial phrases. Boots have ever played an important part in modern languages; we speak of seven-leagued boots, a reminiscence of Tom Thumb and the Ogre; we talk of sock and buskin as synonyms of tragedy and comedy; *graisser ses bottes* is to prepare for a long journey, and, by extension of meaning, to die; and 'to die in one's shoes' is a vulgar euphuism for being hanged.

To *mind our p's and q's*, again. Why must we be careful of those letters more than of others? Because in the olden days the host kept his customers' scores in chalk on the panels of the doors. P stood for pint, and Q for quart, and it behoved the guest to watch his score lest he should exceed his proper number of p's and q's. The printer, too, must needs be careful of the two letters, which in type are so very much alike. To suit, or to fit, to a T is a plain allusion to the carpenter's T, which is much used in mechanics and drawings.

There is an immense number of words and expressions which we use in daily conversation without reflecting on their original meaning, and of which the history is both instructive and amusing; but I will now only explain the French saying '*Chacun a sa marotte*,' equivalent to 'Every man has his hobby.' *Hobby* is a contraction of *hobby-horse*, the wooden creature on which a

small boy rides round the nursery, or the animal which prances at fairs and village feasts. I have not gone into the derivation of *hobby*, but I would suggest that it may be *au bois—wooden* ; or from *abbey*, because popular entertainments in the Middle Ages were chiefly provided by the regular clergy.

Marotte is literally the *fool's bauble*, and is a contraction of *Marionette*, which is, of course, a familiar form of *Marie*, the chief female figure in the old Mysteries ; the little figure on the *bauble* is a baby or doll ; the Scotch *bawbee*, or halfpenny, received that name because it was first struck to commemorate the birth of Mary, Queen of Scots ; *bawbee* reminds us of the cognate *poupée* and the Italian *bambino*—p and b being interchangeable letters ; even our *doll* may be only another form of *poll* and *moll*, both of which are diminutives of Mary. Again, we have the word *puppet*, an English form of *poupée*. The Italians have *popazza* for *doll*, and the North American Indians *papoose* for *babe*.

One of the gravest pages of English history records how the Speaker's mace was stigmatised as '*that bauble* ;' by implication that brutal phrase classed the Speaker Lenthall with the majority of mankind (see Carlyle).

The hobby, or *marotte*, of many profound thinkers is philology ; therefore I need make no excuse for having endeavoured to explain some of our small ignorances of words and expressions.

A FINANCIAL OPERATION.

It was nearly twelve o'clock on a bright spring morning. Yet Colonel Punter was still busily employed in his bachelor rooms in Piccadilly. The Colonel was a fresh-complexioned, somewhat portly man, of about fifty years of age, with grizzled hair and moustache and a vigour of eye and form which, although he had retired, gave ample evidence that he was blessed with plenty of strength and energy, and would be quite ready for hard service should his country require it of him. On this morning he was correcting the proofs of a pamphlet that was shortly to appear, entitled 'The Proper Formations in Savage Warfare.' This pamphlet was looked forward to in military circles with a good deal of interest, for Colonel Punter was a very well-known man, and was highly thought of as a scientific soldier. He had been at work on these proofs for two hours, and had just made up his mind that it was time to walk down to his club, when his servant entered the room and, presenting a card, said that the lady would be very much obliged if Colonel Punter would grant her an interview.

'Certainly,' said the Colonel; then glancing at the card he muttered to himself: 'Mrs. Verner—I can't remember ever to have heard the name before. I wonder what she wants.' Then, being a kindly and courteous man, he rose from his writing-desk, pushed the proofs away, and took up the newspaper, so that he might not appear to have been interrupted at work. Scarcely had he completed this little manœuvre when the door opened and a lady, well but quietly dressed, was shown into the room. She was tall and graceful, and wore a heavy veil, which, however, on the servant's retiring, she threw back, and, holding out her hand, advanced with a smile, saying :

'I am afraid, Colonel Punter, you will have forgotten me.'

The Colonel was quite equal to the occasion and returned her greeting cordially, racking his brains, in the meantime, to think where he could have seen that beautiful, sad face before. It was the face of a woman of about thirty-five years of age, or perhaps a little more, with dark hair and eyes, and an indefinable expres-

sion of mirth beneath its sadness, indicating, as it seemed, a lightness of heart which the troubles of the world might have dimmed but could not obliterate. Observing, apparently, the Colonel's somewhat puzzled expression, she continued gaily:

'I see that, as I expected, I shall have to help your memory. Don't you remember Miss Maud Mervyn, when you were quartered at Dover more than twenty years ago? Why, Colonel Punter, you had just got your company then, and we used to dance together at the Dover balls.'

'Give me a moment, Mrs. Verner,' he replied; 'twenty years is a long time for an old man's memory to go back in a flash.'

'Now, don't deny it,' continued she, laughing. 'I see you don't remember me, but I am not at all offended, for, indeed, how should you? I was a slip of a girl then, and you were, if you will allow me to say so, a man of somewhere about thirty. I, no doubt, was an infinitely insignificant person to you then, as, on the other hand, you were a very important person to me. But, you see, I am obliged to plead our old acquaintance, Colonel Punter, as it is my only excuse for the liberty I have taken in calling on you.'

'Excuse of any kind is quite unnecessary,' said the Colonel with a slight bow and smile.

'It is very kind of you to say so,' she replied; 'and when you have heard my sad story, I think you will give me the advice which I have come to ask of you.'

'If it is a subject on which I am at all qualified to speak,' said he, 'I shall be most happy.'

'I think it is decidedly your subject, Colonel Punter,' she replied, 'for it is about my son, who is in the army, that I wish to ask your advice.'

'Your son—in the army!' exclaimed the Colonel with an inflexion of voice that was decidedly complimentary to the youthfulness of her appearance. 'May I ask his regiment?'

'The 60th Lancers.'

'The 60th Lancers!' repeated the Colonel. 'Why, Mrs. Verner, I know your son. His commanding officer is an old friend of mine, and I have a slight acquaintance with the whole regiment.'

'This is very singular and very lucky,' said she. 'As you know my poor boy's regiment, I think you will be better able to understand and advise on the troubles and difficulties I am in

regarding him. Will you let me tell you my sad story from the beginning, or shall I be boring you?'

'Oh, pray don't think so for a moment, Mrs. Verner,' said the Colonel; and he would have liked to add, 'Nothing you could say would bore me,' but felt it would be unsuitable to the occasion.

'Well,' she continued with a sigh, 'my married life was a short and not a happy one. My husband's health was always bad, and for this reason we had to reside abroad. When we had been married two years my husband died and left me alone in the world with an infant boy.' She paused and seemed lost for a moment in sad memories, while the Colonel glanced sympathetically at her, but thought it well to say nothing. 'Well,' she continued, 'during the last twenty years I have lived almost entirely abroad, but I sent my son to be educated at Eton, and about two years ago he obtained a commission in the 60th Lancers. Words cannot tell what a comfort and joy my son has been to me during my lonely widowhood—I have been so proud of all his school triumphs, I have always been his confidante when he got into trouble. You see, Colonel Punter, I am sadly constrained to use the past tense, for I am grieved to say that since he entered the army his manner to me has gradually changed, until now, when I do see him, which is not often, he who used to be all frankness and love is all coldness and reserve—and—and—if this goes on it will break my heart.' Here she fairly gave way and covered her face with her hands. Colonel Punter's soft heart was always much perturbed at the sight of a woman's tears. So he kept murmuring in his most soothing accents:

'Pray, madam, pray calm yourself. I am sure I will do all I can to help you.'

In a few minutes she recovered herself and said:

'You must excuse my breaking down. I know it always vexes a man to see a woman's tears. But I will promise not to do so again, and I dare say you are wondering what you can do to help me in this matter. Well, the fact is, I want to know the worst. I have heard rumours about my son which make me shudder whenever I think of them. I hear that he has given himself out in the regiment as the son of rich people who live abroad, and that he is living in most extravagant style; whereas it is, in truth, with considerable difficulty that his moderate allowance is regularly paid.'

'Young scoundrel!' ejaculated the Colonel. Then remembering that a son must never be abused to his mother, added: 'I beg your pardon, Mrs. Verner, but for the moment my indignation got the better of me. Besides, these reports are, perhaps, not true. I do not know the affairs of the junior members of the corps sufficiently well to be able to give an opinion on the subject.'

'Oh, I quite understand that, but do tell me what course I had better take,' she said, glancing appealingly at him. 'How am I, a helpless woman, to find out whether these dreadful reports are true or not? and yet I feel that I must know the truth or go mad.'

After a pause, during which the Colonel was evidently lost in thought, he replied: 'Mrs. Verner, I promised to do the best I could for you, and I will. I am going down to Aldershot in a few days, and I shall there see Colonel Thompson; from him I will ascertain what reputation for wealth your son has in the regiment. I admit I don't much like the detective part of the business, but I feel that it is a sacred duty to protect a lady in your sad position.'

'Oh, how kind of you, Colonel Punter!' she exclaimed. 'This is more than I had any right to expect that you would do for me. But, oh, let me beg of you not to expose my son if these rumours should be true, and let me implore you not to seek an interview with him on the subject. If you learn from the Colonel, as you kindly say you will, whether what I have heard is true or not, and would, on your return to town, grant me a few words of advice as to what course I had better take, I should be very grateful.'

'I shall be most happy, Mrs. Verner,' said he briskly, 'but I feel sure that you will find that there is nothing in it after all. Your son, as far as I know him, is a charming young fellow, and quite incapable of the frauds which these accusations impute to him. So pray keep up your spirits, and, if it is convenient to you, let us arrange to meet here at this time on this day week.'

The time was quite convenient to Mrs. Verner, and, with many apologies for the liberty she had taken in calling to ask his advice, she departed.

On his journey down to Aldershot the next morning Colonel Punter thought a good deal about his fair visitor of the day before and her troubles. He heaped, moreover, many hard words on the head of young Verner (for, of course, he supposed him, at any rate, partially guilty). 'Selfish young rascals, all the lot of them!' said he to himself; 'they don't mind a straw how much trouble

they bring on their relations, if only they can indulge themselves; and such a charming woman too!' And then he went off into a reverie, in the midst of which he found himself speculating as to whether a man of his age was absolutely and irrevocably too old to marry without making himself look like a fool; and as the train arrived at Aldershot he had just come to the conclusion that there was a good deal to be said on both sides.

That very evening he saw Colonel Thompson, and in the course of conversation managed to ask his questions about young Verner, and found out that, according to Colonel Thompson, Verner was the son of a rich merchant in Singapore, and that his people had not been in England for many years.

'Yes, thank you,' said Colonel Punter; 'I thought I had heard of his people in England, but I suppose I must be mistaken,' and then he changed the subject. He happened, however, just before mess (he was a guest of the regiment that night), to meet Verner by himself, and he suddenly resolved, in spite of the widow's request, to say a few words to him. So, stepping forward and addressing the young man in a somewhat constrained voice, he said: 'Would you mind taking a turn with me, as there are a few things I should like to speak to you about?'

'I shall be most happy, Colonel Punter,' said the young man, wondering what on earth the old boy had to say to him.

No sooner were they well out of earshot than the Colonel turned short on his companion, and said sternly: 'I saw your mother in town yesterday,' and then paused to watch the crushing effect of his words. But no crushing effect was visible; on the contrary, Verner answered in accents of mild surprise:

'You must be thinking of someone else, sir; my mother is at Singapore.'

'No, I am not thinking of anybody else,' said the Colonel, still more sternly; and then added, 'So you are going to brazen it out, are you?'

'Brazen what out?' said the young man, apparently thoroughly puzzled.

'You know very well,' said the Colonel; 'and if you don't, you soon will.' Then he turned on his heel and walked off.

Young Verner stood for a moment looking after him, then walked away, laughing heartily.

At mess that night he was heard to say to a brother-officer: 'You know old Punter, who's here to-night?'

'Yes,' replied the other, 'I know him pretty well. What about him?'

'He was in India a good deal, wasn't he?'

'Yes. Well?'

'Did he ever get a touch of the sun?'

'Dare say he did; most people do out there.'

'Well, if he did, it has affected his brain—poor old boy!'

'What on earth do you mean?'

'Why, I mean that the gallant Colonel may have his lucid intervals, but when he met me, just before mess, he was as mad as a hatter.'

'How mad?'

'Well, he told me that he had met my mother yesterday in London.'

'She's at Singapore, isn't she?'

'Yes, and has been for the last twenty years, and so I told him.'

'What did he say to that?'

'He said he saw I was going to brazen it out. I said, "Brazen out what?" and he retorted, with a scowl that would have frightened an elephant, that I knew very well. Then he turned and walked off. I could not help laughing at the poor old fellow at the time, he was so desperately serious about it all. However, the sun may do the same for me some day, and I really pity him, for he's a very good chap when he's all right.'

'Oh, a capital fellow,' replied the other, 'and can tell a very good story. It's really very sad. I suppose it must have been a touch of the sun, though I never heard of his being odd before.'

'He seems all right now, anyway,' said Verner, looking up the table to where Colonel Punter was sitting.

'Oh yes, he's all right now. I'll tell you what, Verner; I have an explanation. The old boy came down from town by a mid-day train, and I dare say missed his lunch, and what you took for a madman was only a fellow very much in want of his dinner.' And the two young men laughingly changed the subject.

A few days after this the Colonel was back in town, and found himself dreading considerably the coming interview with the widow. He would have to confirm her worst fears, he was afraid; also, that there would be a scene, and he did not like the idea of it at all. He felt, moreover, that he must appear in the light of a bearer of bad news—a melancholy character which he did not by any means wish to assume in Mrs. Verner's eyes. 'However,' thought

he, 'I shall at any rate have an opportunity afterwards of playing the part of comforter and adviser.' And this reflection seemed to cause him a good deal of satisfaction. It will be seen, therefore, that the Colonel had been somewhat taken (to use the word which he employed in confessing it to himself), or smitten, with Mrs. Verner on the one occasion on which he had seen her, and during the few days that intervened between his return to town and the day on which they had appointed to have their second meeting he found himself constantly regarding that future date with the mixed feelings which have been described above.

The appointed day and hour found Colonel Punter seated in his room trying to read the paper, but in reality waiting a little nervously for Mrs. Verner. She did not keep him long. On entering the room she looked keenly at the Colonel, and, advancing quickly, said in rapid, anxious accents:

'Oh, Colonel Punter, don't keep me in suspense; is it true?' Then seeing his blank look, she cried out: 'It is, and he is dishonoured.' Then she sank into a chair and burst into tears. This the Colonel had prepared himself for, so in his most winning accents he implored her to compose herself. This in a few minutes she partially succeeded in doing, and immediately proceeded to cross-examine him as to what he had found out and done at Aldershot: how there was no doubt in the regiment as to young Verner's being the son of rich people at Singapore, how the Colonel himself had told him so, and how he (Colonel Punter) had in a fit of indignation spoken to the young man himself. For this she mildly upbraided him, reminding him of her request, and the Colonel deprecated her wrath and pleaded sudden impulse. When the story was finished she rose, and, smiling sadly through her tears, said:

'I don't know how I can sufficiently thank you for your kindness to me, Colonel Punter. You have indeed been a true friend, and I should like above all things, if you will allow me, to ask your advice as to what I had better do in this sad matter; but, indeed, I feel quite incapable of doing so on this occasion. Hearing that these terrible reports are true has, as you have seen, upset me very much, and I think I had better go home now; but if you will allow me to fix a future interview by note, when I feel less unequal to the effort, you will add one more to your many kindnesses.'

The Colonel very readily consented, and in another moment

she was gone, and with her, so it seemed to our gallant friend, all light and beauty departed from the room. From that moment, too, though he would hardly have confessed it to himself, he began looking forward to the day when he should see that note upon his table.

A fortnight had elapsed since the interview above detailed, but Colonel Punter had not yet received the expected note. He had not given up hope, but still he was undoubtedly depressed, and, whether it was an effort to throw off this dejection which had induced him to accompany his friend Captain Jones to the Variety Theatre, or whether impelled by fate, or for whatever reason, we will not stop to inquire, but at any rate in that theatre, and comfortably ensconced in two stalls, sat Colonel Punter and Captain Jones on this evening, some of the events of which are about to be related.

The curtain had just fallen on the first act, and the house, till that moment wrapped in gloom, sprang suddenly into light. Then, as if by common consent, every man, woman, and child in that great audience, with a want of manners that would be permissible nowhere else, but which is quite conventional between the acts of a play, commenced, with or without opera-glasses, to scrutinise his or her neighbour. For a few seconds the Colonel had a discussion with his friend as to whether there was time for a cigarette between the acts. This was promptly decided in the negative, and both officers, grasping their glasses, proceeded to join in the 'general inspection.'

With a calmness born of long habit, Colonel Punter was sweeping the house, when suddenly his arm dropped and his gaze became intently fixed on the occupants of a box on the right of the stage ; these consisted of two gentlemen and a lady, and the lady was Mrs. Verner. On this point he had no doubt whatever, though he looked at her with ever-increasing surprise, for she was in very full evening dress, and was extensively bejewelled. She was, moreover, at this moment, talking and laughing loudly, not to say boisterously, with her companions, both of whom the Colonel mentally and unhesitatingly pronounced to be cads. At this juncture Mrs. Verner, turning her head suddenly, caught sight of Colonel Punter staring at her from the stalls; the moment their eyes met he bowed, and she also bowed slightly and smiled ; then, turning to her companions, she seemed, from their uproarious laughter, to be telling them a more than usually good

story. Captain Jones had observed the mutual recognition pass between his friend and the lady in the box, and was greatly astonished.

'Why, Colonel,' he said, 'do you know her? You don't mean to say that you have had to go to the Hebrews, like younger men?'

'Yes, I know her. But what on earth do you mean by asking whether I've been going to the Hebrews?'

'Well, I think it was a very natural question, under the circumstances.'

'I don't know what you are talking about. Who do you think that lady is, then?'

'I don't think at all, Colonel. I know that she's Mrs. Hart Moss, the female representative of one of the biggest money-lending firms in town; and they tell me she's a very good hand at the business.'

Colonel Punter made no reply, but became plunged in a deep and apparently distressing reverie, for he clenched his fist and almost ground his teeth, until he attracted the attention of Captain Jones, who had, in the meantime, been nodding recognitions to some people of his acquaintance.

'Why, Colonel,' said he, 'what's the matter? The sight of that Mrs. Moss seems to have disagreed with you awfully. Whom did you mistake her for?'

'It has disagreed with me,' said the Colonel grimly, 'but I see it all now. What you say, Jones, is quite true; she is a very good hand at her business.' Then suddenly his countenance brightened somewhat, and he added:

'Come and have something at the club after the play, and, if you will swear secrecy, I will tell you the whole story.'

And he did tell Captain Jones every detail, finishing the narrative with these words: 'So you see she made a regular catspaw of me, in order to find out if Verner was worth powder and shot. I suppose, as his people live abroad, she found difficulties in the ordinary methods of procedure.'

'I expect that you're about right, Colonel. By Jove! she's a clever woman!'

'I wonder she had the audacity, though,' said our gallant friend, his anger boiling up again for a moment. 'Why, I might make the whole matter public.'

'She knew you wouldn't, though.'

'And she's quite right,' said the Colonel, 'for I won't.'

AFTER AUTUMN.

I.

No more the shocks of Corn
Stand like twin sisters in the sunset glow,
Nor in the flush of morn
The ruddy reapers, shouting, come and go.
Earth's golden fields are gone ;
And lo, on barren plains the lurid Sun looks down.

II.

With Autumn song has fled ;
The circling swallow scythes no more the air ;
Upon its lonely bed
The drooping floweret pines, despite its prayer,
Then falls to die
Unpitied by a soul, unnoticed by an eye.

III.

Yet still in calm serene
Earth sets her troubled heart to simpler joys,
And beauty, else unseen,
On every trembling leaflet seems to poise ;
The Thistle shakes her gown,
And from the sable folds, outflows the wingèd down.

IV.

Each morn the skies are set
In pearl, weird tinted as a wizard's hall ;
The spider spreads her net
Intent to catch the raindrops as they fall,
And weaves along the road
Her crystal palaces to teach the world of God.

V.

As after ceaseless rain
The chill dank glades with drifted leaves are stored;
And by the bleak wind slain
The smitten reed hangs down its useless sword;
The beech in hues of red
And bronze mimics the dusky bracken's withering bed.

VI.

While round the dying hedge
The sere convolvulus curls amber veils;
From strips of jutting ledge
The ranks of dewdrops file along the rails:
With every zephyr's breath
Each slips from his frail hold, caught in the arms of death.

VII.

O'er hill and field and wood—
Not sorrow for joys fled, or news of death,
A sovran Calm doth brood,
A dove-like Peace, the sister twin of Faith,
Knowing anew with Spring
All things shall rise again in sweeter blossoming.

VIII.

So let the Winter come
Half like a thief, half like a lover stealing,
And gaze with motions dumb,
On every trembling leaflet downward reeling:
Thereon he'll make a bed
When winds and snows are drear, to lay his hoary head.

NOTES BY A NATURALIST.

HOW I BECAME ONE.

My home as a boy was in a quaint old fishing village close to the edge of the North Kent marshes. The place had an odd, irregular look; one would think its inhabitants had begun building from the shore up inland to a certain point, and then come back and finished along the water's edge. The top rooms of the houses generally projected over the pavement, with queer gables which were ornamented with grotesque figures. By the water stood old mills, warehouses, and shipyards, all having a decayed look. That business of some kind had once been carried on there the old wharves and fine houses showed, but when that was no one about the place in my time knew. It was entirely isolated from any other town or village. Railroads and steamboats were things known only by name to the general community. The odour of fish pervaded the place; whichever way you went, inland, or along shore, you saw fish not only outside but in the houses as well. To this day it is no favourite diet of mine. It is sometimes possible to have too much of a good thing. Nearly all the people got their living on the water. Poor they were, but a contented lot, and, as this world runs, honest. Now and again it would be gently hinted that they smuggled—who can say? the virtuous have enemies; they, perhaps, had theirs. One thing I can testify; if at any time a little medicine was needed, it was sure to come out of a very short-necked dark-green bottle, holding more than a pint, and that medicine was certainly made in Holland. The fishermen and their lads passed our house on their way to and from their fishing-boats which lay at anchor below in the marshes. On the return journey they were sure to have something in the shape of fish or wild fowl—for you would find a duck-gun on board all the boats—and to catch a sight of these was my principal hobby. When they found out this, they never passed the door without showing 'the boy' what they had got. To this day that is my title with the few that are left who knew me as a child. Many were the questions I asked them about bird and fish. I tried to draw on my slate a dead curlew they

had shown me one evening. The next time the net was brought and opened for me to look at I showed them my curlew. From that time dates my roaming in the marshes where the birds lived. I never rested until the kind-hearted fisher-lads had taken me with them to see for myself the birds they talked about. Fortunately for me I could read well as a child, and any book I saw that contained animals or birds I read if I could possibly get at it. Very limited, however, were the publications of those days—at least, for the general public; the children now have books that you could not possibly have bought then for any money; they did not exist.

I was often missed at home; no one knew where I went, and many were the reproofs that I drew upon myself—some of them very forcible ones, for coming home in the pickle I did. At last they let me have my run; the only question asked would be, 'Are you going in the marshes or into the creek?' Many a time have those fishermen brought me home on their shoulders, giving me a string of goggle-eyed flounders or other booty to take indoors, saying, 'Tell 'em you've bin with us.'

Before long I knew where to look for the birds, and could mimic their cries: the shriek of the curlew and his mournful whistle; the pewit (*Vanellus cristatus*), and the note of the stone curlew (*Œdicnemus crepitans*), or thickknee—called in the marshes the king of the curlews. Placing the fingers in the mouth and whistling like the boys do in the street gives one of the bird's cries. I had plenty of room to move about, and no one interfered with me or the birds. It was not necessary. The Bird Preservation Act was not thought about at that time. The plover's eggs were left for the bird to hatch, and if the young were seen they might be picked up just to look at and be let go again. Bird and egg collectors had not reached our neighbourhood.

The miles of marshland teemed with bird-life. When the gun was used it was for the wild-fowl proper—geese, duck, widgeon, teal; but the waders that gave life to the dreary-looking pools were little troubled, for powder and shot with the fishermen meant money. When they fired at a bird they shot at something that would do for dinner. Fish may give you intellectual power, so some learned men say; I know for a fact over much fish-diet does not put much power into the body, and continued for any time it is a delusion.

The wild lands reclaimed in times past, foot by foot, here from the sea would be again under water but for the sea wall which runs mile after mile, and looks just like a railway embankment—very broad at the bottom and narrow on the top, where there is just room for one person to walk comfortably. Well do I remember the time when the sea broke over it like a waterfall. The men had some trouble with their cattle then.

I have watched the life on the marshes at all hours of day and night; in the early morning, when the mist rolled over the lands and the scattered poplars and stunted willows took strange shapes, while the red hares flicked the wet off their hind feet as they sat on the mole hillocks; at midday, when the gulls left the sea to come to the shallow marsh pools to bathe and rest—a pretty sight. Mixed with them you would see the pewits and red-legged sandpipers (*Scolopax calidris*); you would hear them too—the cackle of the gulls, the 'pewit-pewit' of the green plover, and the scream of the redshank.

In the evening flight after flight of starlings made their way over the flats to meet in one vast host, in order to go through their drill before settling for the night in the reeds. They rose up and sank down again, turned and twisted as one bird; sang their evening hymn, with chatter and whistle, rush and roar of wings; while from the beach sounded the wailing scream of the curlew.

The marsh lands are bare, with the exception of the rich green grass; and you would not find water-lilies, only reeds and a sort of short flag in the dykes which intersect them in all directions, and which are inhabited by large eels in great numbers. In search of the reed-wren's nest I got into mud as well as water.

At one particular hour of the afternoon in summer—between five and six o'clock—the marshes shone in a golden light which tinted all things far and near—just such a tone Cuyp gave to his marsh scenes; and, to complete the picture, one saw the men-of-war, frigates, and sloops off the mouth of the Medway in the distance. Turner visited our marshes and painted some of his famous pictures from what he saw there: to wit, 'Stangate Creek,' 'Shrimping Sands,' and 'Off Sheerness.'

On the seaward-side of the wall, a strip of land ran, about one hundred yards in width from the water's edge when the tide was out—called the Saltings. It was covered with a tough low shrub having grey-green leaves, *Sucæda*—'Seablite,' they named

it—with coarse wiry grass and the seapink; and this was cut up with runs and hollows caused by the rush of the tide. In these, birds would come to feed; my fisher friends moored their boats near the spot, and if they thought a bird would please me it was sure to be got for 'the boy.' One day a lad made a sign to me; I knew what it meant, and followed him to his home. Opening the door, he pointed to something in a corner, saying, 'There, mind he don't nip ye!'

It was a black-backed gull (*Larus marinus*), one of the largest of his kind, quite capable, if I had given him the chance, of wrenching one of my small fingers off.

'Father's just winged him; he ain't hurt you? Come an' draw his pictur.'

I did draw its picture, to his great satisfaction, if not to my own, and made him a present of it.

One day I was missing, for early in the morning a lad had whispered to me, 'Father's boat will come in on the next tide; he's bin away all the week on the fishing ground. Goin' to meet him, ain't 'ee, eh?'

In the evening something was seen moving up the street in front of the fishermen covered with wings. What it was the folks could not at first make out. Coming a little nearer someone shouted, 'It's the boy with his birds!'

The boy went to bed that night in a reflective mood; for he had been corrected in the very forcible manner before hinted at. The next day found him in the creek with a fork tied on to a stick, spearing flounders and catching crabs. The creek was wide, and very shallow when the tide was out; not more than a foot in depth, and the water clear. When the tide was in there was twenty feet of water in the middle.

In our small village each one knew the other; my companions at times were what the present more refined state of society might term 'doubtful.' They lived by the gun. But they were good to me. Many a time have I been with them over the Saltings, close to heel, ready to drop or crawl at a motion when the water spaniel got the scent of fowl. Sure shots and true field-naturalists, they knew them all, and where to find them. I owe my early insight into bird-life to these men, and to an inborn love of all living creatures. Coming past the long shallow pools, my companion would point out the various waders, their bodies reflected in the clear water by the light of the setting sun,

and the tern, with his shuttlecock flight, catching insects and small fish. On one strip of beach I have watched the dotterels (*charadrius hiaticula*) for hours; they nested there—if the spot on the shingle where they laid their eggs could be called a nest.

The man with whom I went out oftenest told me of a struggle he once had with a great sea-eagle that was shot in the wing on the rabbit links in the marsh, just enough to prevent his rising. Many a time have I gazed on that bird; they made no fuss over him, he was not the first of his kind which had visited our shore.

I remember well the day one of my school companions, not much more than a boy, went out with a borrowed boat and a gun, and shot a wild swan—a fine Hooper—dead with the first shot, on a rising tide.

Wandering over the marshes, wading in the creek, exploring the reed beds and swamps, together with having the run of the sea-shore, will go a long way in giving a boy an amount of self-reliance which may be of use to him in the future. Some kind friend sent me a box of water colours, paper, and brushes, and a good lead pencil—a precious gift to me, and a source of joy to my companions, the fisher-lads.

They said the boy could make them 'real good picturs' now, coloured 'nateral as life.' They knew nothing better in the way of art, and I no greater pleasure than to reproduce in my rough fashion the creatures that were a never-failing interest to me; so we were all satisfied.

A good mile from our village stands the grand old parish church, with its massive square tower built of flint stones, a prominent object, which can be seen from far over the water. The churchyard is full of fine old walnut trees; it looks more like a wood than a burial-ground, and it has enough room wherein to bury the dead of twenty parishes. The interior of the church is beautiful; arches supported on pillars rise to the roof in the centre and side aisles. The windows of rare old stained glass throw many varied tints on wall and pavement, in which are slabs inlaid with beautiful brasses of a bygone day—of knight and lady, with hound at foot and hawk on wrist. Suits of armour hang from the walls. The ends of the farmers' stalls are carved in odd and familiar devices, a fox and goose, a pig in a sitting posture, and others equally comic and grotesque. The

pews in which we sat were so high-backed that you could not see the occupants of the next one to your own without standing up. Why so large a church should have been built where so few people were, no one knew. To solve that question one would have to go many generations back. Like the other churches on the coast, it fronted the sea. Many a fisherman has rejoiced at hearing the chimes ring out over the water on a Sunday morning, whilst his boat was making the harbour tide.

In that same church as a boy I got in a pretty pickle. We all went there, rich and poor. There was no organ in it in my days. The mixed choir sang, accompanied by clarionet, viol, and oboe, and real good old-fashioned singing it was. In the same pew with me and my folks sat a shoemaker, a little man, who came in a swallow-tailed brown coat and a stiff stand-up collar reaching to his ears, knee-breeches, worsted stockings, and low shoes. He took snuff, and what a nose he had wherein to put it! He got the nickname of 'Grunter,' because he went to sleep in church as a rule, and snored. Never shall I forget one particular Sunday afternoon. About the middle of the service two starlings had come in and perched on one of the pillars, where they had whistled and chattered their loudest, but no notice had been taken of so common an event as that. But later on the Grunter fell asleep. From hard breathing the sounds in his corner gradually increased until they became pig-like grunts and whines, whilst his nose went working and twisting like a mole's.

I saw a head rise up from the next pew, and a strong hand grasped the Grunter's collar. One good shake, and then the shoemaker's voice was raised loudly, 'For evermore, amen. Eh! What!'

Forgetting the solemnity of the place and time, I burst out in a perfect yell of laughter, which some kind soul smothered as soon as he could by cramming his silk pocket-handkerchief into my mouth. Then they ungently led me out. Oh dear!

When I was about twenty years of age, domestic changes caused me to leave my old marshland home. I parted with my old companions and kind friends with sorrow. Just as I was going a hamper was brought for me. It was a parting gift, and contained water birds and waders, beautiful creatures captured by the fishermen and their lads, as a last gift to 'the boy,' as they still called me.

A WINTER'S DAY IN THE MARSHES.

Some time after I had settled in Surrey I revisited my old marsh-land home. Such a welcome I received from my boyhood's friends as does me good to think about.

Shooting was the order of the day; and I knew how to use a duck-gun. If I live to be very old, I think I shall never forget the sight of the marshes as they looked in that unusually severe winter-time. For mile upon mile the grass, hedges, dykes, and reed-beds were covered with snow frozen hard on the surface. So deep it lay that it formed an unbroken plain, and it was impossible to tell what you were walking over. The fowl, driven off the water by the fierce north-easters, sought the shelter of the creek, where great masses of ice were crunching together; wild duck, golden-eye, widgeon and teal, with the divers—all tamed by the frost, so that you could get within shooting distance of them. The dunlins (*tringa variabilis*) flew in clouds over the flats. A splendid sight they were, glittering in the sun like silver at one moment, the next becoming invisible as they turned in their flight. The birds were of little use for eating; they were poor as poverty itself, almost starved. Tons of good fresh fish were used as manure on the fields; there was no market for them. They were placed in heaps of about a bushel each at given distances, all over the land. The gulls soon found it out, and the food they could not get on the water they got on the shore. Black-backed gulls, grey, common and black-headed gulls, came with the hooded crows and fought, gorged, and cackled all day long.

The vegetable-feeding wild geese, wariest of birds, flew overhead with slow flapping flight; they were hardly worth shooting; the mud froze on the flats as the ebbing tide left them, so that the sea grass and other marine plants were not available for food. The curlews, mere frames covered with feathers, shrieked and wailed continuously. Such was bird life on the marsh during this terrible winter by day. A hard blue sky formed a background to the long glittering plain.

By night the scene was grand and weird; the sky deep blue, the wild fowl uttering call notes, as they passed and repassed over the stretch of marshland all white and level, on their way to their feeding grounds. Now and again came the subdued

quack of the wild duck at the report of the gun and the fall of his mate, mingled with the whistling of the widgeon and the scape-scape-scape of snipes on the wing; and last, not least, the hoarse cry of the hungry heron.

All at once, yet far off, a cry comes over the flats, as though from a pack of hounds in full cry in the air. Grasping my arm, my companion, a grey-haired old man, says, 'Do yo hear that, boy?'

Yes, I hear. Nearer and nearer it comes; and now is heard the rush of many wings with strange unearthly yelp and bark. The sounds pass over us and then die away in the distance.

'Let the fowl be for to-night, and we will get home; there's bad luck about when the Hell hounds are on the hunt:[1] you know what took place here? They heard them then; we are standing on the very spot; let us move.'

And the old man drags me on in nervous haste.

I knew the story well. A father and his son—I knew them both—had gone down for the night shooting. The son, unknown to his father, moved from his standing-place. Taking the worsted ball on his boy's cap for the head of a bird, in the dim uncertain light, the man fired and killed him. And there, where we stood and listened to the cry of the air-hounds, above all the cry and clang of wild fowl, the father's terrible cry of agony rang out, 'My son, oh my son!'

The next morning found me in my old haunts again. A hard blue sky was overheard, without a vestige of cloud; the wind blowing bitter keen from the east, and the marshes covered with frozen snow, so deep in many places that few travellers would dare venture out there; but I wanted birds as specimens, and the long-continued cold had made them tame.

The tide is running up, and the birds are on flight from place to place. There are very treacherous traps for the unwary in the saltings—that meadow-like space left between the salt water and the sea wall. To look at it you would think it easy travelling; but the thick growth of the sea blite and coarse grass and rush conceal the runs and dykes made by the rush of the tide, some of which lead to the sluice-gates in the sea wall. The force of the

[1] The strange cries heard in the air, I have no doubt, proceeded from a mixed flight of white-fronted and Barnacle geese (*anser bernicla*), rare visitors on that part of the coast. During that fearful winter birds of a feather did not at all times keep to their own company.

tide opens these in flowing up, and fills all the dykes; when the ebb takes place the gates close again. Four, five to eight feet in depth these runs and dykes are; only a marshman can go safely over these places.

Nothing is to be seen yet but a few hooded crows on the prowl. It is no use to think of shooting the Saltings just now, so we turn into the marsh to look about for a bit: and the curlews (*numenius arquata*) screaming will let us know when the tide has turned. What a long dreary space it is, covered with glittering snow! Here and there the reeds and flags along the dykes have been bowed right over, and form a rough kind of tunneling roofed with snow. It is not of the least use to exercise caution, for the crunch, crunch of the foot tells its tale. But the cold is fearful, and a bird will not leave shelter if he can possibly help it; so we tramp on in the hope of a chance shot.

A dark patch shows on the snow; reaching it we find it is a marsh spring not frozen. Here and there you come upon such; also the footprints of the heron, for the snow is soft round the margins of these springs. There are no signs of the web-footed or hen-footed fowl here; only the heron is about.

The other birds do not like him; for he is always hungry, and his stomach is very accommodating. Near some pollard willows some starved-out fieldfares are bunched up. They utter a feeble 'chuck' at times; their feathers are puffed out, making them look twice their natural size. A gull comes flapping over on the hunt, for a dead or wounded bird is a nice meal for him. From a bunch of dead flags, with a scape-scape-scape up springs a snipe with that twist-and-turn-about flight peculiar to himself and his relatives. He is not fired at, for if there are any fowl in hiding anywhere in his line of flight that cry will move them. It has done so; three mallards rise from a dyke; they are low down and fly straight to where I am standing by the willows; three in a line, their green heads glistening in the sun, and the red brown of their breasts showing distinctly. They are near enough now, I think, two of them at any rate. 'Bang!' 'Quack, quack;' a twist and turn of their necks and bodies tells that they have been hit, but neither bird falls. It serves one right, for it is almost useless firing at fowl coming right at you: the breast feathers are so thick. It is a warning to resist temptation for the future. As we near the Saltings something springs from a patch of dead flag; which we shoot, and it proves to be a fine specimen of the short-

eared owl (*strix brachyotos*), or 'woodcock owl' of the marshmen. His light body and hawk-like flight often lead folks to take him for some other bird. He hunts by day as well as in the evening; any hen-footed fowl, not too big for him, is his prey. The shore shooters know him well; they see him, just as the light begins to fade, come skimming over the flats, now high up, the next moment close to the ground. All at once he stops, and fans with his wings like a kestrel over a tuft of rushes. That fanning of the wings is remarkable; it causes a current of air, much stronger than anyone would imagine, which rattles and stirs the dry rushes, so that any creature that has sheltered there comes out and the owl gets it. His near relative, the long-eared owl, has the same tactics on the heaths and commons which are his hunting-ground. He makes the leaves and twigs rattle with the fanning of his wings in the same way. They do not eat all that they catch at the time, but hide it till wanted, and the contents of their larder would surprise many people.

As we near the sea-wall something shoots over it: a male sparrow-hawk, in full plumage—a fine little fellow. We crouch down in between the hillocks and observe his movements; the bird he was after has taken cover. After a sharp turn or two he settles on a clod of broken-up turf—a perfect study; if you had not seen him perch you might pass close, and not notice him. That tuft of grey sea blite matches his grey back, and a stem of broken bulrush, reddish-yellow, tallies with the hue of his barred breast. To all intents and purposes he is invisible. There is a quick movement, for he has just caught sight of what he had lost for a time; one rapid motion of the head and neck, and the hawk is on the wing. A little 'cheep!' and you see him fly past with a dead pipit (*anthus pratensis*) in his claws. We do not stay to fire at him now, for the curlews are heard crying, a sure sign that the tide has turned. The wind has changed, too, from east to north-east, and blows against the tide, sending the salt-drift driving over the flats, and making the eyes run; a blinding salt-drift is not pleasant any way.

Gaining the foot of the sea-wall, we crouch down for shelter, and listen for the notes of the fowl, driven by the fierce wind off the open sea to seek harbour in the bays and creeks. The curlews are heard above all the rest; then comes the screaming of the redshanks, the cackle of gulls, and the cry of tern (*sterna hirundo*); all combined with the peculiar chatter of thousands of

dunlins or oxbirds (*tringa variabilis*). The fowl are coming up with the wind, so, crawling up the bank, we peep very cautiously out over the Saltings and down the creek. The whole place is alive with hen and web-footed fowl; about a mile away a line of birds is to be seen coming over from the opposite shore; we get quickly back to the bottom of the wall and wait for them. The whistle of their wings is first heard, and then we can distinguish them. Widgeon they are, the feathers underneath shine like white satin. Picking out the leader as he passes by, and aiming a yard in front, we bring him down with a thud, dead. And now the fowl are on the Saltings; their scream, chatter, quack, and whistle all mixed up together, while from the other side of the water comes the sound of the heavy duck-guns hard at work. We slip over the wall, and begin to crawl on hands and knees to the fowl feeding on the very edge of the ebb-tide. Curlews are not to be thought of; they know exactly how far a gun will reach, and keep just the right distance out of harm's way. Besides, they post one of their number for sentry duty. The redshanks are nearly as bad, for they kick up a noise and let all the other birds know that something is crawling along.

A winged curlew, when he runs screaming and wailing over the ooze, will disturb all the birds for a mile or more. Strange to say, they do not fear the fishing-boats, and, concealed from sight by the nets, the men kill them from the deck as they feed on the edge of the tide. If one drops on the water and goes off with the tide, they have him, for a skiff with oars in her is always in tow. In the autumn the curlews visit the turnip-fields in quest of snails, worms, and slugs. One of my old friends has frequently shot them before his pointers, as well as the thick-knee, or stone curlew. A large flock of dunlins have settled on the edge of a pool left by the tide, and look pretty little creatures as they run nimbly about, picking up the small things it has left behind it; a few more yards and they will be near enough to hit, but just as the gun is raised to my shoulder, and my finger touches the trigger, I feel myself very gently sinking. The water has undermined the frozen snow and let me through. The hole forms a hiding-place, leaving my head and shoulders free. Pulling myself together, I look first to see that my gun is right, and fire. Five dunlins and three sanderlings (*arenaria calidris*) to the shot, while one bird flies out to the water's edge and drops. He is not allowed to stop there long, for a grey gull drops down by

the side of the bird and swallows him whole. These gulls are continually beating up and down on the ebb and flow; their bills can dig and tear like a raven's. When wounded they will throw up all they have eaten, and fight for their life on a light stomach. They require careful handling; folks not used to them will put them down quicker than they picked them up, and give them the butt-end of the gun on the head for nipping their fingers. These large gulls, the great black-backed, the lesser black-backed (*larus fuscus*), and the grey, or herring-gull (*larus argentatus*), are not numerous here. They work up and down singly or in pairs, knowing well how to take care of number one. As a rule, they only get shot from the fishing-boats. The common and the black-headed gull are all over; that is to say, the black-headed gull in winter plumage. The fishermen catch as many as they require with hook and line; it is like spinning for pike, as the boat sails along. The line is played out with a small fish on the hook, the gull pounces down, and is caught in the upper mandible. The hooks are made of soft iron, so that they bend freely, and beyond the slight touch of the hook the bird is not injured in the least. The fishermen know exactly when to pull, so that the bird shall not swallow the hook. They eat them, after having buried them for twenty-four hours to take the fishy taste out of them. I have known hooded crows shot and treated in the same manner, and a farmer once told me they were as good as his fowls. His farm-lands faced the sea, and when the dun crows paid their visits to his fields he would take his old flint-locked fowling-piece down from over the chimney, and bring home a couple. I dined with him many times, but prejudice is strong, and I always declined crow with thanks.

Getting under the shelter of the wall, I made my way lower down to the tide, where, crouching under the remains of a stack of reeds, I found a 'shore-shooter'—one who makes his living by means of his gun. By some unlucky chance he had forgotten to fill his powder-flask. The birds are well up on the Saltings, and he has only enough for another charge for his duck-gun. Could I oblige him with a charge? he asked.

'Certainly; with half a dozen, if you like,' was my reply.

'I can't afford to shoot them little hen-footed things,' he remarked; 'powder and shot cost money. Are you after something to stuff? You seems to have some little things done up careful like.'

'Well, yes; something in that way.'

'Ah, I fancied you was by your shootin'. You let some fowl go by that I should have pulled at. You don't shoot for a livin'?'

'No, I do not.'

'Shall you be down this part any more, think you?'

'Yes, I may, for anything I know.'

'Well, there's some of your sort of birds about here, what you're after, and I could knock a few over for you. Would this one be any good to you? If it is, take it.'

I was glad to have it, for it was a fine specimen of the Kentish plover, or dotterel (*charadrius cantianus*)—a rare bird even here.

'Can you live by your gun?' I asked.

'Sometimes; last winter I did well, though it was by chance like. It come about this way. I had to go to the marshes at the back of the island, Sheerness; you don't know it, do you?'

'I know it well.'

'What, the cliffs and the bays? Well, just out from the cliffs, a sort of cloud was movin' about, and then goin' out of sight for a time. Never in my life had I seen such a lot as that; and by the way they flew I could tell they was black geese.' (Brent geese he meant.) 'Well, I said never a word, but went home and thought about it. Things was lookin' rather glum with me just then, for there was precious little to do. Next mornin' I starts early with my gun and somethin' to eat, and gets there about eight o'clock. You know the place, do you?'

'I know it, a shallow part, covered over with sea grass and weed, and a good nine miles from here.'

'Ah, that's it; the geese was well sheltered there, with plenty of food, and they'd gathered from all parts. I brought home three couple that night and sold 'em. Then I bought myself powder and shot and a few other things, and went to work. Of course, the farmer what rented the marsh near the place got as many as he liked to have; he lived five miles from there. I used to leave them for him as I passed on the way home at night, and sometimes ducks for a change. There was a rare lot of coots as well; they are good to eat, they are, but they clapper claw and scratch like cats if they ain't shot dead. Well, all through the winter I managed middlin'; rough work at times, mind you, but I lived, and that's somethin'. Mind your own line of work and keep your tongue between your teeth is the best plan when you drop on a

lot of fowl like that. If you let out one half a word, you'll have plenty to help you do the work. My line of work is shootin' fowl, an' I don't want anybody to help me.'

The Kentish plover, he told me, was shot accidentally when he fired at some fowl that had pitched. The wind was blowing a gale when I bade him good-bye; I had my back to it, which was some little comfort.

Presently I heard a little twittering chatter, and some small birds darted past and over the sea-wall into the marsh. There was just light enough to see them as they stood huddled up by the withered flags. I fired my load off at them, and killed two stints (*tringa pusilla*).

On my way home, I met the flight shooters coming down for the night shooting. They carried guns of wonderful make and length, from the very long duck-gun to the short bell-mouthed musquetoon. One would think they had ransacked some old armoury. These are handed down from father to son; many of them have flint locks. They are regarded with the greatest respect, and their killing power is considered wonderful. If they go off, a thing that is by no means certain, when the trigger is pulled, the men do kill fowl with them; but they never fire at a single bird; they would term that throwing away a charge. To see the way they are wrapped up you would fancy their owners were afraid of their getting the rheumatics or ague, which evils the guns escape, but their owners do not. No man shoots the flats for any length of time without scraping acquaintance with the bailiffs of Marshland—ague and intermittent fever.

GRETNA GREEN.

THERE is nothing on the last milestone this side of the Border to tell me how far I am still from Gretna. Like an ancient postboy it stands there, moss-grown and blind, deaf and shaky, leaning over towards the earth as though tired out with measuring so faithfully all the way from London. And now its work is done, its plate has fallen away, and, like the bright eyes that once turned to it so eagerly, it is dim and mouldy. How far to Gretna? why, a crack of the whip, a shake of the reins, and see! across a little valley lies Gretna, straggling, broken, white and low. Between runs the Sark, the border stream, fringed with willows, muddily turbulent. I stroll over the angular bridge and up the hill, no longer sprung by willing postboys, white-favoured from Carlisle, and in another moment stand at the head of the village street. There's not a soul to be seen there but the old landlord of the Queen's Head, sunning himself tremulously at his doorway. He's eighty-four, and deaf as the post he steadies himself by. He remembers well how in the month of October, in the year 1818, Lord Erskine skipped through that same doorway with the Marylebone heiress he had just rattled off with down the great north road. There's his signature, diamond-scratched on the window, and in the room he was married in hangs a copy of his certificate. Truly a volatile Lord High Chancellor!

In the old days, assuredly, I should not have had to stand so long knocking, as now I do, at the high priest's door. His outpost acolytes would have seen me coming up the hill, and his services would have been touted me before his less active brethren could have had time to change their working coats; but now, knock as I will, I cannot make him hear; and small wonder, for his old wife tells me he's dead asleep, though the morning is creeping on, and already the autumn sun is high. Poor old gentleman! his occupation at the altar gone, he has to work like commoner people in the fields, and, up at four, he was trudging the miry ways in the dark, and home again at nine to get some rest. So I step softly into his room and wait for him in due time to wake; and, while I wait, glance round the sacred chamber where so often has the knot been tied they came so far to tie—and would have gone afterwards how often how much farther for relief from it! A lowland

cottage, nothing more, this temple of *hymen festinans*, where for three generations the weaver owners have been trading in matrimony as fast almost as they could get witnesses. The floor of the temple is uneven and the ceiling discoloured; an old press for altar, and corner china cupboards for side chapels, and for white-robed choir a clothes-horse, whereon, round the huge fireplace, are drying certain worn garments of the high priest, who comes to me presently, dazed and yawning, in dingy linen canonicals, and braces that trail on the ground like a broken chasuble.

The high priest has all the mysterious dumbness of the augur, besides being only half-awake. He professes to know nothing, except that he and his father and grandfather have been in the business (as well as the weaving) for the last hundred years, and that in the press he keeps the records of his achievements, which for a trifle offered on his shrine he will show me. There have been other high priests, of course, but on the breaking up of the marriage ring—might one say?—they broke up too, and have long disappeared, they and their books. There was the landlord of Gretna Inn, for example, who did a roaring trade down to 1830, when the making of a new road and the building of a new bridge took from his house the privilege of its position, and made the toll-bar keeper's the first over the border. This toll-bar keeper, the blacksmith of fiction (for there never was a marrying blacksmith at Gretna), after dabbling in matrimony in an amateurish fashion took to it seriously in 1843, and between that year and 1857, the year of their destruction, solemnized (if that be the right word) more than eight thousand marriages. In his last year alone he made over eight hundred couples happy. I saw his books afterwards in safe custody in Carlisle, whence they sometimes for legal purposes travel backwards into the London courts of justice, and are duly accepted there as evidence; and I much admired the accurate way in which they were kept, neatly written on printed forms, for the most part by the toll-bar keeper's daughter, without an erasure or a blot. There they were, carefully packed away dry in tin cases, each page a romance, each entry a history. Here's a major in King George's service, runs away with a young lady from Tooting. I don't know, but I dare say he was at his last financial gasp, and she the daughter of chemicals, or whisky, or some plethoric dye; or perhaps, to judge him more charitably, he fell in love with her at first sight, strolling across the common, and, having nothing but his Peninsular medals to recommend him, did well to carry her off. At

any rate they were married at the toll-bar, for there's the major's bold fist and Alicia's trembling missish signature. And here's a young French lady from the Bloomsbury district trips off with a country gentleman of Bedfordshire. Now who on earth was she? French governess, milliner, adventuress of some *Palais Royal* sort? Or do I wrong Clotilde, and was she, after all, the fair daughter of some honest officer *en retraite* in Bedford Row, ruined by the Bourbons, and with a beard he never shaved since Moscow? And here's the daughter of an Irish baronet gives her little hand to a young gentleman of Devon, and, slipping over in the Holyhead packet, meets him at Chester and is off with him north, with post-boys at ten guineas a stage. And here, the pages mysteriously wafered together, I can just peep in upon a legal light whose accurate hand figures over his bride's servant-maid scrawl. There are these and thousands more, and as I turn the pages I can hear all their sighs, oaths, protestations. I hear the clicking of bed-room door-keys on rebellious daughters, and the rustle of the soft-hearted housemaid, Mary, slipping a note under her young mistress's door. I hear the whistle under the window and see the perilous descent, the flight through the dark garden, the post-chaise waiting, and can plainly distinguish the slam of the door and the grind of the wheels as they rattle off for Barnet and the first change. There the children crowd round the window for pence and fresh horses are brought out, and the bridegroom stretches his legs and looks backward down the hill towards London. And off they flourish again, and just outside the town pass the Liverpool High Flyer, whose guard recognising their condition gives them a jovial tootle on the horn.

Meantime, my own particular high priest has fetched his own books and spreads them before me. His earliest date is 1771, his latest but ten days ago, when according to the Scottish laws he joined a couple of devoted servants. He has a printed form now, steam printed, that he gives the happy pair in proof of their union. At the top there is a woodcut of the sacramental cup and the open Bible; underneath runs—

Kingdom of Scotland,
County of Dumfries, Parish of Gretna.

These are to certify, to all whom they may concern, that ——, from the Parish of ——, in the County of——, and ——, from the Parish of ——, in the County of ——, being now both here present, and having declared to me that they are Single Persons, have now been married after the manner of the laws of Scotland:

As witness our hands at Gretna, this — day of ——, 18—.

Witnesses ————————

The whole enclosed in a neat border with fancy turns like the spirals of a passion flower. But all that is the new order, and about his old books there's nothing so neat. They look just like what I imagine in most cases they were, records of haste, irregularity, ill-judgment; they are for the most part dirty, blotted, torn. The witnesses many of them could not write—often they were the postboys; frequently the happy pair themselves could only put their mark, for at the time of the great Carlisle hiring fairs of Martinmas and Whitsuntide the lads and lasses would stream out on foot and in wagons and carts and be married by the score. In those days it was cheaper than church, there were no banns to be put up, no expensive fees; and then the lady possessed the inestimable advantage of being able to strike while the iron was hot, could carry her swain off in a dogcart and bring him back, firmly and irrevocably wedded. It was, in fact, this wholesale slaughter—matrimony distributed as Charlemagne distributed Christianity to his soldiers, by platoons—that in a great degree carried the measure of 1857; for, as fitting end to the day's fairing, dozens of young couples would very commonly enter into the holy state and after a day or two of each other's society never see each other again, nor in any way regard the ceremony as binding. Still, though many of the high priest's clients could not write, there were many who could; witness Lord Erskine, and Lord George Coventry, who espoused Lady Mary Beauclerk in 1811, and —to mention no names more recent—members of the H.E.I.C.S., and reputable merchants of Hâvre de Grace, and many baronets' sons and sprigs of nobility without number, whose dashing signatures flourish next the scrawl of Mary Graham from the neighbouring farm, and the unsteady cross of her young man, John Hewetson. The high priest is proud of his *clientèle* and his principles. He is proud to say he never was among the number of those who used to tout on the platform on the arrival of the trains from the south, in white tie and wrapped in plaids like the herds; nor would he, honest fellow, ever consent to falsify or mutilate his books, though time after time he has been offered money to destroy troublesome evidence. Perhaps that is the reason why he is still only plain high priest, without preferment; with a living, it is true, but a living to get in the fields, among a flock purely animal.

If I try to trace the Scotch marriage, I find it nebulously lost in the ancient lowland custom of *hand-fisting*. Whether the

custom existed before the Reformation or not I cannot say, but certainly in the fifty years or so immediately following the dissolution of the monasteries—that is to say, the latter half of the sixteenth century, when the mass priests had all disappeared and before the new Protestant pastors had been properly distributed or appointed—there was in the extreme north of England and south of Scotland such a dearth of the officiating clergy that the people there were driven to the primitive practice of matrimony, by choosing their wives and taking them home without ceremony of any kind, on the understanding that the contract was in existence for a year and a year only, and could be rescinded at the end of that time on the due and proper complaint of either of the parties. If there were no complaint, the quasi-contract became complete and indissoluble; if the complaint were substantiated, the complaining party had to bear the charge of the child or children of the union. That such a custom was not entirely confined to the lower classes is clear from the inspection of the family records and pedigrees of that part of the country, whereby it is evident that many of the highest rank were in the habit of *hand-fisting* their spouses. But now for hasty English couples there is no such matrimonial refuge as once the lowland village afforded so recklessly. Now, for a proper Scotch marriage, a three weeks' residence in the country for either bride or bridegroom is necessary; and those three weeks must be of the most complete character, each day calculated from dawn till dusk and not from hour of one day across into the same hour of the next. There is a well-known leading case that decides that a couple crossing the border at four in the morning of the first of June and married at eleven on the twenty-first, were not according to the Scotch law duly and properly married, and their marriage was accordingly annulled.

PRESIDENT KELLER.

On a stormy night of September, 1816, the chief magistrate of the canton of Lucerne, an elderly man, named Keller, started from the casino in the town, along with his two daughters, at half-past eight, for his house some short distance from the town, down the bank of the river Reuss. The two young ladies were in white evening dresses, and were unprovided with cloaks, though they had umbrellas, for the rain had come on suddenly and unexpectedly.

There was a footpath along the bank of the Reuss, in some places high above the foaming, swirling stream, in others approaching the water's edge. To prevent horses taking this path there was a turnstile at the entrance to it, outside the Noelli Gate of the town. The old President passed through the turnstile and then offered his arm to his eldest daughter, who declined it, because she had to battle with the wind and rain behind her umbrella and needed both hands. She went forward, then the magistrate followed, and lastly came the second daughter, also with her head down behind her umbrella.

The clouds became thicker, the night darker, and the rain fell heavier.

'Papa,' said the eldest, feeling something thrust against her, 'is that your umbrella pushing me aside?'

No answer.

When the younger girl peeped on one side of her screen she caught a glimpse of her elder sister's white fluttering gown, but did not see her father, who was in black. Presently both girls found they had strayed from the path, and called to each other and to their father. The old man made no reply. In another moment the young ladies recovered the path, and pressed on, one some three hundred paces behind the other, and their father, as they believed, between them. Here the path became slippery, and the elder, turning, called to her father to keep immediately behind her, and be cautious how he walked lest he should fall into the river. She moreover relaxed her pace to allow the old man to catch her up.

The second sister, hastening on, saw her elder sister waiting where there was a rail, but just then she lost her shoe in the

mud and halted to grope for it. As she could not find it, she resolved to remain under her umbrella till her father and sister should reach home, and, missing her, return with a lantern, when she would be able to recover her shoe. The house was not far off, and she saw the front door open and her sister stand in the lighted entrance. A few minutes later the servant-girl came with a lantern and helped her to find her shoe.

'Papa is home?' said the young lady.

'No, miss, not yet.'

'But—he was between my sister and me.'

In fact, the old President had vanished in the night from between his two daughters at hardly a hundred and fifty paces from each.

As soon as Salesie Keller, the elder daughter, learned that her father was not behind with her sister, she at once bade the servant attend her; they would return along the path in search of the old man. Moreover, the younger sister accompanied her in the search. They had not gone far before the lantern was extinguished by the wind. Near at hand was the house of the Amtman Pfyffer. They went to his door and asked to have the light rekindled. He was in his dressing-gown, having his supper. He at once pulled on his boots, took another lantern, and assisted in the search, along with some of his servants. It was in vain. The President had vanished. Not a cry had been heard by the daughters; noiselessly he had disappeared from between them.

The Amtman at once hastened into the town to inquire at the casino whether the old gentleman had returned to it. It was possible he might have strayed like his daughters in the dark, become bewildered, and thought it best for him to return whence he had started. But Justice Keller was not there.

Then he went to the Councillor of State, Am Rhyn, the second in authority after Keller, and communicated the disappearance to him.

Nothing further was done that night—nothing well could be done—on account of the darkness and storm. Next morning, September 15, the body of the lost man was discovered in the river on a sandbank about two hundred yards from the spot where he was thought to have fallen into the Reuss. The corpse was at once recovered and examined. The expression of the face was calm; mouth and eyes closed, the fingers clenched in the hollow of each hand. His purse was in his pocket; the watch had stopped at 9.26. Keller therefore had died between 8.30 and 9.26.

slight bruise was on the side of the nose and another on the brow, apparently caused by his fall.

As Keller had been subject to fits for many years, it was concluded that he had been overtaken by one of these whilst walking close to the water's edge, and had fallen in. There was not the smallest trace of violence to be seen on the corpse, and not the least doubt existed that the death was accidental.

The deceased had been a man generally liked; he was at the head of the Liberal party, and a very keen politician; but even his most bigoted opponents could say nothing against his personal character, and respected him as a man of integrity. We have called Keller President. He was, in fact, the chief magistrate of the canton, and bore the predicate of 'Excellency.' The Liberal party were then dominant, and Keller, as head of the canton, represented its domination.

So the matter remained for nine years, and no one had the least suspicion but that the death of Keller had been accounted for in the only way in which it could be accounted for consistently with the evidence. But, nine years later—in 1825—*five* persons confessed to having been involved in a conspiracy to murder him, and to have taken part in his death.

This was the occasion of a trial which created the greatest interest in Switzerland, excited the most violent partisanship, necessitating the withdrawal of the case from the hearing of a Lucerne to a Zurich judge, led to the calling of an enormous crowd of witnesses whose depositions fill fifteen volumes and exhibit a most extraordinary amount of self-delusion. It is moreover a case eminently instructive, for it shows to what an extent party feeling may cloud the mind and darken judgment.

. . . .

In the Swiss republic exists an entire class of men, of unknown numbers, who enjoy and passionately cling to a freedom more extensive than the most democratic of republics accords. This is the great class of Doerfers, or the Homeless. They are Swiss, and belong to no canton. They are subject to no authority but that of the police, who drive them from place to place. In a country where every effort is made to break up property equally among all children of rich or poor, with the object of giving all a fixed habitation and a means of existence, this great class of proletariates has grown to large numbers and to be a general difficulty, if not a danger. When a band enters one canton the authorities pass it forward to the next, and the German frontier is watched by the

police against invasion by them. If any cross the border, they are inexorably arrested and cast back on the free Swiss soil. They have even been executed in some of the cantons, at the beginning of this century, because the cantons were without other means of disposing of them. They profess to carry on the trades of tinkers, spinners, bird-sellers, broom-sellers, ratcatchers; but these trades are merely the disguises behind which they beg and steal.

Of their origin nothing certain is known; they are recruited from the ill-conditioned in every canton. Their existence was well known, but no particulars concerning them till the famous trial of 1825 in the matter of the death of Keller, when much light was thrown on their mode of life.

They are all related or connected, and have no very fixed surnames. They occupy no houses; in summer they camp out under the trees or in the mountains about their fires, and in winter sleep where they can—in barns and outhouses. It might please a poet or novelist to describe their life as joyous and free from care, but, as a fact, their existence is one prolonged heartbreaking misery. They rarely frequent high-roads, but steal about by mountain paths or hide among the recesses of the forest.

In the May of 1824 a burglary was effected in the house of a shopkeeper at Naefels, in Glarus. A few weeks later a girl was arrested in Schwyz who was found disposing of some of the stolen property. She gave her name as Clara Wendel, and her age as twenty. She was taken to Glarus and there imprisoned. After the general continental custom, a *juge d'instruction* examined her in prison repeatedly, and endeavoured to extract a confession from her by working on her hopes and fears.

After she had been thus cross-questioned twenty-eight times, her reserve gave way, and she began to communicate information, not only concerning the burglary at Naefels but concerning a hundred other robberies and burglaries, and other crimes that had been committed and whose perpetrators had been undiscovered during several preceding years. Her brother John was a daring and dreaded robber. Her brother-in-law, Joseph Twerenbold, had been in a Swiss regiment, but had voluntarily associated himself to the Homeless, and was a notorious thief. As the crimes now being brought to light affected other cantons besides Glarus, and as the prisons in Glarus would not contain the numbers accused of participation in them by Clara Wendel, the canton of Glarus appealed to Lucerne to assist in the investigation, and Lucerne readily consented to do so. A Doctor Heer, a worthy

physician, was commissioned to examine not only Clara but also all the rest of those held in durance under suspicion of implication in the crimes of which Clara had revealed her knowledge, and to report on what he learned. It is, by the way, singular that this duty should have been committed to a medical man, and not to a lawyer.

Dr. Heer soon became bewildered by the contradictions in the confessions and answers he received in cross-examination, and he requested Am Rhyn, son of the President who had succeeded Keller, to take the burden of the examination upon him. He was a man of great energy and enthusiasm, and went to work with hearty good will and unflagging patience. All at once the rumour spread through Lucerne that Clara Wendel had confessed that she, along with several of her relatives, had been implicated in the death of Keller.

She had, indeed, hinted something of the sort on December 10, 1824, and again on February 10, 1825; but so little credence was given to what she said, the examining magistrate being so satisfied that Keller had met with an accident, that she was not pressed on this matter. On September 23, 1825, however, she made a full disclosure of the murder, and she, as well as those implicated in it, were subjected to reiterated cross-examination between that date and November 3 in the same year. The story then revealed was to this effect. On September 14, 1816, Clara, her brother John, her sister Barbara, Twerenbold, the Kappelers, father and son, and two others, were camping in a wood about four miles from Lucerne, when they came to the town, and entered a tavern outside the Basle gate. There they met a comrade, Toni, who bade them follow him to a low public house, 'The Dove,' in the town. There they met a doctor, Carraggioni by name, and he treated them to wine. Towards evening they left the 'Dove' in two parties, and met again near the house of Keller and Pfyffer. Here they were accosted by a servant of the Amtman Pfyffer, who invited them into the house, where they were given more drink. Pfyffer was present and drank with them. Whilst there they, or some of them, blackened their faces and left the house. As they left Pfyffer cautioned them to be careful and do thoroughly what they had undertaken. They waited by the side of the path along which they knew that Keller would return. Clara and Barbara stood some way back, and Twerenbold and Kappeler took turns to watch near the turnstile. They were now joined by two others, Maria Ulrich and a policeman, Kratz, who belonged to the band though in the service of the state. After the signal had

water till he thought fit to admit his guilt; as on May 2 he still denied it, he was fastened in such a manner with chains as to be in a bent position. On May 6, as he still denied all knowledge of it, he was beaten and his hands fastened by handcuffs to the gyves that held his feet. Not, however, till June 6, could the confession be wrung from him. On one occasion he was whipped for two hours. The rest of the witnesses were allowed to associate together and arrange their stories they were to tell, so as to make them agree. When there still remained divergences in their accounts, leading questions were put to them, and they were made to correct their inaccuracies so as to bring all the stories to fit together.

When, however, the investigations began under the Zurich judge, it was otherwise; the five culprits varied in their accounts in the most extravagant manner. Clara Wendel remembered, for instance, that the President was walking along, reading a book, when her brother and the others thrust him into the water, and explained that the daughters did not see it, because they were both some way on in front. It does not appear that Am Rhyn was conscious that he was acting wrongly, and forcing five persons to falsely incriminate two innocent men. He was perfectly convinced in his own mind that they had murdered Keller, and their denials, evasions, and inaccuracies he put down to wilful attempts to escape confession and obscure the truth. The system of having recourse to torture to extract a confession was general in Switzerland and Germany, and was disapproved of only by the most enlightened men. Am Rhyn was an ardent politician, a fanatic in his way, and because these two old men belonged to the opposite party, and were, indeed, leaders of it, he considered them capable of committing any crime, and so was led on by his own bigotry to the concoction of a false accusation which might, and indeed very nearly did, cost them their lives.

As it was, an impartial judge speedily brought falsehood to self-conviction, and Plyffer and Carraggioni were discharged as innocent.

The reason of Clara Wendel's confession of having been implicated in a murder which had never taken place proved to have arisen out of her craving for notoriety. She was a vain and garrulous girl, and she believed she would be regarded as of some consequence, and become an object of popular interest, if she pretended that she had assisted in causing the disappearance of the president of the canton which held her in confinement.

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UNCLE JOE.

IN TWO PARTS.

CHAPTER I.

'Confound the fool!' said the Dean, as he read his letters at breakfast. Of course it was a very improper remark, because the expression is not permissible except in the 'Te Deum;' but, after all, it looks much worse in print than it sounded in reality, for his wife flung in some little ejaculatory coughs, so that the footman, who was even then arranging the chairs for family prayers, might not be scandalised. From the extreme gusto with which the Dean desired that his enemies might be overthrown in stony places, and otherwise maltreated that morning, Mrs. Dean perceived that her husband was mightily incensed. Her natural curiosity to know who the fool was, and why he should be confounded, rather interfered with her devotions, and directly they were over, she followed the Dean into his study with great alacrity.

'What is the matter, dear?' she said, after carefully shutting the door as a precautionary measure against any further imprecations.

'Matter!' said he. 'Why, that fool Josiah is going to be married!'

'I don't believe it!'

It was necessary for the Dean's wife to say this out of self-respect, because for the last thirty years she had consistently maintained that Josiah *never* would marry, and up to that time he never had. By adhering to this formula, she had acquired a reputation in the family for great discernment of character.

Josiah (who was the Dean's brother) had got himself into a scrape some ten years before with a designing American girl, and the Dean (who was then rector of Compton-in-the-Marsh) had journeyed to Yorkshire to deliver his brother from her wiles. His wife had then said:

'My dear, you give yourself much unnecessary trouble; Josiah will write to her, give her books, and all that kind of thing, but, as I have always said, Josiah will never marry.'

The Dean's wife was right. The American young lady had long since returned unwedded to Kentucky, and this episode added, as it were, the coping-stone to her reputation for exceeding penetration. That reputation was again at stake, and it behoved the Dean's wife to stand to her guns.

'Now, my dear,' said the Dean irately, 'it's no good your repeating your cuckoo cry, for the fool writes himself and announces his engagement, and the day is actually fixed.'

Then he threw the letter across to his wife. She felt a crisis had arrived, and that perhaps her husband's wrath was justifiable. She read the letter slowly and with great care, then she folded it up solemnly and returned it to the Dean.

'Of course,' she said, 'the fact of its being a widow makes it extremely critical, but the marriage is not to take place for three months, and in the meanwhile Joanna and I will go and stay with him.'

'Yes,' replied the Dean, 'I have always said that if once a widow took him in hand, it would be all up with him. When the fool went and gave two hundred pounds for that wretched little clay pot, I said his brain was softening.'

The Dean never forgave the clay pot incident. It was in reality a small alabaster vase of extreme beauty and rarity, dug up at Cyprus; somewhat chipped and discoloured, it is true, but of unknown antiquity. The language the Dean used when he heard of the price was quite unclerically forcible; he always referred to it as 'the accursed thing,' and burned in his wrath against the man that made it some thousand years ago, and the still greater villain who had recently dug it up.

It now becomes necessary to give a short sketch of the Dean and his brother. There have been all kinds of deans in the annals of the Church—political deans and literary ones, and now and then a hunting one; but Dean Perkins was unique of his kind, he was a financial Stock Exchangey Dean. He, as it were,

natriculated at Capel Court, and took high honours in Brighton ι's.

It came about in this fashion. Andrew Perkins was a flourishng jobber on the Stock Exchange when he fell in love with the laughter of rich old Alderman Higgins, the respected leather nerchant of St. Mary Axe. Maggie was an heiress, bright and pretty, and very devout indeed. Broker Perkins was very much n love, but she met his declaration by stating that she always neant to marry a clergyman, and she never would marry any ne else.

To the profound amazement of the entire London Stock Exhange, Mr. Perkins turned his back upon Capel Court, retired rom business, and rushed off to a theological training college. In . year or two he emerged as the Reverend Andrew Perkins, and he happy owner of Miss Higgins and her accompanying twenty housand pounds. Capel Court made profane jokes and dozens of dreadful riddles on the subject, but when some of them eached his ears, his reverence was observed to wink: it was a ignificant wink, and may have referred to the twenty thousand pounds.

When he was in orders, Mr. Perkins announced that he must liscover a post which, whilst being strictly clerical, would yet afford him scope for his great financial powers; such a one soon offered itself.

There was a venerable old society called the 'Archdeacons' Sustentation Society,' and just then they wanted a secretary. It was an exceedingly prosy, fusty old society; no one exactly knew why archdeacons needed sustaining, but it had been established nearly two hundred years. The members of its committee were mostly sleepy old clergymen, and its subscribers were chiefly old adies, generally residing in Suffolk and Lincolnshire. The old adies were too old and blind to read the reports, but they subscribed regularly because their fathers and grandfathers had done so before them, and in Suffolk it was not considered decent to die without leaving a legacy to the archdeacons.

The Board met once a month, but never did anything. No one quite knew where the funds went to, except that all the old gentlemen who met round the Board table had a nice fat fee for giving their valuable services.

Now it so happened that the last secretary had just got appointed to a living in Yorkshire, and the post consequently fell

vacant; moreover, the old society was rubbing its stuffy old eyes with amazement, and all the old gentlemen felt a little grieved and pained, for actually the 'Charity Organisation Society' had suddenly fallen upon the 'Archdeacons' Sustentation Society,' and published its balance-sheets, and proclaimed that its working expenses were no less than forty per cent. of its gross income. The old gentlemen were only hurt, not at all alarmed or agitated, for they knew that none of the old lady subscribers in Suffolk had the least idea what the 'Charity Organisation Society' was, and they would have gone on subscribing just the same if the working expenses had been ninety per cent. instead of forty.

Casting a wary eye round the clerical horizon, Mr. Perkins descried the old society feebly struggling in the mud, and he at once saw a field for his financial powers. He applied for the post. Like the historical Pope, he appeared to the Board of ancient directors to be a prosy quiet person also, but when he was appointed, he at once appeared in his real colours. Without a moment's loss of time the new secretary investigated the state of the invested funds of the society; he discovered that several thousands of pounds were placed in securities paying only two and a half per cent. Then he drew up a report embodying a new scheme of investment. At the very first meeting of the society after his appointment, he hurled his report at the stupefied heads of the directors. Prebendary Potter (who was considerably over eighty) always came up to his club, had a good lunch, and then attended the Board meeting. He invariably slept through the proceedings, but Prebendary Potter did not sleep on that eventful afternoon, he was expected to follow calculations as intricate as a Budget speech of Gladstone's. The new secretary pointed his lean finger at him, and made him shake in his shoes. When the excellent old divine heard Mr. Perkins talking excitedly of Charkow Krementschug, Wabash, and Dunaberg Witepsk, he meekly supposed he was conversing in an unknown tongue. Another venerable old gentleman, Archdeacon Slowboys, moved several resolutions that the whole matter of investments should stand over *sine die*; but the secretary made short work of him, and speedily swept his resolutions out of the way. The end of it was, that in six months the society was pulled out of the mire, its income increased from five thousand to eight thousand, and the 'Charity Organisation Society' was silenced.

This masterly stroke of finance caused such a flutter in clerical ircles, that the Bishop of Dorchester, who was president of the ociety, called and attended a Board meeting at the office one fternoon. He was much impressed with the secretary and his loings. The Bishop stayed afterwards for a little private chat vith Mr. Perkins.

Now the Bishop was a profound theologian, and had brought ut a book on the Council of Nicæa, which was acknowledged to e a very remarkable performance indeed. He was very well up n the third and fourth centuries, but profoundly ignorant of verything that has happened since. Consequently, when he saw n the papers advertisements from stock-jobbing firms, inviting he public to join syndicates and make a hundred per cent. of heir capital without the least risk or trouble, with a beautiful hildlike faith he entrusted all his small savings to one of these xcellent firms, and retired into early Church history again. Messrs. Hare and Hawkins were the gentlemen that took the Bishop under their protecting care. Unexpected results followed. Before the Bishop knew where he was, he became shareholder in ll sorts of extraordinary companies; many of them were speedily vound up, and he was involved in litigation. Every week calls vere made upon him; then Messrs. Hare and Hawkins made him lirector of several companies, which the Bishop at first thought very ind of them. He modified that opinion when one day an enraged hareholder in the Cotopaxi Gold Company threatened to have im up for issuing fraudulent prospectuses. The Bishop felt that piscopal existence in the third century was preferable to that in he nineteenth. He could have wrestled with Arius and Paul of Samosata, but Messrs. Hare and Hawkins were too much for him; e might have daily excommunicated them, and they would still ave flourished like green bay trees. It was when the Bishop ad been reduced to a state of despondency that he dropped in nd had his memorable half-hour's chat with Mr. Perkins. In ten ninutes that acute gentleman had mastered the whole position; t was all plain sailing to him; he took the Bishop in hand, nay, what is more, he took Messrs. Hare and Hawkins in hand, for he alled upon that distinguished firm. When they saw his all-round ollar and his air of pastoral innocence, they thought a new fly had valked into their net; they were speedily undeceived. It is true his bland-looking gentleman had walked into their net, but it vas with the purpose of rending it to pieces, which he speedily

proceeded to do, smiting the astonished stockbrokers hip and thigh. He intended to set at liberty a certain episcopal bluebottle which they had wound up tightly in their meshes, and were industriously sucking, and he did it. Messrs. Hare and Hawkins became extremely abusive, but Mr. Perkins preserved his bland manner to the last, and he left them with the comforting assurance that they should hear from him again, which they did, and that speedily, for Mr. Perkins caused letters of an alarming character to be written to them by a certain eminent firm in Ely Place, and in one short month the Bishop was rescued, cleared from all his difficulties, and free to hark back again to the Council of Nicæa. His gratitude was unbounded, and in a few months Mr. Perkins became rector of the valuable living of Compton-in-the-Marsh. Step by step he mounted the ladder, till at the present moment you behold him Dean of Dorchester.

The Alderman's daughter had borne the Dean two children, a boy and a girl. The boy, Hubert, was at Oxford, and the girl, Sybil, was being educated in Germany.

Josiah now claims a few words of introduction. Everybody called him Uncle Joe; he was between fifty and sixty, and much given to pottering over art collections, and antiquities generally. His strong point was Dürer, and his house was full of old German engravings.

'All very ugly,' said the Dean's wife, 'and many quite indecent.'

'They are all more or less draped,' said the Dean maliciously.

'What is the good of drapery, if you carry it over your arm?' retorted his wife.

Before he took to collecting art curios, Uncle Joe had been a tallow-chandler in the Borough. He was not born to that walk in life. He went to Oxford and took an excellent degree. Then, perceiving that law, physic, and divinity were all overcrowded, he announced his intention of going into the tallow-chandler line. Several deputations from the family immediately called on him and protested. To all of them he read a very eloquent passage from a work of Mr. Ruskin's, which demonstrated the extreme desirability of honourable gentlemen going into trade, and how ennobling it would be for trade and the honourable gentlemen also.

The Dean was just then emerging from the obscurity of his heological training college, and bearing down triumphantly on the

Alderman's daughter. When he heard of Uncle Joe's determination he was rather upset, but he wrote home and said, 'When Josiah takes to quoting Ruskin, I always give the point up; the two together are capable of any folly.' Besides, the Dean could not say much, for tallow was not much worse than leather.

Uncle Joe announced his intention of carrying on his trade on Ruskinian principles, and he did so: no such tallow was sold anywhere in London as in that little shop in the Borough; no such ideal candles were known in the trade. He himself dispensed short and long sixes over the counter; he treated his customers like friends; he gave credit to the poor, and demanded cash payment from the rich; he never made a bad debt; his reputation spread far and wide, and money rolled in steadily at No. 150 High Street, Borough.

The mind of the Dean was tremendously exercised as to what became of the money. Many a call did he make on his brother, offering his assistance in the investment line. He took care never to talk of Wabash or Dunaberg Witepsk to the tallow-chandler; to him he sang the praises of the virtuous Three per Cents., old-fashioned debenture stock, or excellent freehold mortgages with a large margin at two and a half per cent.

The Dean and his wife were Uncle Joe's only near kin, though there was a host of outlying cousins. Many and many a time, when the Dean called in the Borough, did he indirectly hint that the chief duty of man was to leave his money to his own near relations, and he gave many instances of people who had thought more of charities than their own flesh and blood, and whose wills consequently all got into Chancery, and their estates became the prey of the rapacious lawyers. Of course, when the Dean, as Secretary to the 'Archdeacons' Sustentation Society,' had to stir up the old ladies in Suffolk, he adopted the opposite view with them, and he demonstrated that their first duty was to leave a large legacy to the 'Archdeacons' Sustentation Society,' irrespective of their kith and kin.

The tallow-chandler always thanked his brother for his hints on investments, but never revealed what he put his money into. This was gall and bitterness to the Dean.

The little shop had been flourishing for ten years, when one day the Dean called on his brother. The result of this call is best shown by the conversation that took place between the Dean and his wife on his return. He then lived in a superior semi-detached

villa on Tulse Hill. The furniture came from Maple, and the art from Doré, and as it overlooked the expanse of a whole field and four trees it was called 'Belle Vue.' This was just before he got the valuable living of Compton-in-the-Marsh.

He looked quite ruffled when he reached home, and his excellent wife asked no questions, knowing that he was just then extricating the Bishop of Dorchester from his financial difficulties, and struggling tooth and nail with Messrs. Hare and Hawkins.

The Dean often came home much perturbed. Then his wife knew that Wabash had gone up when it ought to have gone down, or *vice versâ*; or that the next of kin of some of the old Suffolk ladies had disputed their wills, and impiously tried to wrest a legacy from the 'Archdeacons' Sustentation Society.' But the way in which the Dean threw his boots about as he dressed for dinner on this particular occasion indicated a special degree of irritation. Presently he burst out—

'I've seen Joe to-day, and of all infernal fools that man is the biggest!'

'What's he done now?'

Socially, she thought he could not do worse than he had done in setting up a tallow-chandler's shop in the Borough, for her father having made his money in trade, she naturally had a sovereign contempt for the counter.

'He's going to retire!'

'Well, *I* call that good news; I really do.'

The Dean went on, without heeding her interruption—

'And a pretty little sum he will sell his business for. For ten years past he's been coining money. What he has done with it I never could discover. I'm sure I've spent hours in that stuffy little parlour, advising him as to investments; if the fool had let me manage for him, I'd have doubled his capital by this time.'

'Well, I am glad he is going to retire,' said his wife. 'The name will be painted out, that's one comfort.' The Dean's wife sometimes vowed that she always used Southwark instead of London Bridge, so that she might not have to go through the Borough, and see 'Josiah Perkins, tallow-chandler,' staring her in the face. She used to say, pathetically, 'That "tallow-chandler" is so wanton, so entirely gratuitous. I'm sure the strings of dips in the window proclaim the fact plainly enough.'

'The anxiety that that man has been to me!' resumed the

Dean; 'and just now, when he was getting so fond of the children. That old Nicæa is a Solomon compared to Joe.' (Nicæa, I regret to say, was the Bishop.)

'But what's he done?' said she.

'Done! Why he is about to retire and take a house on the Yorkshire Moors, nine miles from a railway station (that alone is a Bedlamite idea), so I again pressed him about his investments, and how necessary it was to have them in good securities, and I told him about the Bishop and his difficulties. Would you believe it?—he has fished out of that precious Ruskin the idea that all interest is usury, and that the right thing to do is to live on your capital! *Live on your capital!*' he repeated in an awed whisper to his wife, with a dreadful emphasis on each word, as one would use in referring to some unspeakable crime.

'A good many people live on other people's capital,' replied his wife; but 'Oh, my dear!' she cried, a light dawning upon her, 'he will die without a penny, and cheat the children out of their inheritance!'

'Yes; it's an infamous shame. Such a scandalous notion to take up with! I never thought any of my relations could have come to this. He'll live till he's ninety, out of pure aggravation. He says the ideal thing is to put the money in a box, and draw out so much every year, and he is quite capable of it.' The Dean groaned; in his Capel Court days he would have sworn.

Of course, you require a little time to realise the enormity of a crime like this, and at first the Dean's wife was too stunned to grasp it.

'Just, too,' continued the Dean, 'as I was getting quite reconciled to tallow, for it really is productive; and to that blessed Ruskin too, for Josiah has certainly made his principles pay. I quite intended to buy the cheapest and smallest of his books, and now this is the end of it! But I really can't bear to think of it; you might as well sink your money in a life annuity at once.' Now, in the Dean's creed, there were certain depths of Gehenna lower than others, and these were reserved for rich relations of his who sank their capital in life annuities, and so defrauded him and his children of their just expectations.

CHAPTER II.

Our story now reverts to the announcement that Josiah meant to marry. Josiah had done all he threatened to do. He sold his business, retired to the Yorkshire moors, and was now reported to keep his money in a box and draw out so much a year to live upon.

'The creature's very name has a heathenish sound about it,' said the Dean, folding up the letter. 'Imogen Walker! Who was the defunct Walker? I should like to know. Of course, she finds he has got a nice bit of money (my poor children's money), and keeps it, I dare say, in bank notes under his bed; and she has got the blind side of him by talking about Master Stewpan and all that crew.'

I must pause to explain that Uncle Joe had lately bought at Christie's a panel, by Meister Stephan, and in consequence the family at Tulse Hill had heard a good deal of that early master.

'Well, we have three months before the marriage. Supposing I and Joanna go down to the Rookery' (that was Uncle Joe's place in Yorkshire) 'and spend a week with him, and see this Mrs. Walker for ourselves, and have a general look round.'

Joanna was a Mrs. Armstrong, a married cousin of the Dean's. She was a person of great vivacity and vigour, and always said (and truly) that she could manage Uncle Joe better than anybody else. She never pretended to take the least interest in the old clay pot or the dreadful German engravings. She told him to his face that she hated Dürer and loathed the very name of Botticelli; as for Lippi she had been known to revile him openly.

'Joe won't have you there,' said the Dean. 'This Walker woman has taken lodgings in the village, and has practically the key of his front door, and you may be quite sure she will keep the Rookery clear of all his relations till he is landed. I shall write him a few lines to-day.'

'I must consult Joanna at once,' said his wife.

Joanna lived close at hand, and Mrs. Perkins called that very afternoon, and thrilled that lady with her tidings. Joanna threw up her hands and ejaculated:

'Goodness gracious! and who to?' Mrs. Perkins felt that when you communicate startling news it is very gratifying to see the person properly startled, and here was Joanna startled out of her grammar even.

'To a widow, my dear, a creature calling herself Imogen Walker, twenty-five years old and he is fifty. Disgusting, I call it! I know she is an agnostic, and no doubt paints herself, and talks all kind of horrid gabble about Giotto and chiaro-oscuro and the rest of it.'

'Ah!' said Joanna. 'It looks bad for your children, and of course *you* feel it after always vowing he would never marry. I think it almost an insult to me for him to go and get himself engaged without consulting me. Of course we had better run up to Yorkshire and see for ourselves.'

'Yes, but I don't like going without an invitation.'

'Fiddlestick! Madame Imogen will put a stop to invitations. All I know is that to-morrow evening sees me at the Rookery. You can come or not, but I shall not lose a moment.' Mrs. Perkins was a little unprepared for such great promptitude of action, but she agreed to go nevertheless, and the next day beheld them journeying north.

'What excuse can you make, Joanna?' said the mild Mrs. Perkins. 'You can't walk into a man's house, and say, "We've come from London to stay with you and prevent your marrying Mrs. Walker."'

'No, Maggie, I needn't say that, because Mrs. Walker will explain that fact to him herself. This is my plan: do you remember Miss Mackenzie, our old governess? Well, she lives at Richmond, just twenty miles beyond Joe's place. Last night I wrote to say we would visit her, and we are going to take Joe on our way. Once get him to take us in, and I don't budge from the house till he's a free man.'

Uncle Joe had bought ten acres of moorland in Yorkshire and built himself a little house. He designed it himself on Ruskinian principles, he said. In some occult way the Seven Lamps of Architecture pervaded the place: the porch taught you something, the hall had its own particular message, and the dining-room its special symbolism. The Dean said the symbolism of the house was draughts, and it taught you a lesson in the shape of rheumatism. Honestly speaking, it was a profoundly inconvenient house. When the Dean first visited it he wrung his hands in despair.

'What's the good,' he pathetically asked, 'of your dining-room having a groined ceiling copied from some hideous thing at Padua, when you've got to go through the scullery to get to it? Who cares for your seven-light window in the hall when seven separate

draughts rage at you through it? No!' said he, 'give me gas, electric bells, and your morning paper delivered regularly.'

The Rookery was built on the hillside, and there was a little village about a mile off in the valley. It was in this little village of Hillbeck that Mrs. Walker was at present lodging, spending most of the time at the Rookery, but discreetly retiring every evening to her own rooms in the village inn.

Uncle Joe congratulated himself that he was exactly nine miles from the nearest railway station; letters meandered over the moors in an intermittent fashion, and there was no possibility of telegraphing save at enormous expense for porterage.

Having built his house, hung all his pictures, arranged his books, and classified his minerals, Uncle Joe set to work on a book that he had been preparing for years. It was on Dürer and the Renaissance. To qualify himself for so learned a work, Uncle Joe had spent twelve months in Germany, learnt the language thoroughly, and got together a vast quantity of Dürer memoranda. Sometimes he said he thought he should have to relinquish so gigantic a task. He was specially despondent when he got to the chapter interpreting the inner meaning of the Knight and Death, for already there were a hundred and seventy entirely different interpretations all to be reconciled somehow, and the only true and vital meaning to be extracted therefrom.

Mrs. Perkins (who shall be known hereafter by her christian name of Maggie) and Joanna were now jolting along that nine miles of rough road on their way from the station. Maggie was in a great state of agitation at the perils by the way; the old wagonette gave many a frightful lurch, and sometimes all but stuck fast.

'Andrew is quite right,' she said irately. 'No one but a madman would go and build himself a house nine miles down a detestable road like this.'

'Bad road or good road, Maggie,' said Joanna, 'nothing will turn *me* back.'

'And then,' said Maggie, 'the place when you get there—always a howling tempest raging round it. Besides, I don't like his "educational series" of photographs stuck all about the house: he oughtn't to expect a Dean's wife to sit in the room with Andromedas and Adams and Eves. I counted them up once, and there are eighteen more or less naked people stuck on his walls.'

'Well, I would rather have fifty Andromedas than one Imogen,' said Joanna.

They now resigned themselves to the last steep half-mile that led to the house, and soon found themselves in the symbolic porch. Over the door was a lovely passage from one of Mr. Ruskin's works, beautifully illuminated in thirteenth-century text and quite illegible.

It was Uncle Joe's boast that his front door was never shut day or night. The Dean often harangued on the extreme folly of this, being anxious about the safety of those bundles of bank-notes under his bed.

They were heartily received by old Mrs. Pratt. She had been Uncle Joe's housekeeper in the Borough, and now looked after him in the Ruskinian residence, but her heart was still at No. 150 High Street.

'Moors are all very well,' she said, 'but you can have too much of them. How beautiful it was to hear the roar of wheels,' she often said, 'and to see the people all a-streaming past!'

Joanna learned that Uncle Joe was not then at home, having gone out for a drive with Mrs. Walker. Then came the natural feminine question—

'And what is she like, Pratt?'

'Oh, she's a pretty little body enough; good pink and white skin, and handsome eyes, and that airy and winning in her ways; but sich a strong will in so small a body I never knew. Nothing turns her when she's got a mind to do a thing.'

'Our luggage will come to-morrow, Pratt; meanwhile we will rest and wait till your master comes home.'

Joanna walked about the room, and found a small work-basket here, a little lace pocket-handkerchief there, and many other evidences of female life.

'I declare!' she said; 'it would be more decent if she were married already. She seems to pervade the place.'

Maggie sat wrapped in thought; she was a kind little woman, always regulating her conduct by a little code of theologic rules.

'Well, Joanna, I don't think we ought to condemn her before we know her; she may be a very good and suitable person, after all.'

'Nonsense, Maggie!' said Joanna; 'good people don't plant themselves on Yorkshire moors, and inveigle old bachelors into

matrimony just twice their own age. Besides, her name, "Imogen," indeed! Most likely Mary Ann; that goes better with Walker. As to her being a widow, it's my belief that she's no more a widow than you are.'

'I hope she isn't an actress,' said Maggie. 'I think the name occurs somewhere in Shakespeare. Once we had an extremely good-looking housemaid; her name was Polly Stubbins. She went on the stage, and when we took the children to a pantomime, a Miss Claribel Montmorenci took a leading part, and she actually was our Polly.'

'I shall stand on a chair in this window,' said Joanna. 'It commands the road, and I'll have a good look at her as she comes up the hill.' So Joanna took up her post, and presently announced their approach. She retailed her report to Maggie.

'Oh, my dear! the ridiculous old thing is spruced up to look quite young, and she is leaning on his arm and looking up in his face; and she is dressed as a widow, and I must say she looks a pretty little thing. Gracious! she has stopped and picked a flower and is sticking it in his button-hole. Oh, my dear! he's kissed her!' (Joanna descended from her chair), 'kissed her in broad daylight, in the open air—so exceedingly low!'

Soon footsteps were heard in the hall, two voices conversing cheerily, and the pleasant sound of a woman's soft laughter.

When Uncle Joe entered the room and saw the two ladies, he stared, then rubbed his hands across his eyes. Joanna airily advanced and gave him a hearty kiss, and said—

'Quite an unexpected pleasure for you, isn't it? *I* say it because *you* don't. Maggie and I are on our way to stay with Miss Mackenzie, and we have come *out* of our way expressly to congratulate you. That, I know, must be Mrs. Walker,' whereupon very cordial handshakings took place in that quarter.

'Well,' said Uncle Joe, 'of course I am very glad to see you both; but you know I am ten miles from a butcher, so chance guests must take what they can get; generally tinned foods.'

'That will do very well,' said Maggie. 'I remember you used to give us tinned oysters. They always turned out green, and floated about in a dreadful yellow liquid.'

Mrs. Walker took off her jacket, and said, with a very sweet smile, 'I for my part thank you very heartily for coming, dear ladies, for now I can accept dearest Josiah's invitation to stay in

his house; of course hitherto it's been impossible.' Then to Joe, 'I'll tell Pratt to get ready the Red room for the ladies.'

'Thank you, Mrs. Walker, but I always have the Blue one,' said Joanna. Mrs. Walker's lips tightened just a shade, but her eyes smiled still.

'I'm so sorry, dear Mrs. Armstrong, but that is now dedicated to me. It looks south, and I cannot live without sun.'

Uncle Joe's mind was still staggering under the suddenness of the invasion. He felt it very kind of Joanna and Maggie, but very embarrassing. Of course he had no conception of the real object of their visit. That afternoon's drive had been more pleasant than ever to Uncle Joe. The little widow had allowed him to hold her hand all the way under the carriage rug, and they had talked much of Carpaccio and the St. Ursula series, and Mrs. Walker had begged him to take her all through his photographs of them that evening and to expound their meaning.

'It is a beautiful thing, dearest,' said Uncle Joe, 'to find so richly endowed a mind as yours thirsting for knowledge.' However, there were Joanna and Maggie, and no Carpaccio was possible that evening.

Joanna and Maggie shared the same room, Mrs. Walker duly occupying the Blue room. An hour after lunch Joanna espied the widow's luggage coming up the hill.

Maggie was sitting wrapped in reverie, adjusting the claims of conscience with an already developing antipathy to Mrs. Walker.

'Ah!' said Joanna, 'we have our work cut out for us. That's a clever woman! we shan't get much of Joe's company as long as she stops here; there are her boxes coming up the drive now.'

'She's pretty,' said Maggie slowly. 'There's no denying that.'

'I own the general effect is good,' said Joanna. 'But she can't stand daylight. Her hair is dyed, and so are her eyelashes; to-night you'll see she will venture on just a touch of rouge by candlelight.'

'I think,' said Maggie, 'she must be a woman of culture, for I heard her talk to Joe about the Morbidezza of Greuze. I don't know in the least what Morbidezza is.'

'All Grosvenor Gallery slang,' rejoins Joanna briskly. 'If it means falseness, and deceit, and lies, you'll know very soon; as to all her art talk I believe it's mere guide-book gabble. I lay any money you'd find two or three cheap art handbooks in those trunks of hers.'

That evening was a troubled one to Uncle Joe. It dawned upon him that there was a certain amount of antagonism likely to develop between the ladies. Maggie and Joanna wished to lead the conversation to family matters. Mrs. Walker desired to guide it into the higher regions of art and literature. She found it a little difficult to converse solemnly of Cimabue and Cima when there were two observant ladies not joining in the talk, but taking note of her every word. After tea music came to the front; Uncle Joe had opened up a whole budget of family reminiscences. He had, it appeared, vivid recollection of the extreme musical ability of Maggie during her early married life.

Dean Perkins had always impressed upon his young wife this vital fact.

'Music, my dear, is a social force. I don't myself care for Beethoven, there is so much of him. I think a fantasia on the airs from "Faust" much nicer, but Uncle Joe seems to like him; always humour him in that direction.' So it was that Uncle Joe retained recollections of many pleasant home evenings, and asked Maggie to give him some music that evening.

Now it is necessary to state that when they were dressing for dinner Joanna had said to Maggie—

'The campaign opens to-night. Madame Imogen is armed at all points; if once you are caught tripping, she will show you no mercy. Your danger lies in being too soft-hearted; pray remember you are fighting for your children. If she does the maternal with you, harden your heart; if she is sympathetic on household matters, harden your heart; if she touches on religion, harden your heart ten times over. Whenever I see you in danger I shall kick your foot under the table—mind you put it handy; I don't want to kick hers by mistake. If I am out of kicking distance, you'll see my hands arranging the hairpins in my hair: that means she is humbugging you. If Joe wants music, play to him; if he wants to talk geology, talk it to him—you attended classes at Gower Street, and must use your little knowledge; don't be afraid of her—as for all her art talk I'm convinced it's humbug. I only wish Mrs. Hogarth were here to trip her up.' (Mrs. Hogarth was a lady deeply versed in all the literature of art, all the ways of the Cinque Cento were clear to her. She had conquered the whole domain of art. She began with prehistoric Mexican griffins, and ended with this year's Academy. She was currently reported to have even attached some definite

meaning to the last chapter of Pater's 'Studies in the Renaissance;' a stupendous feat! Naturally, therefore, Joanna felt if she had had her to back her, poor Mrs. Walker would have been speedily overthrown.)

During dinner time the talk was on general subjects. After dinner Uncle Joe retired to have a smoke and a doze, and the three ladies sat in the study, the Rookery not boasting a drawing-room. It was then Mrs. Walker felt the tug of war had come. With keen instinct she saw at a glance that Joanna was best left alone, but that something might be done with Maggie. Already the Dean's wife was leaning towards the little widow, she seemed so forlorn. Besides, it was her duty to try and think the best of everyone. Joanna took a piece of uncompromising plain work out of her basket.

'That is a shirt, Mrs. Walker, for my small son. I'm a poor woman, and I make his and my own things.'

'How sweet of you! I've been admiring that costume of yours all the evening; how clever of you to make it! I wish I could.'

'I make underlinen, not dresses,' answered Joanna. 'That costume cost eighteen-and-sixpence, and came from the Borough, close to where Uncle Joe sold tallow.'

Mrs. Walker expressed polite incredulity. She herself was arrayed in a superb velvet dress, all covered with old lace and embroidery, which had evidently cost a great many eighteen-and-sixpences. Maggie had taken up a book (it was 'Faust'), but after a few minutes she was startled somewhat by the little widow seating herself on a footstool at her feet, playfully closing her book, and saying prettily—

'Dear Mrs. Perkins, put that tiresome book away, and tell me about your dear children.' What mother's heart could resist such an appeal so prettily urged? Before she knew where she was, Maggie was engaged in a delightful little chat with the sympathetic Mrs. Walker. She had never found a better listener, all through the thrilling account of Hubert's typhoid fever and Sybil's frightful series of fits. Just at the critical moment in each history, where Maggie felt words of sympathy would be all too little, Mrs. Walker did not intrude words; she inserted little sympathetic sobs, or she would take Maggie's hand and give it a lingering, loving squeeze. Each time her motherly hand was pressed, Maggie felt her heart go out to the little widow. She

was encouraged to tell the agonising story of the death of her third child, who had only lived long enough to be baptised.

'I called her Amaranth,' whispered poor Maggie. At this point Mrs. Walker was almost too much overcome to speak; she leant her head against Maggie's knee and murmured:

'Ah, how I feel for you! I lost my baby three years ago—a lovely child. He lies under the snows of Sorrento.' Then Maggie was dissolved in tears too.

At this moment Joanna, who was stitching away in breathless fashion at the shirt, suddenly flung her work aside in a very abrupt way.

'We shall have a storm to-night,' she said. Then she rose and passed to the window to watch the sky, and poor Maggie was startled to receive in passing an agonising kick on her ankle from the sharp toe of Joanna's shoe.

Later in the evening Uncle Joe begged his sister-in-law to play. A dozen excuses rose to her lips: she was so nervous; since she had married she had never practised; her music was in her box. The excuses were real; poor Maggie had but two things she knew without her notes—part of a Beethoven sonata, and a mazurka by Chopin. Joanna's object was to get Mrs. Walker to play, to gauge her abilities in that line. So Maggie played her Beethoven bit, and Joanna marked time with her hand, and seemed to experience extreme delight, though she had heard it at least a hundred times before. She asked Maggie with profound interest:

'Is that the "Moonlight," my dear?' At this Maggie stared, and Uncle Joe threw up his hands in blank amazement at Joanna's extreme ignorance in musical matters. This emboldened Mrs. Walker, and when she was asked to play she thought it safe to venture.

Now I am sorry to say that this music took place after that old-fashioned custom had occurred that Uncle Joe called 'Having in the glasses.' Mostly the glasses contained milk only, but on festive occasions Uncle Joe beguiled his guests into having a little whisky toddy or some milk punch. Mrs. Walker had been induced after many pretty little protestations to take a little of the former, and Joanna had mixed it for her. The result was soon apparent. Mrs. Walker became exceedingly lively. Her veneer of little elegant refinements fell from her, and she displayed new traits of an unexpected nature. When she was pressed to

play or sing she at once complied, and, to the amazement of the party, she sat down and burst into an extremely lively music-hall carol, very pronounced both in style and words; the way she rendered it was pronounced also. At the end of each verse there came a cry of 'Houp la! tarry diddle oh!' and each time this refrain came round, Mrs. Walker raised her hands from the piano and slapped her knees with extreme vivacity and gusto. At the end of it Maggie wanted to say something kind, but was too transfixed with amazement. She murmured something about its being very characteristic. Uncle Joe asked if it were not a Hungarian national song, and it was very singular that Joanna only uttered a prolonged 'Ah!' in a very expressive way.

Then all dispersed for the night. Joanna and Maggie had a pleasant little chat before going to sleep.

'That's conclusive,' said Joanna, directly they were in the bedroom. 'She hails from some London music-hall, I should say; put her in tights and the skimpiest of tunics and she'd do credit to them.'

'I thought it extremely vulgar,' said Maggie; 'I hope she was not laughing at me about Amaranth. I am a little doubtful about the snows of Sorrento; but I think you made her toddy too strong.'

'Of course I did. "When the wine is in the wit is out." I made it three parts pure whisky, and she drank it without winking. I can see a chance of escape for Uncle Joe; we have begun very well, dear, and I shall sleep in peace to-night.'

THE BURMAN AT HOME.

I HAVE reached the village of Kannee, on my way to the hills, whither I am bound on a shooting excursion. Perhaps I should say *was* bound, for having arrived here, there does not seem to be much probability of my proceeding any further. An hour before my arrival, Shway Hmaw, the old carpenter, brought in the startling news that he had seen a party of dacoits in the jungle only a few miles away. No one knows but that they are coming to Kannee, and I find myself now in Moung Daw's house, surrounded by nervous villagers who are dolefully comparing notes on Shway Hmaw's meagre intelligence, and promising themselves all the terrors of fire and sword before the sun sets.

Of course no one will accompany me to the hills, so my expedition is effectually stopped. In addition to this, my boatmen are so apprehensive for my honour's safety, that they have positively declined to face the return journey to Bassein,—a paddle of thirty miles through narrow jungle-fringed creeks. At Kannee, therefore, it is clear I must remain for the present; so, with a view to the good graces of a village which has frequently supplied me with beaters, I make a virtue of necessity, and through Moung Daw (whom I introduced to you on a previous occasion) announce my intention of staying here for to-day at all events. The auditors receive the information with gratitude, and depart with voluntary promises to 'follow' next time I come down to shoot.

There is absolutely nothing to do at Kannee, which is just like a thousand other riverside villages in the paddy-growing districts of Lower Burma.

A long street, not too clean, traversed by a raised brick-paved pathway in the middle, runs parallel to the river bank, losing itself in the jungle at either end. The houses stand at irregular intervals on both sides of it, and are all built on much the same plan, whether they be frail erections of bamboos and mats, or—like Moung Daw's—more substantially constructed of beams and planks. Their size varies much, for everyone builds his own residence, and does it as he pleases, since in this happy valley there

are no municipal regulations or local government rules to curb the exercise of a taste which is sometimes a little eccentric.

Before many houses there are bamboo frames upheld by poles, covered with luxuriant creepers which produce immense pumpkins. Their own stalks are insufficient to bear their weight long before they ripen, so the cultivators brace them neatly up to the framework to prevent their falling. This is the only gardening indulged in within the village precincts; outside it there are some ill-kept enclosures where a few coarse vegetables are grown.

The interior of a Burman's house conveys the idea that he had only enough material for one entire floor, and, by way of obtaining variety, laid the front half two feet from the ground, and the rear half six feet higher. Thus a man standing on the front and lower floor has above him only the rafters, and the floor of the rear half has nothing below it but the bare ground. The space between the two floors is left open altogether or is protected with lattice work, and a flight of rude stairs enables the family to pass from one story to the other. The upper one is screened from public view by a partition, and is used as a general bedchamber, being walled in all round, with a window or two on the floor-level. The lower floor is generally open on all sides, and there the occupants may be found during the day, cooking, eating, lounging, or working, in full view of the passers-by. The vacant space below the bedchamber is utilised as store-house, poultry-yard, and cattle-shed; so the owner has his worldly goods under his protecting eye at all times.

The conveniences of civilised life find no place in such villages as this, and the people seem to get on in their quiet way very well without them. The post office is an institution unknown, for no one writes or receives letters. There are no policemen, for there is nothing for them to do. No goats trespass on the road at Kannee, to be caught and impounded by the stern servants of the law; and that, as everybody knows, is the occupation without which, in the busy town, the native Peeler would be as a lost man.

My friend Moung Daw is the sole representative of the Imperial Government. He assists the thoogyee [1] of the circle in the collection of taxes payable by the cultivators resident in the village; is responsible for their good behaviour; and, for the

[1] A petty revenue officer.

faithful discharge of these duties, enjoys the handsome stipend of ten rupees per month. He is consequently regarded with much respect as the local magnate and leader of Kannee society. Most of the villagers are paddy-cultivators or boat-owners, who work hard for five months in the year, and make up for their exertions by complete idleness during the remaining seven. Now, at the end of the hot season, work for both classes is just over, and everybody is at home all day.

It is drawing on towards noon, and the heat is oppressive. I sit down to breakfast, grateful for the light breeze off the river, which renders the house with its thatched roof tolerably cool. Even the restless pariahs have sought refuge from the rays of the terrible sun, but a crowd of naked children, still interested in my doings, though I have been here often before, stands outside open-mouthed, keeping a sharp look-out for scraps of bread or meat; luxuries the recipients generously share with their friends.

Mah Lay, the goung's wife, has finished boiling the rice, and now stands holding the grimy pot in both hands while she pours off the water, and issues invitations to breakfast to a few favoured friends who are squatting on the road outside under the mango trees.

'Ho, Pho Loo, come and eat!' 'Ho, Moung Gyee, rice! rice!' 'Moung Tso, good little one, you want your morning food.'

Her shrill, good-tempered voice rouses the men, who drift in leisurely and sit down round the heap of steaming rice Mah Lay has turned out on two fresh plantain leaves on the floor. The guests do not go through the ceremony of accepting the invitation in words. It looks rude perhaps, but it is only 'a way they have.' The manners of the Burmese amongst themselves are not gushing, but always easy and pleasant.

The hostess supplies more leaves to serve as plates, and each man helps himself from the common pile to a double handful of rice, which for the time being occupies all his attention—and fingers. A Burman never drinks in the course of a meal, but, having swallowed the last mouthful, goes to the chatty that stands in a corner in every house, and takes a little water to wind up the entertainment.

As a race they are naturally temperate, but few jungle men will allow an opportunity of tasting wine, beer, or spirits to pass.

All these go by the name of 'berrandy.' There is no such letter as *r* in Burmese, but the deficiency seems easily supplied by the Burman if he wants a little stimulant.

Breakfast over, the men assemble round my chair for a chat. I present them with a cheroot apiece, but it is evidently not worth while for every man to smoke his own. Moung Daw, as host, lights his, and his guests stick theirs in their ears for future enjoyment, whilst the one is passed from mouth to mouth round the little circle.

'Has your honour brought the medicine box this time?' asks Shway Hmaw in a tone of deep interest.

I have brought the box as usual, and my reply in the affirmative elicits a general expression of opinion that 'it is good.' My stock of remedies is not extensive; in fact is as limited as it is simple in character, consisting of vaseline, which is the universal cure if a man has anything wrong outside him, and quinine, chlorodyne, and pills for inward application. Thus my patients run at least no danger of being poisoned, if they derive no benefit from the physic.

I have travelled a great deal with the above assortment of medicines, and, absurd as it may seem, can confidently assert that their production at the right time, when the country was disturbed and villages abounded with bad characters, saved me from many difficulties.

The men around me are already discussing the patients who may want medicine, and I overhear sundry remarks on the 'cases,' which, literally translated, read like exercise phrases from a very primitive grammar.

'Can his honour's medicine cure Moung Pay's heel?'

'I think Moung Pay will die; he is very thin.'

'Moung Pay's inside is sick, therefore he grows thin.'

'Bah Oo had much pain yesterday.'

'Yes, it was his belly; he ate many mangoes.'

'The little medicine balls will be good for that.'

'Will his honour give medicine for Mah Gyee's cow?'

'I cannot tell. Moung Daw will ask him.'

And so on for five minutes whilst I am unpacking my provisions to get at the box required.

'Those people who want English medicine to-day may come to me and I will give it to them,' I say with the generous kindness of a man who has a boundless stock of health at his disposal.

'Tell anyone who has hurt himself to wash and come to Moung Daw's house now,' I continue with candour unusual in doctors.

The injunction to wash is very necessary, as I have found by experience that the acquisition of a 'nah-pouk,'[1] be it wound, burn, or sore, is followed by total abstention from the use of water until the place is healed. A curious thing, for the Burman is cleanly in his personal habits, bathing regularly every day when water is convenient, and in that land of heavy rains few villages are not well supplied.

Half-a-dozen little boys constitute themselves criers, and the proclamation is rapidly conveyed to every house in the village, resulting very shortly in a large assemblage of patients, some of whose troubles throw a striking side-light on the carelessness of the race.

Mah Too's baby is the first. It has a sore head acquired by being accidentally laid on the hot clay fireplace after the ashes had been removed. The shaven head of the poor baby is sadly scarred, but the accident occurred some time ago, and there is nothing to be done, as the injury is healing up.

Bah Oo's four-year boy. Above the piercing howls of the patient, I gather that he kicked his father's dah as it lay stuck through the floor, and cut his foot nearly through. In stentorian tones I prescribe washing, vaseline and bandages to be applied at once; and recovering breath turn to

Bah Oo himself. Severe pains which he thought yesterday indicated cholera, but his friends ascribe to mangoes. Is better now, but would like medicine in view of a recurrence. Accepts one pill in both hands and chews it with mournful earnestness, dashed with dawning hope of good results to follow.

Mah Gyee applies for advice regarding a large boil on her neck. Gratefully receives a strong recommendation to wash, and a bread poultice, which she is uncertain how to use, and is too shy to ask me about. Correcting Mah Lay's suggestion that her friend should eat it hot, I continue dispensing medical comforts and judicious advice, keeping an eye on my servant, Moung Tso, who, acting on these occasions as my assistant, displays great skill in the washing department. Indeed the liberal use of warm water is the initial treatment in every instance, and it is two hours before the last patient takes his departure. Regretfully declining to go and see a man who is lying ill of smallpox at a village two miles

[1] Lit. 'sick hole.'

off, I wander down the street, followed by Moung Daw, to see what has attracted the little crowd there.

It appears that Moung Saik's eldest boy is to be tattooed to-day, and the 'Htokwinsayahgyee' (great professor of tattooing) has just arrived with his formidable-looking instrument and inks.

Of all Burmese customs, one of the most singular is that of tattooing the person, from the waist to below the knees, with figures in black ink. Every man in the country is thus adorned, and unless his skin be unusually dark, he looks at a little distance as though he were clothed in a tight-fitting pair of knee-breeches. The custom is said to be falling into disuse, but I have seen very few Burmans without this 'mark of manhood,' which is conferred upon him when he is about twelve or fourteen years old. The operation is a painful one, and I was glad of the opportunity that now offered to see it, though aware that it takes at least two or three days to complete.

Pho Myin, the subject, is lying on a mat quite nude, with a dazed look in his half-closed eyes, and breathing heavily. Moung Daw nods at him meaningly.

'He has taken much opium' he says, grinning to me.

I am not surprised at it. If the Htokwinsayahgyee was going to exercise his art upon me for four or five hours, I should follow the Burman's plan and take opium by way of an anæsthetic.

The tattooing will show well upon the plump fair-skinned lad before us, and the professor evidently thinks he is a subject to take pains with, as he sits carefully mixing his ink in a joint of bamboo, and preparing his weapon. This is a brass rod nearly two feet long and about half an inch thick; it is weighted at the top with a little ornamental figure, and at the other end has a hollow point divided by two cross slits into four fine pricks. The professor examines the 'business end' critically, and, having satisfied himself that it is sharp enough, tucks up his putsoe, and squats at Pho Myin's side. Selecting a spot on the thigh, he places both feet on it a few inches apart, and, stretching the skin tight, draws the outline of the first figure—a tiger rampant—with an inky splinter of bamboo; this is soon done, and relieving himself of a large mouthful of betelnut, the professor settles down to work in earnest. Leaning forward through his widely parted knees, he balances the brass style daintily, and, clasping it with the finger and thumb of the right hand, makes a 'bridge'

me, fidgeting uneasily. His cocoanut of a head is shaved bare, excepting a patch at the top, whence the lank black hair falls on his shoulders; he is inexpensively dressed in a necklace of small beads, a costume well adapted to the climate.

The examination is not a very severe one. Shway Pho can say his alphabet right through without a mistake, and can multiply two by two correctly after thinking the sum over for a bit; and considering that he has only enjoyed the advantages of the Kyoung for one year and a half, perhaps that is as much as can be expected. He is also master of a brief Pali prayer, which he gabbles through at a gallop, secure in my ignorance of a language that might be called the Latin of Burma. He doesn't understand it himself, but Moung Daw says, 'It is the custom to learn this,' so that I suppose is conclusive.

The other children look on with rapt attention, and smile their congratulations to the candidate as he returns demurely to his place, exhibiting the new four-anna piece I have awarded him.

A low standard of education is universal throughout Burma. In every village resides a Phoongyee—Bhuddist priest—who teaches the children of both sexes the elements of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and it is rare to meet a man or woman who does not possess these accomplishments in a greater or less degree. School fees are paid by the parents in kind—rice, betel-nuts, dried fish, vegetables, &c.; and as it is a 'work of merit' to feed the reverend gentleman, he is usually quite the fattest man in the village.

The existence led by the majority of the priesthood must have great attractions for the lazy Burman, who is happiest when utterly idle. Living in the seclusion of the Kyoung, the ascetic Phoongyee passes his day in 'meditation' (this state might be called 'sleep' if you or I sank into it) and in reading. The younger members form a procession every morning, and file through the town with the globular begging-pots slung from their shoulders and held with both hands. With eyes bent on the ground that they may rest on no woman, they pass from house to house, their appearance being the signal for the lady of the establishment to issue forth with a bowl of rice which she drops into the begging-pot. The recipient does not raise his eyes or acknowledge the charity; he passes on, keeping them downcast, no doubt on the pot, taking mental notes of the size of each contribution by the flock. After their daily round, they return to the Kyoung with the food, which must be eaten by priests before

noon. The rice thus collected is supposed to be all the nourishment a Phoongyee sustains life with. But it is—in a large monastery at all events—generally consumed by the younger priests and the lads who, in accordance with Burmese custom, are spending their two or three months in residence at the Kyoung, a better meal being cooked on the premises for the elders. In villages where there is but one priest, he is the schoolmaster, and as such fairly earns the support which his flock bring him daily.

The shadows are beginning to lengthen at last, and the hot sultry day is more bearable as we return to the village, where the people are congregated about the street. A group squats gossiping here, half a dozen youths are playing football there, and in a secluded space between two houses an excited gathering is absorbed in the pleasures of a cock-fight.

This amusement is forbidden under English law, and is not much practised in the larger towns, where detection means appearance before, and fining by, an English magistrate. In villages, however, the sport flourishes, for native officials cannot be trusted to put it down. Moung Daw was a Burman before he was a Government servant, and looks with a lenient eye on the doings of the law-breakers who are passing the cool of the day in the pastime they love beyond all others the round of daily life can afford.

A space ten feet in diameter is densely surrounded with spectators, and within the ring squat the owners opposite each other, preparing their birds for battle. Each man is holding a cock between his knees, and with the palms of his hands is ruffling the feathers of the neck briskly up the wrong way, a proceeding which appears to have the effect of rousing its angry passions. Now this preliminary is over, the owners take their cocks round the body and swing them to and fro, almost allowing their beaks to meet at each advance. Excited by this treatment to the highest pitch, the birds lose no time in coming to close quarters as soon as they are released with a gentle cast towards each other by way of a final hint. They are not handsome creatures, these two, but full of fight, and are therefore prized accordingly. No spurs are worn, but the combatants make terrible use of their natural weapons, pecking, striking, and clawing viciously, whilst their owners, on all fours, hover round them with chirps and words of encouragement. The furious scuffle, half obscured in a cloud of dust and feathers, results at last in the leggiest, shabbiest, most disreput-

able-looking fowl of the pair gaining the advantage. A bony-looking scarecrow before the fight, his best friend would barely recognise the victorious champion now, as his backers, who have hitherto watched the bout with speechless attention, relieve their pent-up feelings with loudly howled scraps of inharmonious song and displays of the remarkable posturing which Burmese prejudice regards as dancing. The crowd dissolves, and the owners secure their birds, lavishing caresses or abuse as their respective performances merit. The football players pause in their interminable game to ask whose cock has won and hear particulars of the 'form' displayed by Moung Gyaw's new champion, resuming their amusement with the additional zest of a new topic to converse about.

Burmese football deserves a word of notice, being one of the most popular games the men indulge in. The plaything is a basket-work ball about eight inches in diameter, and the object of the players is to kick it from one to the other without allowing it to fall to the ground. No sides are formed, and any number apparently can join in the game, standing in a circle a few feet apart. The ball is started by a gentle kick from one player's doubled-up toes; another receives it upon his knee, wherewith he drives it skywards to be caught by a third who allows it to fall behind him, and sends it up again with a well-directed kick of the heel. Good players keep the light ball up for a long time, timing and directing blind kicks with wonderful accuracy. It is not an intellectual game, perhaps, but it has great vogue amongst the Burmans.

I am sorry to find on my return to the goung's house that Moung Tso has given grave offence to Moung Daw by addressing him before the villagers without proper respect. Interrogated, he thinks that Moung Tso is a very proud boy, and wants hard words: no good boy would call the goung of a village and an old man 'Moung,' without prefixing 'Ko.' It is highly improper, and he requests that I will direct the proud servant to address him in future as 'Ko Moung Daw' and nothing less. I undertake to correct the boy at once, but my wandering eye happens to rest upon the delinquent as I speak, and I think after all Moung Tso has some excuse for his aggressive pride. What village Burman —for such he is—could parade amongst his fellow-countrymen in a London-made black tail-coat and receive their just admiration, without rising the least bit in his own estimation? The total

sacrifice of comfort is to him as nothing, as, conscious of the sensation his appearance creates, he swaggers blandly down the street, smoking one of my cheroots.

I call him to me and administer the wigging he wants. I wish I could do justice to the figure before me; a sturdy, dark-skinned youth, five foot nothing in height, with masses of black hair drawn off his face and neck, coiled in a loose shaggy 'young' or knot on the top of his head. His garments are but two; a red cotton putsoe, tucked tightly up round his thighs as if to conceal it as much as possible, and a superannuated black tail-coat, built for a six-foot Briton, which hangs from his shoulders in graceful amplitude. The sleeves are turned back to show the now ragged lining halfway up to the elbows. The buttons are ignored, but the pockets are hardly equal to the strain on their capacity. Those useful receptacles have been taxed by the owner to their utmost extent. His betel box—a lacquer-ware trifle, four inches in diameter and depth—rattles against his calves secure in the depths of one 'back coat-bag' as he calls the tail pocket, and a couple of spoons and the tin cutter keep it company. The other contains a few useful sundries belonging to himself and to me, but why he has bestowed them there he has no explanation to give, and their variety is so wide that I will not hazard a guess.

The inventory comprises, amongst other items, two dusters and his own linen jacket (all dirty), a few boxes of matches, one large mango, a couple more spoons, and an assortment of discharged cartridge cases! As Moung Tso, fraught with apologies, sinks respectfully upon his heels, the contents of his pockets are more extravagantly in his way than ever, and, hidden to the tips of his ears in the turned-up collar, he looks like a large and ugly species of monkey. Crestfallen and humbled, he retires to a corner, and, after discharging the cargo I have detailed above, divests himself of his finery, which he rolls into the tightest possible parcel, evidently feeling his now snubbed condition unequal to supporting the grandeur of his coat for the present.

'We have not heard anything more about the dacoits, Moung Daw,' I say by way of turning the subject.

'I think Shway Hmaw was telling lies,' says the goung confidentially. 'I do not think dacoits would attack *my* village.'

'Then you will be able to get men to row my boat back to Bassein to-morrow?'

A TUMBLER OF MILK.

'Trifles make the sum of human things.'

SYBIL was to dine late. She had never dined late in her life before. That is not to say that Miss Sybil Latimer had never been present during a part or even the whole of that solemn function ushered in nightly by the roll of the gong at eight o'clock. Sybil was an only child and had her privileges, the chief of which was to be the companion of her parents at all times and seasons when not actually engaged in the pursuit of knowledge; but with that stern upholder of etiquette, her mother, all such liberty must be acknowledged as liberty, all relaxations and indulgences recognised as relaxations and indulgences, and even sitting up to dinner must never be called 'dining late.'

Thus up to the present time.

But Sybil was now trembling on the verge of womanhood; her eighteenth birthday, that great birthday in a girl's life, was at hand, and even Lady Georgina allowed that it was time to acknowledge as rights what had hitherto been winked at as irregularities.

The world must be apprised that the heiress was about to step across the Rubicon.

On a like occasion Lady Georgina's nieces, the blooming Mary and Isabella, who won Sybil's envy and admiration, had each been granted a ball of her own, a ball to which half the county had been invited, and at which the fair débutante had reigned as queen; but a ball for Sybil was not to be contemplated for a moment.

'For a delicate creature like her it would be madness, absolute madness,' quoth Colonel Latimer, who took to the full as much charge of his daughter as though she had had no other parent. 'My dear'—to his wife—'you would not, you surely would not think of it,' continued he, stammering with anxiety and consternation. For the idea had been mooted in his presence, and had made the few remaining hairs on his head stand on end with fright.

Her ladyship, however, was quite of his own mind on the subject.

A ball was the last thing she would think of; Sybil would be sure to be overheated, overstrained, overdone in every way. A ball meant a vast amount of fatigue and risk, and a ball dress on a December evening every kind of ill to which the flesh is heir. Then for a ball, the great rooms and all the long, echoing, draughty corridors with which Latimer Hall bristled, would have to be thrown open, and Sybil would have to thread them with the rest. Terrible thought. Last, but not least, who in the neighbourhood was there worthy of leading the heiress on to the floor?

Sir Robert Dovercourt certainly, but unluckily Sir Robert was not a dancing man, and was moreover seldom to be had when wanted. If wanted for a ball, or a picnic, or any sort of festal gathering of the proper, orthodox, family kind, the young baronet might almost be reckoned upon to have 'another engagement,' and Lady Georgina was not the person to like being met by 'another engagement.' Failing Dovercourt, Godfrey Hanbury was the next in succession, and it was a long step from the one to the other. Sybil's mother, who thought hardly anybody could ever be good enough to touch the hem of her daughter's garment, drew up her own beautiful neck at the bare idea of Godfrey, and she and her husband finally agreed together in parental conclave that a dinner party—a formal, frigid, stately dinner party, at which all the old silver and china should be in use, and for which the invitations should be issued weeks beforehand—was the only suitable, sensible, and rational mode of celebrating their darling's entrance into the world.

'Sybil,' quoth the old soldier, shaking his grizzled head—he had not married early, and was now in his sixty-fifth year—'Sybil is a fragile flower; no adverse wind must ever blow upon her. Balls and theatres are for girls of another kind. Great, strong, robust young women,' proceeded he, with ineffable contempt, 'may be able to enjoy such amusements, and derive no injury from them. I am not speaking for others. I am not dictating to other parents; but our daughter is cast in a mould of her own. A delicate, shrinking, sensitive creature,' waving his hand gently to and fro; 'a mere puff of thistledown—that is our Sybil. She is a charge, a great charge. It is our duty to guard, protect, ward off every roughness, every sharpness from her tender frame. And now, now that she has reached the age when dangers of another kind are likely to assail her, we must redouble our exertions. Sybil will be sought after, run after, raced after.

There will be a regular siege laid to Miss Sybil Latimer whenever she appears in public, and her lovely face——'

'Yet, would you believe it,' said Lady Georgina, who had heartily agreed to all, 'would you believe that my sister Diana spoke to me only yesterday about Sybil's want of colour, and asked whether I did not think she would be the better for running about more in the open air? Imagine Sybil running about in the open air in mid-winter! As if I should ever be so mad as to risk my poor darling's health by such rashness! Only yesterday, you remember, we both fancied she had a cough after driving with me, yet I am sure I had the carriage windows closed the whole time. The open air, indeed! The raw, damp, cold, December "open air"! But that was Diana all over.'

'Diana all over,' echoed he. 'Your sister thinks that all the family should be as tough and rough as her branch of it. Because she and her daughters are able for anything——'

'And they will certainly grow coarse, as I hinted yesterday. I was determined Diana should not have it all her own way. And as I could see plainly what was in her mind—indeed she almost said that we overdid it in our care of Sybil—I had my answer. I said, "My dear, your girls look almost *too* well. There is such a thing as looking *too* well. What a skin gains in colour it often loses in delicacy. A skin cannot be too smooth. Does it not strike you that Isabel's skin is perhaps hardly quite as smooth as it was?" That was how I answered Diana.'

'And very well you answered too. Yes, I think Isabel has too much bloom. At present, while she is quite young, this may be overlooked, for she is a pretty girl as girls go, though of course not equal to Sybil; but in a few years' time I would not answer for it that either of your nieces will not have developed too fully, that they will not have grown coarse, as you say, with all that walking, and riding, and skating, and tennis-playing. Your sister thinks it healthy. I am no great admirer of such healthiness myself,' owned the Colonel, frankly.

'At any rate it would never suit our child,' assented Lady Georgina. 'I am thankful that nobody can interfere with us about her. Diana may do as she pleases with her own daughters, but it is rather too hard that she should wish to manage ours. And imagine Sybil brought up like Mary and Isabel! If anything were to happen to Sybil——' The door opened and Sybil entered.

A fragile-looking creature, as her father had said, pale, slight, and bending, with soft dark eyes that looked wistfully out upon the world, and a thoughtful brow, almost too pensive for one so young.

Sybil was seldom heard to laugh; it would have been too much to expect that a child so nurtured could laugh with any of the abandonment of youth, but the chiselled lips of her small sensitive mouth would occasionally part in a smile, a smile so rarely sweet, so timid yet so arch, so tremulous yet so keen and apprehensive, that people whose sole acquaintanceship with the heiress had hitherto been through the representation of her parents, or beneath their strictest supervision—we had almost said intervention—told each other that nobody as yet knew anything about the real Sybil Latimer, and that, carefully hid as this being was from mortal view, she yet existed in other form than that presented to the world.

'If one could only get *at* her!' sighed the girl's own next of kin, the Lady Diana, and Mary, and Isabel, above alluded to. 'If one could only *ever* see Sybil without those two pairs of eyes which hover over her from hour to hour!'

'If we do but propose a walk, or a ride, or a talk upstairs,' cried the lively Isabel, 'Aunt Georgina has a thousand objections on the tip of her tongue. It is Sybil's hour for lying down, or her hour for taking her tonic, or her hour for something else. The amount of medicine of which Sybil partakes in the course of the week would keep a poor man's family minus other food for the same length of time. And if she does but stir from the drawing-room fireside for half an hour, it is "Where is Sybil?" from Uncle Henry, or "Have you seen Sybil?" from Aunt Georgina, until some one has to own up as to where she was last seen and heard; and then the poor thing is hunted out and run in again, and penned down in an easy-chair, with a shawl hung over the back if there be but a breath from the doorway; and she is begged to say whether she is not cold, nor chilly, nor shivering, when she is far more likely to be faint from the heat, and suffocating for want of air.'

'Her poor little white face quite haunts me sometimes,' subjoined Lady Diana.

'And her voice, mamma; such a little low, soft, toneless voice. I don't think Aunt Georgina would even like her to speak so that she could be heard across the table. Oh, I know she

thinks we chatter too much, and too fast, and too everything, but I do wish poor Sybil might be allowed not to whisper.'

'I seldom even hear her whisper.'

'She is afraid of you, mamma; she is afraid of us all. I suppose,' said Isabel, with a little blush, 'I suppose she has found out that we do laugh about her—not exactly at her, no one could laugh *at* Sybil—but about her: about all the odd things they make her do, and the clothes they make her wear, and the way they treat her altogether. If only Sybil could be got away from Uncle Henry and Aunt Georgina, if only she——'

'It is of no use your making schemes for your cousin, my love,' interrupted her mother, promptly. 'I have tried all I could do, and said all I could say, and it came to nothing. Worse than nothing, it created a soreness on the subject. So that now my tongue is tied, and though I have set others on, to see whether they might not have more success, it has been equally in vain. Nothing will open the eyes of your uncle and aunt. They will go their own way, and all I can say is, I hope they may not live to repent it.'

Such being the state of things at Latimer Hall, it will be understood why so much importance attached to the simple fact of Sybil's dining late on the occasion of her eighteenth birthday. Everything that the only child did, or thought, or felt was of importance. She was made to think of herself as the principal personage of the place, its pervading spirit, and the chief end of both her parents' lives.

Every habit, or rule, or law, had reference primarily to her; and in her health, her comfort, and her convenience was found an interest which grew with every added year.

How such an exotic was ever to expand or develop mentally, how she was to thrive or flourish bodily had their sheltering arms been withdrawn, was a problem neither Colonel Latimer nor his wife cared to face. They were there to protect, support, hold between finger and thumb as it were, the gossamer-like creature given them for a child, and with their whole hearts they believed that nothing which care, affection, or unremitting watchful study could bestow upon their darling, was wanting on their part. The conviction was a just one—it was wisdom alone that was needed.

But oh! the martyrdom which that single want inflicted on a helpless victim!

Many and many a time the pillow of the gentle girl would be

wet with tears of shame, grief, or disappointment, unsuspected by all. Many and many a time would the quiet obedience so unhesitatingly yielded send the stinging blood to her cheek. Often and often would she hang her meek young head to hide the cloud which no endeavours could altogether keep from overshadowing her brow. From earliest days it had been so—she felt, she fancied, it must be so for ever. It was hers 'not to make reply;' hers 'not to reason why;' hers simply to suffer, trust, and love; more, to smother all outward testimony of the sobs, the distress, which would have vent when none was by to view or hearken, when the candle was out at night, and only the form of the old nurse could be seen in the far distance of the next room, still and motionless, scarce venturing to stir hand or foot, lest the sound should disturb the supposed sleeper. Sybil would bury her face in the kindly pillow and weep freely then.

Oh, why was she so different from others? Why was her lot to be so strangely apart from that of all around her? No one was ever like her—she was never like the rest. How happy they must be! How ineffably lonely and dull she often was!

By-and-by conscience would begin to prick, however, and the poor child would tell herself she was the naughtiest, wickedest, most ungrateful being in the whole wide world; that poor papa and mamma, against whom she was repining and fretting, loved her dearly, and only wanted her good in all they did—and the tears would flow afresh at this, the cruellest thought of all.

But they were different tears from those which had gone before. The hot, scalding drops which had blistered Sybil's cheeks as they ran, had had their own deep fount of bitterness in a sense of wrong and injustice, and with them no softening dews of penitence had mingled; and as this secret fount was ever being fed afresh, it was little wonder that its waters would sometimes swell into a flood that well nigh overflowed.

Scarce a day passed at one period of the girl's life but what it brought its own pang.

What agonies, for instance, would a showery afternoon cost the owner of that curiously cut, carefully invented outer garment which never failed to be handed into the carriage or hung across the Colonel's arm, when Sybil was of the party! Hapless Sybil, who must presently suffer herself to be enfolded in the loathed wrap, would almost sooner have died than have faced her cousins thus, had the choice been offered her. Yet how often had the very

thing most dreaded taken place—the meeting which brought with it such throes of shame, actually come to pass! From pure compassion, open inquiries and mirth had come at length to be suppressed, but what signified it? Sybil knew—well did she know—how it would be the moment her back and the backs of her parents were turned. What booted it that, all unconscious of the curled corners of Lady Diana's mouth, 'We have had such an excellent cloak made for Sybil,' the proud father would say, exhibiting it and her with a satisfaction unconcealed? Lady Diana would, it is true, only nod in answer, and he would perceive nothing; but Sybil knew that her aunt could not speak for laughing.

'Turn round, my dear,' the Colonel would run on, 'turn and let your aunt see the other side. Look, Diana; do you see the cut of that? No cold air can penetrate in there, can it? Nor creep up that sleeve, eh, can it? Nor chill the back of the neck? All our own idea, her mother's and mine. Made to order. Made on purpose for Sybil. Not another cloak like it in London.' Lady Diana would not answer him a word, but Sybil almost fancied a caress in the hand laid upon her own humbled, drooping little shoulders presently.

Again it would be the anxious restrictions, cautions, and reminders of her fond guardians which, well enough for a child of six, embittered the ear of the maiden of sixteen.

If Sybil were lunching out—for this dissipation in a sociable neighbourhood would now and again be permitted under the loving care and surveillance of the elderly couple—every morsel would be watched and every dish inspected. A throbbing little heart would be almost sure to be set a-going ere the meal was over by something such as this, 'Sybil, my darling, you know what Dr. Rhubarb said. Anything the least rich at table was to be strictly avoided. Is not that gravy a little rich? If so, do not take it, my love. Keep your vegetables to the other side of the plate.' 'Sybil has to be so very particular,' to host and hostess.

This from Lady Georgina.

Sybil's father would go yet further. 'Sybil has such an uncommonly delicate stomach,' would be distinctly caught in the Colonel's deep bass, supposed, but only supposed, to be lowered to an undertone. Oh, the rush of hot blood to Sybil's brow at the sound!

If only, only they would not talk about her, would not draw

attention to her, would let her alone as other girls were let alone! She would avoid gravy, vegetables, everything—she would eat dry bread, if she might but eat it unobserved and uncommented upon.

How she would envy the healthy, hearty lads and lasses around her, country-bred children whose parents and guardians never troubled their heads as to what they ate, or drank, or wore—once it were on—who might tumble about on the ice, frolic in the snow, dance the long winter nights away, and toss among the haycocks on summer afternoons. Sybil was never allowed to run, or jump, or toss. She was not to be made too hot, nor too cold, nor too tired—and above all, she was never to be excited. Her cousins, when children, had been wont to shout aloud at their play. Sybil had once been heard to shout too. This had disturbed the Colonel and Lady Georgina for days afterwards.

To make one of the noisy, merry, riotous party of which Lady Diana was always the head and front, was the summit of bliss in the eyes of the solitary child. She would watch one and another of the little ones, as, fresh from their sports, they would run straight to their mother's lap, panting and glowing, spreading their mud-stained little hands upon her breast, kissing her with their hot, moist, merry lips, all unrepressed and unrebuked.

And yet, of course, *of course*, she could not doubt her parents' affection. It was only that Aunt Diana was different, and Aunt Diana seemed to understand. What delightful strong boots and woollen gloves Mary and Isabel wore, and what nice, rough, fashionable-looking coats they had! Poor Sybil's heart would be nearly broken as she compared those coats, and those plain, serviceable, unremarkable hats and frocks, with her own constructed, invented, unique articles of attire, every one of which had been designed on some strange unknown pattern for herself alone, and for whose every seam special and minute instructions had had to be given. Even her stockings were at all times woven to order; even those simple accoutrements could be turned into instruments of torture. It will scarcely be credited why, but the fact was this, that the poor little toes were severally encased as though in gloves.

Now this secret Sybil hoped and almost prayed was unknown beyond the precincts of her own home.

The distortion was not visible, not visible ordinarily; but the dread lest any unforeseen circumstance might lead to its detection was for many years one of the haunting terrors of the young

girl's life. Little did either parent dream to what was due many an apparent readiness to comply with their wish to refuse an invitation, since not a syllable would be breathed in mortal ear of Sybil's inability to face the risk that lurked therein—since it would only need Lady Georgina's 'Be sure that Miss Sybil changes her slippers,' to open gulfs of possible misery.

Once the acute little ear, ever on the stretch, had caught a terrible opening sentence. 'Sybil is a great sufferer from cold feet,' delivered in the old Colonel's most impressive aside.

She had almost torn her playmates out of hearing. At every moment she had expected to hear the revelation, followed by all the self-complacent prolixity in which Colonel Latimer was wont to indulge when once upon his hobbyhorse, and then—Sybil could not bear to think of what might have happened then. If once Mary, or Isabel, or the boys knew!

Now the truth was that they did know, but pity sealed their lips. Pity sealed the lips of most people, when the pale-faced little girl was by. Who could bring the scarlet flush to that brow, and the quiver to that lip?

'The sweetest girl under heaven, Sir Robert.' It was Lady Diana who spoke. 'The sweetest, truest, most loyal, lovable nature. How my sister and her husband——' Here the speaker choked indignantly and remembered herself. When in the vein, Lady Diana's tongue was apt to run away with her. 'Lady Georgina is, of course, entirely devoted to her daughter,' proceeded she presently, 'but all the same she is cruel to her, cruel beyond everything. Oh, don't look at me like that, Sir Robert. Bless me! I thought you knew what kind of cruelty I mean. Sybil's parents worship the very ground she treads upon, but the ground must be carpeted, cushioned, padded, till she can neither see nor feel what she is doing. She is perfectly conscious herself of this—and that is what I mean by Lady Georgina's being cruel. Sybil perceives everything incongruous and absurd in the mode of her upbringing. Her parents, on the other hand, perceive nothing, and will take advice from nobody. It is sufficient for them that some real or fancied want of Sybil's is supplied. They care not in the slightest whether or no public opinion is outraged by the manner in which it is done. My niece is not strong, not naturally strong, but she is by no means so delicate as they imagine, or as they have done their best to make her. She wants sunshine, warmth, freedom, merrymaking, laughter. In

her earlier days she wanted to romp, and shout, and tear about in the open air'—(the 'open air' in Lady Diana's lips was to Sybil's parents as a red rag to a bull)—'now,' proceeded the sensible and warm-hearted creature, 'now that she is older, she wants to be let alone, to devise her own little projects, follow her own bent, and busy her hands and her brain in ways of her own choosing. The poor child does not want to be set to do every single thing she does. It would be amusing, if it were not so absurd, to hear a great girl of seventeen, nearly eighteen now, directed and instructed, and questioned and cross-questioned, as to how every moment of her time is to be, or has been passed. If Sybil were a fool— But she is not by any means a fool! So far from it, I am persuaded that my niece has considerable force of character, and that all this grinding down and cramping in has not been able entirely to subdue it. She submits her will, but not without difficulty. And she is a finely strung child—well, scarcely a child now, but I must always think of her as one,—it is dreadful to her to have every little fancy held up to public view, and forced upon the attention of an audience. Sybil knows and sees what they are thinking, while her parents are entirely unconscious. My goodness! what scenes I have seen!' and Lady Diana turned up her eyes and raised her hands with the unction of a true orator. 'Well, well,' proceeded she, 'well, well. Perhaps they will be wiser some day; but I must say that the whole thing is a never-ceasing fret to me, and that the patience with which that dear child bears with my poor foolish sister and her still sillier husband—Colonel Latimer is the most obstinate man in existence, Sir Robert—I say that Sybil's obedience and dutiful submission towards them often brings the tears to my eyes.'

'You are a good woman,' said Sir Robert, who had listened to every word of the harangue. 'You—you are a good woman.'

There was something in his tone which made Lady Diana look up. 'Sybil is very pretty,' said she, softly.

'Very pretty.'

'And quite tall enough for so slight a figure.'

'Quite tall enough.'

'If she were only better dressed.'

Sir Robert smiled.

'I say, if she were only better dressed, Sir Robert; but no doubt you think that is only a woman's notion.'

'No, indeed, Lady Diana, I am sure that I—I agree with you, but after all, you know, a frock is easily changed.'

'Sybil's frocks are not.' The speaker laughed; a laugh which had reference to some of the Colonel's whispered revelations. 'However,' she added, recollecting that she had something yet to say, 'however, I understand your meaning. After all, dress is nothing—nothing. You are going to the birthday party, I believe?'

He believed so too.

'Well, you will take Sybil in to dinner, I have very little doubt. You know she is to dine late'—Lady Diana, like the rest, attached a world of meaning to the simple fact—'Sybil is to dine late, and I understand is to be made a sort of queen of the feast; so, although her mother will have old Lord Furzecott, who could hardly be put off with a chit like Sibyl, she will be taken in by the next in precedence, probably yourself.'

He bowed and looked—she was sure he looked—pleased.

'Do try to draw her out,' proceeded Sybil's aunt, earnestly. 'Make her talk. Make her answer for herself, for once. It is a real opportunity; for her parents cannot well answer in her place and anticipate every syllable from the two ends of the dinner-table. They would if they could,' and she laughed afresh, 'but luckily the table is long;—oh, but,' and her face fell, 'but I am afraid you will be placed at my sister's left hand. Oh, that would spoil all, for that poor old thing—Lord Furzecott, you know—he will only nod his head and mumble over his plate; he will require far, far too little attention, I fear. Well, you must do your best. Seize every chance. You will be repaid—indeed you will. Sir Robert, I love Sybil'—which was a very good-natured thing to say on the part of a woman who had daughters of her own.

But, to be sure, Lady Diana was shrewd as well as kind. She had formed her own ideas on the subject; and she now told herself that neither Mary nor Isabella would ever need go a-begging, that young Dovercourt was nothing to them nor they to him, and that, taking one thing with another, he was the very man for her niece.

Sybil would be happy with him, and he would be the making of her: the fond parents would never refuse such an offer, and so much could not with certainty be predicted of any other likely to come in their way.

'Good character, first-rate position, and close proximity,' nodded the excellent aunt to herself; 'they will never have such

another chance—never. It would break their hearts, poor things, to part with their ewe lamb; and to keep her near at hand they would give up a great deal,—but there is really no one else at all suitable. As for Godfrey Hanbury'—and she turned up her nose as Lady Georgina had done, and looked equally handsome and haughty as she did so. 'Sir Robert is poor, but his family is as good as our own; so some of the Latimer money may very well flow into the Dovercourt coffers. He is very nice—he is more, he is delightful—and so comfortably stupid that they would all get on together like a house on fire. A brilliant man, even an ordinarily clever one, would never put up with Henry—never for a moment. But poor dear Sir Robert, with his round face and simple blue eyes—I think they rather lit up as he listened to me,' and she smiled to herself afresh—'I think I contrived to work an idea into his honest noddle. Now, if only those tiresome people—really, Henry and Georgina are such a pair of simpletons I am at the end of all patience with them—if only they will not go and do something ridiculous at this crisis, I think we shall achieve something. But they are such—it was with the utmost difficulty that I could prevail on them to allow Sybil to be handed in to dinner by the only man they would dream of for her husband! It was that lucky hit of suggesting that she might be made a sort of birthday queen of, that carried weight enough. Well, I have done my part, and now if only Sir Robert will do his!'

Sir Robert was ready enough to do his. To him, as to the rest of the world, this 'dining late' of Sybil Latimer's meant the commencement of a new epoch, and as he had known her, off and on, from childhood, in a desultory, haphazard, come-and-go sort of fashion, it is not to be wondered at that he took an interest in the matter.

Had he been let to do so, he would soon have managed to be friends with Sibyl. He had a talent for making friends, and, even as it was, she was less shy and more at her ease with him than with anybody beyond the precincts of Latimer Hall. His frankness, his hearty laugh, and his broad, red, beaming face had an infinite allurement for one who was never red-faced (except from blushes), and who did not know what it was to laugh aloud. Sir Robert would roar with merriment when thoroughly amused. He would lean back in his chair, and enjoy the joke to its very dregs; while poor Sybil, who could see funny things too, and would have had quite a little store of humour of her own if it had

not been so persistently quelled, would look at him with an envy which, as years passed, gradually gave way to admiration. How big, and bold, and brown he was! How little he cared which way the wind blew, or how hard the rain fell! How free he made with his tongue and his step within the muffled, hushed domain in which she herself had been taught to glide and murmur until the very sound of a door shutting sharply or a footfall treading fearlessly would sometimes set her pulses in a flutter! Then how readily, and pleasantly, and altogether equably would Sir Robert chat with either parent, not as though he had a moment's hesitation about responding to their inquiries or combating their arguments!

Once or twice he had actually spoken up for her; he had dared to plead for an immunity against which even Lady Diana had not ventured to protest. He had not, it is true, been successful—no one ever would have been successful—but he had done it, and Sybil had almost adored him for doing it.

Grief and gratitude had mingled their bitter and sweet in her heart that night: grief that her friend should have known of the rule which was to her so deep an indignity, and gratitude that he should have striven to right her wrong.

Thenceforth he had become her hero, and while Lady Georgina was saying to herself, in her supposed worldly wisdom, that it was of no use her and her husband's ever giving a thought to young Dovercourt, for that Sybil, dutiful and obedient as she was, would be certain to turn from his ugly face; and that, so surely as she did so, Henry would give in, and she herself would give in (seeing that Sybil's happiness was to them all in all)—while the poor creature, who, after all, was a mother and an affectionate one, was telling herself this with a sigh—what was Miss Sybil about, but wondering, and pondering, and peering out from under her long lashes to see what had become of this very Sir Robert, and questioning more and more whether he was in his turn ever giving a thought to her?

Once she had been nearly sure that he liked her, that he liked her better than other people did, understood her more than they did—and—and—even admired her just a little, and looked at her just now and then; but, for some months preceding the birthday party, the young man had been absent from the neighbourhood, and the news that he had not only been invited, but had accepted his invitation, gave her heart almost a shock. Then had followed the intimation that, at her aunt's suggestion (for the first time,

Lady Diana's interference in a programme of their own had been graciously received by the prickly couple)—'at her aunt's suggestion' had been repeated by both—it had been settled that she was to be taken in to dinner by the bachelor baronet.

Sybil had not said a word. But she had looked, as she had felt, happy: so happy, indeed, that Lady Georgina, ever on the watch for any change of colour or turn of feature, had suddenly paused, drawn a long breath, and gazed wistfully into her daughter's face. Did it strike her that the time had come when even that limpid surface might not reveal all that lay in the depths beneath? At any rate the name of Sir Robert Dovercourt did not again rise to her lips, and presently she reverted to other matters connected with the all-important matter on hand. For such an august occasion Sybil was to have a really smart new dress. It could not, of course, be cut, as was the prevailing mode, low in the neck and short in the sleeve, and there must still be this and that hygienic precaution observed in the making; but still it was to be pretty, it was to be fashionable, and it was to be had from a first-rate London dressmaker. In this last lay the youthful débutante's chief source of satisfaction and comfort. No really first-rate potentate, such as Lady Georgina named, would, for her own sake, turn out a birthday dress for a young lady of eighteen that was not by means of art and skill worthy of her reputation. The tailors had, she knew, demurred to her coats, and had only been prevailed upon to yield on the plea that for a little girl, a mere schoolroom miss, appearance could not signify, health must be everything. Hints had, however, been dropped that even in her parents' eyes appearance was now to a certain extent to be held of consequence, and Sybil trod on air. At last, *at last*, she was to be as others were, wear what they wore, and turn and step about without that terrible consciousness of being followed by curious and derisive glances, which had permeated her life hitherto. At last—perhaps, at last—one pair of eyes might look not only on her, but on her trappings, with all the ignorant but delightful homage of a man. Sir Robert, her old friend Sir Robert, should see that poor little Sybil could be 'fine' for once.

How fast flew Sybil's feet up the broad oaken staircase when one bright frosty morning it was announced that the box—the box of boxes—had arrived from town! It had been taken to her dressing-room, she was informed, where it was already being opened; she waited to hear no more.

The lid was off, in spite of her haste, ere she was at the door, and the first sight that met her enraptured vision was that of glossy folds of white satin festooned over with silvery veilings and wreaths and trails of shining blossoms, being drawn forth from rustling depths—a dream of beauty never to be forgotten.

Sybil stood still and clasped her hands. Never had she beheld anything more pure and exquisite,—and it was to be for her, for *her*. A sigh of ecstasy escaped, a soft murmur burst from her parted lips. And then, to be sure, the fairy robe itself was not all. There were besides tiny, sparkling, beaded, white satin slippers, such slippers as Cinderella's prince might himself have fallen in love with; and there were a pair of the longest, softest, most delicately perfumed gloves, gloves that would certainly reach to Sybil's elbow, if not beyond; and best, because least expected of all—for Lady Georgina's orders had been lavish, but had for this occasion been entrusted to one person only—something still longer than the gloves, still softer, still more dainty; something that unrolled and unrolled, and grew more and more bewitching with every turn, until finally resolved into the most beautifully embroidered silken stockings that heart of maiden could desire, with, oh! joy of joys, no hidden horrors, no discomforting secrets thereto attached. Her cup ran over. It seemed as if all at once every thorn had been extracted from her roses.

If the first view were ravishing, the next step was still more enchantingly novel and important. The whole contents of the box must be tried on without delay; two attendants lent their aid, Lady Georgina, eyeglass in hand, looked on, and only the young lady's now acknowledged young-ladyhood prevented the worthy Colonel's being present also. As it was, he hung about in readiness to confer on any debatable point, or to pronounce upon the whole.

'Are you sure they fit? Do they *quite* fit?' earnestly demanded the mother, as the small feet in their wondrous new casings were displayed before her. 'Sybil, my precious, do not scruple to tell me exactly how they feel. Are they easy? Are they comfortable? Not too tight *anywhere*? Not too high in the heel, nor too low in the instep, nor too narrow across the toes? Do they pinch you in the *slightest*? Do they hurt *anywhere*? Say if they do at once, my love; they can be sent back, and fresh ones ordered if——'

'They are very nice indeed, thank you, mamma.' Sybil's young face was aglow all over.

'They *look* very nice certainly, but still if they are not comfortable——'

'Indeed, mamma, they could not be more comfortable.'

'And the patience the bit thing has wi' a' her mamma's fidgets and fancies, and her no bein satisfyed with naethin, is a sicht to see,' cried old nurse, Scotch to the backbone, in her heart at this. 'Puir bit cratur! she canna be *let be* e'en aboot a best goon for the birthday, but it maun be "Sybil, my bonnie, it's bound to pinch ye some gait." Aweel, her mamma means nae ill, but the folks is few and far atween that could thole it!'

Sybil was now being arrayed in the satin folds.

'Charming!' cried Lady Georgina, for once caught in a womanly snare. 'Charming!' and for a full minute she said nothing more.

But all too soon anxiety was at work again, and over and over again had it to be repeated that every detail was as it should be, that the waist was not too long, nor the collar too high, nor the sleeves too tight. Was the skirt at least not rather narrow? Could Sybil move, and breathe, and recline, at ease? Would she run no risk of tripping over her lace in front, or of being entangled in the train behind? Would those high-heeled slippers —— But here Lady Georgina actually brought herself to a standstill, and dangled the eyeglass nervously from her hand. Now the truth was that 'heels' were not only hers but Colonel Latimer's inveterate and openly proclaimed aversion, and long and loudly had they waged war with them on Sybil's behalf.

'Manacles, distortions, deformities,' had been the Colonel's cry. Were it once to come to his knowledge that any living creature had dared to attach to the feet of his precious child, or rather to her shoes, their obnoxious component part, speech would not have sufficed for his wrath, and no power on earth would have prevented his sending back the pretty, shining, sparkling little apples of discord without the delay of an instant.

But Lady Georgina was not a man, nor a soldier. She looked at her daughter, and, as we have said, suggestion and inquiry alike melted away. She could not do it.

Of Sybil's own innocent delight, of her pride in displaying her small self so transformed and illumined to the sympathetic household, of the secret hopes to which the present hour gave rise within her modest bosom, fluttering and thrilling like that of a

frightened bird beneath its unwonted sensations, we must not now pause to speak.

Suffice it to say that all went well, and the day of the dinner party drew on.

Of this in itself the young girl had no dread. By nature Sybil was fond of society, easily pleased, readily amused, and disposed to believe that the most of those she met were as kind, and good-humoured, and benevolent, as they appeared to be. People were always kind to *her*; and from having been so much in the company of her elders, the current topics of the day were neither found to be devoid of interest nor above her comprehension; nor would she have shrunk from being questioned and appealed to, had she been allowed to reply without the reply being descanted upon, and dissected piece by piece. Might she but have talked as others talked—but why hark back to the old grievance? There was one person at least with whom Sybil Latimer was never miserable, never upon the tenter-hooks, and with him—a sigh of satisfaction escaped whenever she thought of it—with him she was to pass the greater part of the eventful evening. Accordingly there only remained one subject for conjecture and anxiety now to feed upon, only one terror had still at times the power to keep sweet slumber from her eyelids. That haunting spectre was—a tumbler of milk.

Every evening at eight o'clock, when Sybil sat down to make her usual light and easily digested supper during her parents' more solid and protracted meal, a tumbler of milk would be placed at her right hand, and it was one of the laws of the Medes and Persians in the old Colonel's household that for no reason and under no circumstances was that tumbler of milk ever to be omitted. In his eyes the nutritious draught was the chief support, the very backbone as it were, of Sybil's fragile existence, and for this reason it had long been one of her worst enemies.

In vain had Lady Diana urged that milk, in conjunction with other food, was by no means the harmless and healthful diet he supposed. His hand had been raised on the instant, and his tone had been heightened also, as he had declaimed and expounded, with invariably the same result—incredulity and a shrug of the shoulders on her part, renewed and inflamed obstinacy on his.

In other respects the meal had been, after infinite deliberation and debate, advanced with advancing years; so that, from the earlier plate of rusks and butter, it had now been turned into a

minute helping of fish, with perhaps a potato in gravy to follow (neither soup nor meat was supposed to suit), but whatever there was or was not, the one thing needful, in the eyes of those who had not themselves to drink it, was the tumbler of milk, and the reason for its being so, with all the usual additional explanations and discussions, was given *con amore* to anybody present who inadvertently laid himself or herself open to receive them.

The point now was, would that ghostly tumbler appear to confront and overwhelm poor happy Sybil on this one glorious evening of her hitherto sunless life? She dared not inquire, had not the courage to awaken memories that might be dormant on the subject. The risk was too great.

Supposing, just supposing, that silence might mean a tacit consent to the absence just for once of the degrading relic of the nursery, would she not have herself to thank, if by any ill-timed inquisitiveness she were to bring down evil on her own head? Provided a discreet reserve were maintained on the other hand, it was quite on the cards that Barlington—Barlington, who was the soul of propriety and as severe an upholder of etiquette as his mistress herself—would take it upon himself to forget.

George and Thomas, the two underlings, would take their cue as in duty bound from their leader, and consider it impossible that anything so homely could appear at the gorgeous banquet. Could she but have hoped that her parents would have shared the feeling? Any such hope, however, at least with regard to the lynx-eyed Colonel, was vain as vain could be; it all depended on his not remembering and not perceiving. But what a thread to hang upon!

As the hour drew nearer the matter loomed more important. At first it had been one of many cares, an anxiety amid numerous anxieties, but as these gradually subsided and at length there had remained only the dreaded tumbler of milk and nothing besides, it attained a magnitude which not unnaturally dwarfed the lesser sources of gratification. Then came listening, watching, and straining to discover, if possible, whether or no everything had been said, any order given.

She did not think so. She could not find any sign of its having been the theme of remark in any way. On the afternoon of the party fortune favoured her yet the more; she was able to slip unperceived into the dining-room, all decked out and almost complete for the evening, and one hasty glance at the place which

she knew had been prepared for herself sufficed to show the now joyous and triumphant little maid that no tumbler of milk was expected there. Her glasses—one, two, three—were duly placed and arranged like those of other people. She asked no more. Oh, the joy of robing and trimming, of alternately dallying and hurrying over her toilette as eight o'clock approached! How early did Sybil repair to her room, and how fondly did she stroke and smooth the satin, hold the trailing garlands up to view, peep at the fairy slippers, stretch and powder and uncover the many buttons of the long gloves! Ready long before she really need have been, there was every minute something to alter, to rearrange, to improve. Now it was an ornament here, now a riband there, now a buckle to be adjusted, now a lock of hair to be fastened.

'Come, my love;' Lady Georgina herself at the door. 'Come and enter the drawing-room with me, and—and—God bless you, my darling!' whispered the poor fond mother, with the water rising to her eyes. For once she had not a single fault to find.

For once Sybil neither shrank nor shrivelled beneath the eyes turned upon her as she walked up the great saloon. Sir Robert Dovercourt was already there—she was glad he was there. He looked at her—she was glad he should look. He spoke to her—and she was proud to be spoken to.

'Looks really well for once, does she not?' whispered Lady Diana, on the alert as ever; 'looks as she ought to do, and not as she ever does do—or at least has done before. Now' (this was all to Sir Robert, who stood near), 'now, you remember what I told you. Oh, don't stand staring at Sybil, Sir Robert; we can all see that she is a new creature in that nice new dress, but have your wits about you. Don't allow this chance to pass. Listen; if you find that your partner is to sit close to either parent, just get into a wrong place and don't be got out of it.'

Sir Robert's honest face flushed up with humour and comprehension. She saw she could depend upon him.

Then the move to the dining-room began, and he made for Sybil's side. 'I am to have you to myself, Sybil. That is jolly.'

'Oh, yes;' quite ready to assent.

'Did you know before me?'

'Oh, yes.' Sybil always spoke the simple truth.

'How did you know?' proceeded he, however. 'You had no business to know. Now, supposing you had wanted to have some one else?'

'Well?'

'You would have made your mother throw me over.'

'Oh, no,' said Sybil earnestly.

'Oh, yes, you would.'

'Indeed I should not; I never should have thought of doing so.'

'Why not?'

'Why, I never ask mamma *anything*;' and the house of cards on which he had begun to build fell over on the instant.

'Oh,' said Sir Robert, showing in his tone something of this; 'oh, I had hoped—but no matter. I see how it is. Your mother arranged it all, and you had no voice. Girls do have a voice in such matters sometimes, don't they?' He sighed, and shot a side glance. At the same moment his well-tutored eyes discerned that if his place were on the left hand of Lady Georgina, at least he was not obliged to know as much. The places were not named.

'I think we might sit here;' and the sturdy baronet seized the back of a chair almost in the middle of the table. 'Eh? What?' as a footman officiously hurried forward to correct the mistake. 'Eh? Oh, we shall do very well here. No, never mind; we'll stop where we are, thank you,' in decided accents, and Lady Diana's laughing eyes applauded the speaker from the opposite side.

'Delightful!' thought Sybil, 'delightful!' 'Now,' pondered she presently, 'now I am quite safe, even from the tumbler of milk. Papa cannot see me at all, and mamma is not likely to be watching. If mamma were but in her place——' And the next moment Lady Georgina was in her place.

A momentary hesitation, a disturbed glance as she beheld what had happened, but that was all. Lady Georgina Latimer was far too well-mannered a woman to cause a scuffle at her own board and among her own guests; there had been a blunder, but she could not help it; if young Dovercourt had been stupid enough to mistake his instructions, he must take the consequences; he had been told where he was to go, and he ought to have done as he was bid; she could not pull about her dinner-table in order to give him his proper precedence, and so he must be shown; he must now sit where he was, and he would know better another time.

Apparently Sir Robert was content in his disgrace. His broad,

red, healthy, jolly face had never looked more replete with satisfaction and good humour. It was an ugly face—an ugly face according to commonly accepted canons—but somehow it was one that everybody liked and that no one was ever sorry to see. More than one among the ladies present would cheerfully have exchanged the elegant, faultlessly attired youth at her side for Sybil's rough-and-ready partner, who was too much of a man, and too big a man altogether, to give his clothes, or his manners, or himself in any way very much of his attention, and had in consequence the whole of it to bestow on his companion. It was well known that Sir Robert could afford to defy even Lady Georgina. Lucky Sybil!

Now Sybil felt her luck to the very bottom of her young heart. She was, it is true, almost a child, but she was almost a woman also.

The birthday party in itself, with all its attendant joys and immunities, would have satisfied the one half of her nature, but it was the other half which now experienced a keener, sweeter pleasure. A woman's hopes and fears and flutterings were beginning to stir within her breast, and she was conscious of an emotion other than she had ever known, and one before which all else paled and faded. Formerly a kind word or look or merry confidence from her old friend had almost certainly been evoked by painful circumstances, or had been followed by some embittering element. Even on the few occasions when it had not been so, when all had gone well, it had struck keenly home to the child's lonely heart that he, who was so much to her, probably scarce yielded more than a passing friendliness, a sort of compassionate goodwill, in return. Of late, to be sure, Sir Robert had seemed to care a little more, to seek her out a little more, but never, never in his life had he looked at her as he did now. And as for his talking to anyone else! Certainly he had on his other side the dullest dame in the county, and one whom even he could not awaken nor invigorate. But still he should have tried, surely he should have tried. Surely the poor lady should not have been allowed to wade through course after course with only the most perfunctory and interjectionary and spasmodic of observations from the gentlemen on either side of her. As a rule she could have depended on Sir Robert Dovercourt, who had the character of being the kindest-hearted and least discriminating talker in the world—a young fellow so happy in himself that he brimmed

over here, there, and everywhere, regardless on whom the sunbeams fell. Was it possible that even Sir Robert could fail for once?'

Sir Robert actually did. There he sat, talking, laughing, eating, telling good stories, cracking good jokes, and sipping good wine, the merriest of the merry, but with ne'er a thought of duty nor of conscience. Poor woman, she never quite forgave him. And she never but believed to her dying day that Sybil cast a glamour then and there over the simple young man, who otherwise would have given no more his heart——. But we anticipate.

Let us return to the tumbler of milk. It was, as we have said, absent, and, in Sybil's eyes, conspicuous by its absence, even from the place which should have been hers. She felt now doubly secure. There was no chance of Lady Georgina's being reminded, nor of Colonel Latimer's reminding himself. The dinner was in full swing, and both were—must be fully engrossed. She need no longer dread her dream of bliss being rudely broken in upon. She might give herself up to it unchecked, play the woman. She would, indeed, content her appetite with a mere thimbleful of the delicious soup (Sybil was fond of soup), whose irrepressible odour issuing from the distant kitchen had assailed her nostrils throughout the day; she would also be on her honour in regard to the fish, decline the sauce, and avert her eyes from the tempting entrées. All of this was nothing; to refrain from every delicacy in or out of season was nothing (indeed, she had of her own accord promised as much in rehearsal, overjoyed to do so, and thus foresee an exemption from outward reminders);—but now even desire to feast upon forbidden fruit was at an end, subdued by an all-powerful rival. Sir Robert could eat and drink and make love all at once—for Sybil it was enough only to receive the last. She asked no more.

'All due to me,' chuckled Lady Diana, from her vantage ground opposite; 'all due to my poking up that dear, nice, stupid fellow, who is the very man for Sybil, but would have had no more the wit to find it out for himself than to fly. Now he will go ahead as though he were in the hunting-field. He will never stop till he has run her in, as he would say. Oh, yes, I can see you doing it, Sir Robert; you have started now and are well off I should imagine, by your looks—and hers. Poor child, what a good time she is having! But what is the matter? What are people looking at? What is Sybil crimsoning at? Some folly of

my senseless prig of a brother-in-law, I'll answer for it. Oh, but that is really *too* bad,' and, in spite of her indignation, the lively lady gave way to mirth she could not restrain. 'Oh, dear! oh, dear!' for Lady Diana had an acute sense of the ludicrous. 'Oh, poor Sybil, poor Sybil! Ha! ha! ha! And, oh, dear! Sir Robert's face! Ha! ha! ha! And, oh, my goodness! what is Sybil going to do? Oh, that incurable idiot, Barlington, to go and present poor Sybil before us all with a great, horrid, invalidish tumbler of milk!'

Well might she say, 'What is Sybil going to do?' Poor Sybil! One moment before, and she had never been so happy in her life. In her fancied security she had been prattling and jesting, and drinking in the exquisite draught of ardour unconcealed, with which Sir Robert's eyes and tongue at once presented her, bending her fair neck the better to give ear to the voice of her enchanter, expanding like a flower in the warmth, responding to the sunshine. And now! It was only a tumbler of milk, but with it the serpent entered into Sybil Latimer's paradise.

That the blow should have fallen thus! That she should have been struck down just when she was treading the celestial heights, when she was inhaling the intoxicating incense, being lured to rapture by the bewitching music!—when, and oh, reader, deign to think this pitiful, and deign to pity—when she was at last free, unfettered, untortured, and at peace!

No word did Sybil speak. Words would have availed nothing; protests, entreaties, rebellion itself even, would now have been all too late; the deed had been done, the sight had been seen, the disgrace was ineffaceable.

Full in the view of all, and uncomely even in the eyes of him who bore it, there was the large white tumbler on its shining tray, and in the accompanying sentence, 'By master's orders, miss,' the hapless victim read her doom afresh.

It happened, moreover, that at the moment a silence fell upon the company, so that her own pale consternation, Sir Robert's mute, round-eyed amazement, and Lady Diana's 'My goodness!' were lost upon nobody, and indeed directed to the one point the looks and intelligence of such as might otherwise have been engaged.

'There is your milk, Sybil.'

Like a dim echo came her father's voice from the bottom of the table. Sybil almost shuddered.

'There is your milk,' repeated he ; and then, horror of horrors, she heard, she was sure she heard, the 'Sybil suffers so much from &c., &c.,' which was the inevitable prelude to revelations and confidences. Of all things Colonel Latimer piqued himself upon being a judicious and thoughtful parent ; the present opportunity for proving himself to be one had been too much for him, and his 'Miss Latimer's milk' had been delivered in a tone that had admitted of no remonstrance. He was now explaining his theory on the subject to the matrons on either side.

But Sybil, what befel her? How did she comport herself? How did she endure the luckless moment?

'Milk, by Jove!' cried a laughing voice in her ear. 'Milk, I declare! Is it for you, Sybil? Is that your fancy?' (her fancy, poor child!) 'Well, upon my word, it is a splendid idea,' pursued Sir Robert, talking comfortably away ; 'looks jolly, and tastes first-rate, I'll answer for it. I never heard of anybody's taking milk at dinner before. I am sure I don't know why they shouldn't though, if they like it; I dare say it tastes uncommonly nice; I——' But here the good-humoured young voice suddenly died away, the blue eyes dropped, and over the speaker's frank open face a queer look stole. 'By Jove!' he might have been heard to whisper to himself beneath his breath. For all down Sybil's scarlet cheeks the tears were streaming.

Of course she should have helped it; of course you and I would have helped it; we would have sunk into the earth, given up the ghost upon the spot, rather than have committed such a terrible, irremediable offence against *les convenances*; but perhaps, on the other hand, we have not had our spirit subdued and our strength broken by years of tutelage amounting to martyrdom, and we have not been, as it were, caught, and caged, and thrust back into our prison again, just when we had spread our wings in one rapturous first flight beyond. This was what had happened to my poor little heroine, and beneath the stroke she sank her head and wept.

'Oh, my goodness! my goodness! my goodness!' Lady Diana's laugh from very horror froze upon her lips. She was no great hand at propriety herself, but this went altogether beyond her. 'Oh, my goodness! that child has done for herself now, at all events,' muttered she, as grave as a judge. 'Who would have believed Sybil did not know better? Well, my good sister and brother, you have only yourselves to thank for this. I hope you

like it. All I can say is, I am thankful it is no child of mine who is making such an exhibition of herself. It will be the talk of the neighbourhood, and everyone will say they have weakened the girl's intellect with their folly. Oh, Sybil, for goodness sake stop!' continued she, almost aloud. 'It is *too* dreadful, and Sir Robert——' But she raised her eyes at the moment, and forgot to finish the sentence. Sir Robert had taken possession of the milk.

'Sybil?' No answer. 'Sybil,' said he again. A low sob. Then a faint 'Yes?'

'You do not want this, and I do,' pursued the speaker, softly; 'let me keep it;' for she had put out her hand. 'I want to take it from you, I want your leave to drink it for you; but'—(everyone else was now talking very fast, and Lady Diana's voice rose above the rest in her gayest, liveliest accents)—'but,' continued the young man, dropping his own tones lower and lower till even the one ear for which they were designed could scarcely catch them, 'but it would be too great an honour; I have no right to ask it, I have no claim to put myself forward as your knight, unless'——(the talking around was still loud, fast, and furious)—'unless,' murmured Sybil's companion very low, 'you will yourself give me the right. Sybil, dear Sybil! may I do this, and everything else for you from this time? May I——,' and he stopped, and held the glass of milk in his hand, gazing into her face. 'Do you understand?' he said.

Understand? Her very heart was bursting.

'I want to fight all your battles for you, to take all your troubles on my shoulders; to care for you, and have you for my own,' fumbled good Sir Robert, not knowing very well in what words to put the feeling with which his great chest was heaving, but no whit reluctant nor embarrassed neither. 'Only say one word, won't you? Because, you see, I must have one word, or else—— Oh, then, never mind about it,' for the chances of obtaining what he sought were obviously small, and it became prudent not to press the point. 'No, never mind,' he went on, 'I ought not to have spoken now, only—only that I can't help it. And if you will just—I say, I may drink it, may I? No, don't look up and down the table; neither your father nor your mother has anything to do with this, no one has anything to do with this, except *you*, *you*, *you* yourself. You, and only you must give me my answer, Sybil. I won't take it from anyone else. I only ask

for a sign, or a look. I shall know what you mean, and you will know what I mean. It is between ourselves. But if I am allowed to drink this—am I to be allowed? . . . Sybil?' . . . Again he paused, and there was no evading nor mistaking that pause.

'Sybil?' Her head bent lower. 'Is it to be "Yes?"' he whispered.

'Yes.'

Sir Robert raised his face, and fronted the assembled guests triumphantly.

'Something has happened,' cried Lady Diana to herself. 'Something has surely happened. He's in earnest. I swear he is in earnest. He has got that wretched milk in his hand, and—good heavens! he looks as though he were going to drink it!'

He drank it to the last drop.

'And now,' he cried exultingly; 'and now?'

She had no words, but neither did he need them. One moment his hand sought hers beneath the table, and he knew that henceforth she would refuse him nothing. . . .

And Sir Robert maintained afterwards, and maintains to this day, that it was the tumbler of milk that did it all.

'For, by Jove! I had always thought Sybil was an uncommonly nice girl, you know,' he averred joyously; 'and I was struck all of a heap by her when she came in that evening, all dressed out so beautifully, you know. But then, that was one thing, and falling in love was another, you know. I don't know—mind you, I only say I don't *know* that I had exactly thought about falling in love with Sybil just then. Of course I should have done it sooner or later; I couldn't have helped myself; but if it had not been for that tumbler of milk—by Jove! I am glad I have not to drink such beastly stuff every day—though to be sure I did not grudge drinking it, and I would do it again for Sybil any time—of course I would. Only I hope to goodness never to see poor Sybil in such a plight again. I can hardly think of it now. I felt as if I could have murdered somebody. That poor child! But I tell you what, she is never going to cry any more, she has promised me that. Bless you, she is as happy as the day is long, now. And she tells me everything, that she does. I know how to get it out of her in spite of all her saying "I am afraid I ought not to tell you," and that sort of thing. That is all nonsense. If I am to be her husband, I shall have to hear it some time, so I may as well begin at once. 'Tis as good as a play. I know all about the coddling and

the fussing, and the queer coats and hats, and the old nurse sitting up in the next room till after she is asleep at night,—oh, by Jove, the whole thing is delicious. Take care of her? Of course I'll take care of her, but it will be in another way, mind you. It shan't be by making her blush up before everybody, and nipping her in the bud at every turn. It shan't be by treating her like something between a fool and a baby. I know what I'm about. Why, Sybil is a new creature already, and as for her parents——' He gulped down the comment in his throat. 'Oh, it's all right, of course,' he concluded cheerfully; 'they are very good sort of people, and we shall get on first-rate. I bear them no grudge, nor yet does Sybil, for that—that—that tumbler of milk.'

NOTES BY A NATURALIST.

A STORM IN THE MARSHES.

'THERE'S some hen-footed fowl in the marsh, some of your waders as you call 'em. I see 'em pitch last night when I left the boat. If you want to see 'em, you can come down in the skiff with me; or if you'd sooner walk, come through the churchyard on to the downs, for they pitched the Medway side.'

So spoke one of my old fisher friends. I preferred to walk, and passed through the old churchyard under its fine walnut trees, the great branches of which were now bare and leafless; recalling, as I looked at many a name I was once familiar with, some of my companions in the expeditions and adventures of my boyhood. After leaving the churchyard I crossed over a few fields which brought me to the downs—gentle elevations, covered with fine short grass.

The bird life here is represented by magpies in small parties, now chattering and scolding at being disturbed. Besides these are a couple of hooded crows and a few green plovers. From this point a splendid view is seen; marsh lands, sea, and shipping; green fields and distant woodlands; whilst right opposite is the Essex coast. From the downs I went straight to the edge of the marsh below, to try and find out where the hen-footed fowl had pitched. The day was bright and warm, even sultry.

And now I am in the marsh, which is covered by countless old mole hillocks, and clumps of rushes, and cut up by pools and dykes; making my way by a track known only to few, through the swamps to the opposite sea-wall, close to where the Medway reaches the salt water. Little has been seen yet except great hares, which start up from the hillocks where they had squatted; red, rough-coated creatures, which look like greyhounds as they speed away. Drawing near to a shallow pool of some extent, fringed round the edge with reed and short flag, I crawl along on the ground to inspect it. Something moves the reeds, and out steps the heron—the Jack-ern of the marshmen—with a cat-like movement; neck stretched a little forward, he slips away on the look-out for what he can get. Nothing comes much amiss; eel or flounder, rats, mice, or birds, all comfort his stomach. Catching sight of me as I rise, he gives a hoarse croak and moves off to

fresh quarters. Further on, near a clump of rushes in a swamp, a water rail runs, jerking his tail; and close by him a spotted crake or rail. They are not alarmed, for no one meddles with them. In the eyes of the marshmen they are worthless hen-footed things. Not many birds have met my view as yet; a mile more and the vegetation begins to change; wild celery, samphire, and sea kale, or wild cabbage, shows all round about, a sure sign that I am nearing the sea, in fact, close on the sea-wall.

And then I saw a sight which I have seen only once in my life, a sight more often heard of than witnessed, and one to be remembered, namely, a cloud of sea gulls fishing. The bright sky, and the dancing, sparkling wavelets, the birds, with their pearl-grey and white bodies, as they rose from the water and dipped down again, and their noise of happy clamour, made a scene which was worth going a long way to see. They had found the smelts, and they like good things when they can get them. A pair of ring dotterels (*charadrius hiaticula*) tripped along with their family just in front of me, pretty, gentle creatures; they are regarded by the coast dwellers in much the same light as the robin is inland. I have never seen a shot fired at them. They are so trustful as they stand and pipe close beside one. After a good look all round, I turned my back on the sea again to wander over the marshes by a different way.

In that part there are gullies worn by the rush of the tide; well inland they go, forming creeks like railway cuttings, half full of water bayed up at one end. In one of these I expected to find the birds; and I was not disappointed. The cry of the red-shank (*scolopax calidris*)—'pool snipe' as they call them—comes from a creek with the whistle of the curlew. Crawling to the edge of the gully through the seablite, I look over and see curlew (*numenius arquata*), and whimbrel (*numenius phœopus*), or Jack curlew, sanderlings (*arenaria calidrix*), red-shanks, gulls, and other birds feeding, washing, and running about, with the tide coming up. On a post, used for tying boats to, a kingfisher is perched, on the look-out for shrimps and other small things. He is a common bird near the saltings. Close to my feet is a dab-chick, or little grebe (*podiceps minor*), a very common bird here. The salt water pool he is at work in is clear as crystal. He is up and down, and round about the sides of it like a little harlequin; he looks to me as if he were flying under the water. Such a gathering of fowl in that part of the marsh I had never seen before.

I soon knew the cause of it. Leaving the birds, I made my way over the marsh, for it was well on in the afternoon, past five by my watch. As I passed the weeds a shiver ran through them, making their stems rattle, then all was still. It seemed to grow suddenly gloomy; where did that puff come from? Looking back seaward, I saw the whole sky in that direction inky in tone, with a coppery glare over it. The water looked black. Against this tone of colouring the war ships and the dismantled hulks stood out in clear relief, looking like spectre ships. A low growl of thunder, as yet far off, but coming over the sea, a weird flash, and the wind rose. I must seek shelter somewhere, but where is the question, in that wild, wide, and grassy place. At some little distance a low reed stack, standing between a few pollard willows, catches my eye; and for it I go at my top speed. The cattle have made tracks long before, knowing what was coming. Fortunately for me, it is reached in time, for with a roar the storm sweeps over the marsh. The starlings have just swept over, flying very low, only clearing the ground; and have dashed into the reeds anyhow. The poplars bend and sway, and seem as if they would be torn up by the roots, while the branches of the stunted willows cut and lash like whips, sending the leaves flying. The curlews, driven over the marsh, come shrieking and wailing in doleful fashion. Strong-winged and swift birds at all times, they shoot past now like meteors; while the hooded crows are blown and drifted all over the place. The little hen-footed things are close hid in grass tussocks or clumps of rushes. Not far from my place of shelter stand two herons, in a little splash sheltered by some willow stumps and rushes; looking very cheerless, their heads drawn on to their shoulders; they know better than to trust to their wings in a storm like this.

With racing speed the homeward-bound fishing boats are making the creek, the water lashed to foam by the wind and a fierce high tide running up. With one mighty clap of thunder which seems to shake the whole marsh, and the roar and whistle of wind, the storm passes over, and the evening sun floods with a golden light both land and water. On a molehill a meadow pipit steps and trills his little thanks that the storm has gone by, and one thinks involuntarily of 'the still small voice.'

Leaving my shelter I made then for home, three miles distant. One solitary figure was to be seen, crossing the marsh in a side direction from me. When I overtook it I found it was the friend

who had brought me the information about the fowl. He had left his boat safely moored in a snug corner of the creek.

'Did ye get shelter?' he asked, 'and have ye sin the fowl?'

'Yes, in the back creek.'

'Ah, I fancied you'd see them there. They was on the ooze this morning round about the boats, hollerin' to one another might and main; terrible uneasy they was all the mornin'. I don't like to see 'em like that; there's sure to be something in the wind, and the fowl knows what it is better than we do; leastways that's what I think.

Like all his class in that fishing village, my friend had an amount of true religious sentiment about him; no cant or humbug, but a manly feeling of veneration for what the Bible taught them. Superstition some would call that now. They gained their living on the waters, and many lost their lives there; and they had family histories and traditions from far-back generations; a class by themselves, they rarely mixed or intermarried with other people.

'Are you goin' back to your new home next week?'

'Yes.'

'You won't forget them hell hounds. Oh, it was terrible, it was, when them two we know of heard 'em for the first, and one of 'em for the last time. What are they, think ye? Birds, do ye say? I don't say that they aint, but they never made that noise that night for nothing; the first time as them two had heard 'em.'

Reaching the sea-wall we left the marsh and walked along the top, which enabled us to look over the saltings and into the creek; the tide now being nearly down. A little distance off, a quarter of a mile it might have been, something was to be seen lying by the water's edge, with some gulls flapping to and fro and cackling over it.

'What can it be?' I asked my companion.

No need for an answer, on getting nearer; we had both seen a drowned man before.

'Stand here, boy,' he says, 'for a minute, while I go to it.'

I stood for a moment and then followed quickly after him.

'Keep back, boy, if you don't want ugly dreams.'

Dreams or no dreams, I looked on the pitiful sight. That poor upturned face! and, alas, it was the face of one of my old school companions. Everything round about me seemed misty

just then, I fancied; something got into my eye; anyhow it required a wipe or two.

After a while my companion spoke. 'The waters had his life, they took him away, and now they have brought him back in the storm. His mother will be a bit easier in her mind, poor thing, for she'll know where he lays when they bury him.'

I say nothing. I am out of tune for once.

Talking to himself more than to me, he went on, 'I knowed there was somethin' in the wind, and the fowl knowed it too; when they hollered so, they knowed a body was comin' home in the storm.'

That night, passing down the street to visit a friend, I heard the measured tread of the fishermen coming; and looking back, saw a grave, silent little procession. They were bringing him home; all that was left of her son to his mother.

I followed my poor friend to his grave beneath the walnut trees, and his upturned face comes before me distinctly as I write this, just as it looked when I saw him lying by the water's edge.

POACHERS AND POACHING.

THE poacher is a product of sleepy village life, and usually 'mouches' on the outskirts of country towns. His cottage is roughly adorned in fur and feather, and abuts on the fields. There is a fitness in this, and an appropriateness in the two gaunt lurchers stretched before the door. These turn day into night on the sunny roadside in summer, and before the cottage fire in winter. Like the poacher, they are active and silent when the village community is asleep.

Our Bohemian has poached time out of mind. His family have been poachers for generations. The county justices, the magistrates' clerk, the county constable, and the gaol books all testify to the same fact.

The poacher's lads have grown up under their father's tuition and follow in his footsteps. Even now they are inveterate poachers, and have a special instinct for capturing field-mice and squirrels. They take moles in their runs and preserve their skins. When a number of these are collected they are sold to the labourers' wives, who make them into vests. In wheat-time the farmers employ the lads to keep down sparrows and finches. Numbers of larks are taken in nooses, and in spring lapwings eggs yield quite a rich harvest from the uplands and ploughed fields. A shilling so earned is to the young poacher riches indeed; money so acquired is looked upon differently from that earned by steady-going labour on the field or farm. In their season he gathers cresses and blackberries, the embrowned nuts constituting an autumn in themselves. Snipe and woodcock, which come to the marshy meadows in severe weather, are taken in 'gins' and 'springes.' Traps are laid for wild ducks in the runners when the still mountain tarns are frozen over. When our poacher's lads attain to sixteen they become in turn the owner of an old flintlock, which is an heirloom, and has been in the family for generations. Then larger game can be got at. Wood-pigeons are waited for in the larches, and shot as they come to roost. Large numbers of plover are bagged from time to time, both green and grey. These feed in the water meadows through autumn and winter, and are always plentiful. In spring the rare dotterels

were sometimes shot as they stayed on their way to the hills; or a gaunt heron was brought down as it flew heavily from a ditch. To the now disused milldam ducks came on wintry evenings —teal, mallard, and poachards. The lad lay coiled up behind a willow root, and waited during the night. Soon the whistling of wings was heard, and dark forms appeared against the sky-line. The old duck-gun was out, a sharp report tore the darkness, and a brace of teal floated down stream and washed on to the mill island. In this way half a dozen ducks would be bagged, and dead or dying they were left where they fell, and retrieved next morning. Sometimes big game was obtained in the shape of a brace of wild geese, the least wary of a flock; but these only came in the severest weather.

At night the poacher's dogs embody all his senses. An old black bitch is his favourite; for years she has served him faithfully, and in the whole of that time never having once given mouth. Like all good lurchers she is bred between the greyhound and sheepdog. The produce of this cross have the speed of the one and the 'nose' and intelligence of the other. Such dogs never bark, and, being rough-coated, are able to stand the exposure of cold nights. They take long to train, but when perfected are invaluable to the poacher. Upon them almost wholly depends success.

Poaching is one of the fine arts, and the most successful poacher is always a specialist. He selects one kind of game, and his whole knowledge of woodcraft is directed against it. In autumn and winter the 'Otter' knows the whereabouts of every hare in the parish; not only the field in which it is, but the very clump of rushes in which is its 'form.' As puss goes away from the prickly gorsebush, or flies down the turnip rigg, he notes her every twist and double, and takes in the minutest details. He is also careful to examine the 'smoots' and gates through which she passes, and these spots he always approaches laterally. He leaves no scent of hand nor print of foot, and does not disturb rough herbage. Late afternoon brings him home, and upon the clean sanded floor his wires and nets are spread. There is a peg to sharpen and a broken mesh to mend. Every now and then he looks out upon the darkening night, always directing his glance upward. His dogs whine impatiently to be gone. In an hour, with bulky pockets, he starts, striking across the land and away from the high-road. The dogs prick out their ears upon the track,

but stick doggedly to his heels. After a while the darkness blots out even the forms of surrounding objects, and the poacher moves more cautiously. A couple of snares are set in holes in an old thorn fence and not more than a yard apart. These are delicately manipulated, and from previous knowledge the poacher knows that the hare will take one of them. The black dog is sent over, the younger fawn bitch staying with her master. The former slinks slowly down the field, sticking closely to the cover of a fence running at right angles to the one in which the wires are set. The poacher has arranged that the wind shall blow from the dog and across to the hare's seat when the former shall come opposite. The ruse acts, and puss is alarmed but not terrified; she gets up and goes quietly away for the hedge. The dog is crouched and anxiously watching her; she is making right for the snare, and something must be added to her speed to make the wire effective. As the dog closes in, the poacher, bowed and with hands on knees, waits, still as death, for her coming. He hears the trip, trip, trip, as the herbage is brushed; there is a rustle among the leaves, a momentary squeal, and the wire has tightened round her throat.

Again the three trudge silently along the lane. Suddenly the trio stop and listen; then they disperse, but seem to have dissolved. The dry ditch is capacious and its dead herbage tall and tangled. A heavy foot, with regular beat, approaches along the road, and dies slowly away in the distance.

Hares love green corn stalks, and a field of young wheat is at hand. A net, twelve feet by six, is spread at the gate, and at a given sign the dogs depart different ways. Their paths would seem soon to have converged, for the night is torn by a piteous cry, the road is enveloped in a cloud of dust, and in the midst of the confusion the dogs dash over the fence. They must have found their game near the middle of the field, and driven the hares—for there are two—so hard that they carried the net right before them. Every struggle wraps another mesh about them, and soon their screams are quieted. By a quick movement the poacher wraps the long net about his arm, and, taking the noiseless sward, gets hastily away from the spot. These are the common methods of poaching hares.

In March, when they are pairing, four or five may often be found together in one field. Although wild, they seem to lose much of their natural timidity, and now the poacher reaps a rich

harvest. He is careful to set his nets and snares on the side opposite to that from which the game will come, and for this reason, that hares approach any place through which they are about to pass in a zigzag manner. They come on, playing and frisking, stopping now and then to nibble the sweet herbage. They run, making wide leaps at right angles to their path, and sit listening upon their haunches. A freshly impressed footmark, the scent of dog or man at the gate, almost invariably turns them back. Of course these traces are necessarily left if the snare be set on the *near* side of the gate or fence, and then they refuse to take it even when hard pressed. Where poaching is prevalent and hares abundant, the keepers net every one on the estate, for it is well known to those versed in woodcraft that an escaped hare once netted can never be taken a second time. The human scent left at gaps and gateways by ploughmen and shepherds the wary poacher will obliterate by driving sheep over the spot before he begins operations. On the sides of the fells and the uplands hares are difficult to kill. This can only be accomplished by swift dogs, which are taken *above* the game; puss is made to run down hill, when, from her peculiar formation, she goes at a disadvantage.

Our poacher is coolly audacious. Here is an actual incident. There was a certain field of young wheat in which were some hares. The knowledge of these came by observation in daylight. The field was hard by the keeper's cottage, and surrounded by a high fence of loose stones. The situation was therefore critical, but that night nets were set at the gates through which the hares always made. To drive them the dog was to range the field, entering it at a point furthest away from the gate. Silence was essential to success. The poacher bent his back in the road at a yard from the wall. The dog retired, took a mighty spring, and, barely touching his master's shoulders, bounded over the fence without touching. From that field five hares were killed.

It need hardly be remarked that the intelligent poacher is always a naturalist. The signs of wind and weather he knows as it were by heart, and this is essential to his silent trade. The rise and wane of the moon, the rain-bringing tides, the local migrations of birds—these and a hundred other things are marked in his unwritten calendar. His outdoor life has made him quick and taught him of much ready animal ingenuity. He has imbibed an immense amount of knowledge of the life of the woods and

fields, and he is that one man in a thousand who has accuracy of eye and judgment sufficient to interpret nature aright.

It has been already remarked that the poacher is nothing if not a specialist. As yet we have spoken only of the 'moucher' who directs his attention to fur. But if there is less scope for field ingenuity in the taking of some of our game birds, there is always the possibility of more wholesale destruction. This arises from the fact of the birds being gregarious. Partridges roost close to the ground, and sleep with their heads tucked together. A covey in this position represents little more than a mass of feathers. They always spend their nights in the open, and for protective reasons. Birds which do not perch would soon be extinct as a species were they to seek the protection of woods and hedge-bottoms by night. Such ground generally affords cover to vermin—weasels, polecats, and stoats. Although partridges roam far by day, they always come together at night, being partial to the same fields and fallows. They run much, and rarely fly except when passing from one feeding-ground to another. In coming together in the evening their calls may be heard at some distance. These sounds the poacher listens for and marks. He remembers the nest under the gorse bush, and knows that the covey will not be far distant.

Partridges the poacher considers good game. He may watch half a dozen coveys at once. Each evening at sundown he goes his rounds and makes mental notes. Three coveys are marked for a night's work—one in turnips, another among stubble, and a third on grass. At dark he comes and now requires an assistant. The net is dragged along the ground, and as the birds get up it is simply thrown over them, when usually the whole covey is taken. In view of this method of poaching and on land where many partridges roost, low scrubby thorns are planted at regular intervals. These so far interfere with the working of the net as to allow the birds time to escape. If the poacher has not accurately marked down his game beforehand, a much wider net is needed. Among turnips, and where large numbers of birds are supposed to lie, a number of rows or 'riggs' are taken at a time, until the whole of the ground has been traversed. This last method requires time and a knowledge of the keeper's beat. On rough ground the catching of the net may be obviated by having about eighteen inches of smooth glazed material bordering the lowest and trailing part of the net. Par-

tridges are occasionally taken by farmers in the following unorthodox fashion. A train of grain is scattered from ground where game is known to lie. The birds follow this, and each morning find it more nearly approach to the stackyards. When the birds have become accustomed to this mode of feeding, the grain train is continued inside the barn. The birds follow, and the doors are closed upon them. A bright light is brought, and the game is knocked down with sticks.

Partridges feed in the early morning—as soon as daybreak. They resort to one spot, and are constant in their coming if encouraged. This the poacher knows, and adapts himself accordingly. By the aid of a clear moon he lays a train of grain straight as a hazel stick. He has brought in a bag an old duck-gun, the barrels of which are short, having been filed down. This short weapon can easily be carried in his capacious pocket, and is only needed to fire at short distances. Into this he crams a heavy charge of powder and waits for the dawn. The covey comes with a loud whirring of wings, and the birds settle to feed immediately. Firing along the line a single shot strews the ground with dead and dying. In ten minutes he is a mile from the spot, always keeping clear of the roads. The poacher has yet another method. Grain is soaked until it becomes swollen and is then steeped in the strongest spirit. This, as before, is strewn in the morning paths of the partridge, and, soon taking effect, the naturally pugnacious birds are presently staggering and fighting desperately. The poacher bides his time, and, as opportunity offers, knocks the incapacitated birds on the head.

The wilder grouse poaching of the moorlands is now rarely followed. The birds are taken in nets similar to those used for partridges. By imitating the peculiar gurgling call-notes of the grouse, old poachers can bring up all birds within hearing distance. As they fly over the knolls and braes they are shot. Many of the birds sold in London on the morning of the 'Twelfth' are taken in this way. In the North, since the enclosure of commons, numbers of grouse are killed by flying against the wire fences. When the mists cling to the hills for days, or when the weather is 'thick,' these casualties occur. At such times the birds fly low, and strike before seeing the obstacle. The poacher notes these mist-caps hanging to the fell tops, and then, bag in hand, simply walks parallel to miles and miles of fence. Sometimes a dozen brace of birds are picked up in a

morning. Not only grouse, but on the lowlands pheasants and partridges, are killed in this way, as are also snipe and woodcock.

In summer poachers make and repair their nets for winter use. Large hare nets are made for gates, and smaller ones for rabbit burrows and 'smoots.' Partridge nets are also necessarily large, having sometimes to cover half a field. Although most of the summer the poacher is practically idle, it is at this time that he closely studies the life of the fields, and makes his observations for winter. He gets occasional employment at hay or harvest, and for his darker profession treasures up what he sees. He is not often introduced to the heart of the land, and misses nothing of the opportunity. On in autumn, he is engaged to cut down ash poles or fell young woods, and this brings him to the covert. Nothing escapes his notice, and in the end his employers have to pay dearly for his labour. At this time the game birds—pheasants, partridge, and grouse—are breeding, and are therefore worthless; so with rabbits and hares. But when game is 'out,' fish are 'in.' Fish poaching has decreased of late years, owing to stricter watching and greater preservation generally. In summer, when the waters are low, fish resort to the deep dubs. In such spots comes abundance of food, and the fish are safe, be the drought never so long. The pools of the Fell becks abound at such times with speckled brown trout, and are visited by another poacher—the otter. When the short summer night is darkest the man-poacher wades through the meadows by the river. He knows the deeps where the fish most congregate, and there throws in chloride of lime. Soon the trout of the pool float belly uppermost, and are lifted out, dazed, in a landing net. In this way hundreds of fish are taken, and find a ready sale. The lime in no wise poisons the edible parts; it simply affects the eyes and gills, covering them with a fine white film. Fish so taken, however, lose all their pinky freshness. The most cowardly part of this not uncommon proceeding is that the lime is sometimes put into the river immediately below a mill. This, of course, is intended to mislead watchers and keepers, and to throw the blame upon the non-guilty millowner. And, seeing that chloride of lime is used in various manufactures, the ruse sometimes succeeds. Many of the older poachers, however, discountenance this cowardly method, for by it the destruction of fish is wholesale irrespective of size. The old hands use an old-fashioned net, to work which requires at least two men. The net is dragged along the quiet river reaches,

a rope being attached to each end. The trout fly before it, and are drawn out upon the first bed of pebbles. In this way great hauls are often made. To prevent this species of poaching, stakes are driven into trout stream beds; but they are not of much avail. When it is known that a 'reach' is staked, a third man wades behind the net and lifts it over. A better method to prevent river poaching is to throw loose thorn bushes into the bed of the stream. In trailing along the bottom the net becomes entangled, and long before it can be unloosed the fish have escaped. This wholesale instrument of fish poaching is now rarely used. The net is necessarily large and cumbersome. Wet, it is as much as two men can carry; and when caught in the act there is nothing for it but to abandon the net and run. This is an effectual check for a time, as a new net takes long to knit and is expensive—at least to the poacher. When salmon and trout are spawning, their senses seem somewhat dulled, and they are taken out of the water at night by click-hooks. In this kind of river poaching a lighted tar brand is used to show the whereabouts of the fish. A light, too, attracts salmon. Of course, this can only be attempted when the beats of the watchers and keepers are known. The older generation of poachers, who have died or are fast dying out, seem to have taken the recipe for preparing salmon roe with them. For this once deadly bait is now rarely used. Here is a field incident.

A silent river reach shaded by trees. It is the end of a short summer night. We know that the poachers have lately been busy knitting their nets, and have come to intercept them. The "alder dub" may be easily netted, and contains a score nice trout. Poachers carefully study the habits of fishes as well as those of game, both winged and furred. To the alder dub they know the trout make when the river is low. The poachers have not noted signs of wind and weather and of local migrations for twenty years past to be ignorant of this. And so here, in the dew-beaded grass, we lie in wait. It is two o'clock and a critical time. A strange breaking is in the east: grey—half light, half mist. If they come they will come now. In an hour the darkness will not hide them. We lie close to the bank thickly covered with bush and scrub. Two sounds are and have been all night—the ceaseless call of the crake and the not less ceaseless song of the sedge bird. A lapwing gets up in the darkness and screams—an ominous sound—and we are all ear. Three forms descend the opposite

bank, and on to the gravel bed. They empty the contents of a bag and begin to unroll its slow length. The breaking of a rotten twig in a preparatory movement for the dash sufficiently alarms them, and they dash into the wood as we into the water—content now to secure their cumbersome illegal net, and thus effectually to stop their operations for three weeks at least. The grey becomes dawn and the dawn light as we wade wearily home through the long wet grass. And still the sedge warbler sings.

The confines of a large estate constitute a poacher's paradise; for although partridge and grouse require land suited to their taste, rabbits and pheasants are common to all preserved ground. Since the reclamation of much wild land these latter afford his chief spoil. And then rabbits may be taken at any time of the year and in so many different ways. They are abundant, too, and always find a ready market. The penalties attached to rabbit poaching are less than those of game, and the 'vermin' need not be followed into closely preserved coverts. The extermination of the rabbit will be contemporaneous with that of the lurcher and poacher—two institutions of English village life which date back to the planting of the New Forest. Of the many modes of taking the 'coney,' ferreting and field-netting are the most common. Traps, with steel jaws, are sometimes set in the runs, and are inserted in the turf so as to bring them level with the sward. But destruction by this method is not sufficiently wholesale, and the upturned white under parts show too plainly against the green. The poacher's methods must be quick, and he cannot afford to visit by day traps set in the dark. When the unscrupulous keeper finds a snare, he sometimes puts into it a leveret, and secretes himself. He then waits, and captures the poacher 'in the act.' As with some other methods already mentioned, the trap poacher is only a casual. Ferreting is silent and usually successful. In warrens, both inequalities of the ground and mounds and ditches afford cover for the poacher. A tangled hedge bank with tunnellings and coarse herbage is always a favourable spot. There are generally two and often half a dozen holes in the same burrow. Small purse nets are spread over these, and the poacher prefers them loose to being pegged or fixed in any way. When the nets are set the ferrets are taken from the moucher's capacious pocket and turned in. They do not proceed immediately, but sniff the mouth of the hole; their indecision is only momentarily, for soon the tips of their tails disappear in the darkness. Now, above all

times, silence is essential. Rabbits refuse to bolt if there is noise outside. A dull thud, a rush, and a rabbit goes rolling over and over entangled in the net; one close after it gets clear away. Reserved nets are quickly clapped to the holes as the rabbits bolt, these invariably being taken, except where a couple come together. Standing on the mound a shot would stop these as they go bounding through the dead leaves; but this would bring up the keeper, and so the poacher practises self-denial. Unlike hares, rabbits rarely squeal when they become entangled, and this allows the poacher to ferret long and silently. Rabbits that refuse to take the net are sometimes eaten into by the ferret, but still refuse to bolt. If a rabbit takes along a blind burrow followed by a ferret, the former is killed, and the latter gluts itself upon the body. When this occurs it is awkward for the poacher; the ferret in such case usually curls itself up and goes to sleep; left to itself it might stay in the hole for days, and so it has either to be dug or starved out. Both processes are long, the burrows ramify far into the bank, and it is not exactly known in which the ferret remains.

The poacher's wholesale method of night poaching for rabbits is by means of two long nets. These are set parallel to each other along the hedge of a wood, and about thirty yards out into the field or pasture. Only about four inches divides the nets. A clear starlit night is best for the work, and at the time the nets are set the ground game is far out feeding. The nets are long—the first small in mesh, that immediately behind it large. When a hare or rabbit strikes, the impetus takes a part of the first net and its contents through the large mesh of the second, and there hanging, the creature struggles until it is knocked on the head with a stick. Immediately the nets are set, two men and a couple of lurchers begin to range the ground in front—slowly and patiently, and gradually driving every feeding thing woodwards. A third man quietly paces the sward behind the nets, killing whatever game strikes them. And in this way hundreds of rabbits may be, and are, taken in a single night. Some years ago half a dozen young rabbits appeared in our meadow-lot which were of the ordinary grey with white patches. Whilst feeding these stood out conspicuously from the rest and were religiously preserved. Of these parti-coloured ones a normal number is now kept up, and as poachers rarely discriminate, whenever these disappear it is *primâ facie* evidence that night work is going on.

Of all poaching, that of pheasants is the most beset with

difficulty; and the pheasant poacher is usually a desperate character. Many methods can be successfully employed, as the pheasant is rather a stupid bird. Its one great characteristic is that of wandering, and this cannot be prevented. Although fed daily and with the daintiest food, the birds, singly or in pairs, may frequently be seen far from the home covers. Of course the poacher knows this, and is quick to use his knowledge. It by no means follows that the man who rears the pheasants will have the privilege of shooting them. In autumn, when beech mast and acorns begin to fall, the pheasants make daily journeys in search of them, and of these they consume great quantities. They feed principally in the morning, dust themselves in the turnip-fields at noon, and ramble through the woods in the afternoon; and when wandered birds find themselves in outlying copses in the evening, they are apt to roost there.

It need hardly be said that pheasants are generally reared close to the keeper's cottage; that their coverts immediately surround it. Most commonly it is the gang of armed ruffians that enter these, and not the country poacher. And there are reasons for this. Opposition must always be anticipated, for the covert should never be, and is rarely, unwatched. And then there are the results of capture to be taken into account. This effected, and with birds in his possession, the poacher is liable to be indicted upon so many charges, each and all having heavy penalties.

When wholesale pheasant poaching is prosecuted by gangs, it is in winter when the trees are bare. Guns, the barrels of which are filed down so as to shorten them, are taken in sacks, and the birds are shot where they roost. Their bulky forms stand sharply outlined against the sky, and they are often on the lower branches. If the firing does not immediately bring up the keepers, the game is quickly deposited in bags and the gang makes off. It not unfrequently happens that a light cart is waiting to receive the men at some remote lane end. But the moucher obtains his game in a quieter way. He eschews the preserves, and looks up the outlying birds. He always carries a pocketful of corn, and day by day entices the birds further and further away. This accomplished he may snare them, and take them in iron traps. He sometimes uses a gun, but only when other methods have failed. A common and successful way he has, to light brimstone beneath the trees in which the pheasants roost. The powerful fumes soon overpower the birds, and they come flapping down the trees one by one.

This method has the advantage of silence, and if the night is still need not be detected. Away from the preserves time is no object, and so the moucher who works systematically, and is content with a brace of birds at a time, usually gets the most in the end, with least chance of capture. The pugnacity of the pheasant is well known to him, and out of this trait he makes capital. When the whereabouts of the keeper is known, he takes under his arm a gamecock fitted with artificial spurs. These are attached to the natural ones, are sharp as needles, and the bird is trained how to use them. Upon the latter's crowing one or more cock pheasants immediately respond and advance to meet the adversary. A single blow usually suffices to lay low the pride of the pheasant, and in this way half a dozen birds may often be taken whilst the poacher's representative remains unhurt.

The most ingenious plan adopted by poachers, however, is also one of the most successful. If time and opportunity offer, there is scarcely any limit to the depredations which it allows. A number of dried peas are taken and steeped in boiling water; a hole is then made through the centre with a needle or some sharp instrument, and through this a stiff bristle is threaded. The ends are cut off short, leaving only about a quarter of an inch of bristle projecting at each end. With these the birds are fed, and are greedily eaten. In passing down the gullet, however, a violent irritation is set up, and the pheasant is finally choked. In a dying condition the birds are picked up from beneath the hedges, to which shelter they almost always run. The way is a quiet one; may be adopted in the roads and lanes where the birds dust themselves, and does not require trespass.

The methods here set forth with regard to pheasants and rabbits are those ordinarily in use. In connection with the former it might have been remarked that the gamekeeper sometimes outwits the poacher by a device which is now of old standing. Knowing well from what quarter the depredators will enter the woods, wooden blocks representing roosting birds are nailed to the branches of the open beeches. The poacher rarely fires at these 'dummies,' and it is only with the casual that the ruse works. He fires, brings the keepers out of their hiding-places, and so is entrapped.

It need hardly be said that our poacher is a compound of many individuals—the type of a numerous class. The tinge of rustic romance, to which we have already referred as exhibited in

his character, may have been detected in his doings. And we may at once say that he in nowise resembles the armed ruffian who, masked and with murderous intent, enters the covert at night. Although his life is one long protest against the Game Laws, he is not without a rude code of morality. He complains bitterly of the decrease of game, and that the profession now is hardly worth following. Endowed with marked intelligence it has never been directed aright. His knowledge of woodcraft is superior to that of the gamekeeper, which personage he holds in contempt. He quietly boasts of having outwitted the keepers a hundred times. The 'Otter' is chary as to those he takes into confidence, and knows that silence is essential to success. He points to the 'Mole'—the mouldy sobriquet of a compatriot—as an instance of one who tells poaching secrets to village gossips. The 'Mole' spends most of his time in the county gaol, and is now undergoing incarceration for the fifty-seventh time. Our 'Otter' has certainly been caught, but the occasions of his capture form but a small percentage of the times he has been 'out.' He is a healthy example of pure animalism, and his rugged nature has much in common with the animals and birds. As an accurately detailed reflection of nature, his monograph of any one of our British game birds would excel even those of Mr. Jeffreys himself; yet of culture he hasn't an idea. He admires the pencilled plumage of a dead woodcock, and notes how marvellously it conforms to the grey-brown herbage among which it lies. So, too, with the eggs of birds. He remarks on the conformation to environment—of partridge and pheasant, the olive colour to the dead oak leaves; of the plunge of snipe and plover to the mottled marsh; of duck and water-fowl to the pale green reeds.

As to his morality with regard to the Game Laws it is difficult to detect just where he draws the line. He lives for these to be repealed, but his native philosophy tells him that when this time comes, game will have become wellnigh extinct. Upon the Ground Game Act he looks with mingled feelings, for, after all, are not rabbits and hares the chief product of his nights? The farmers now get these, and the poacher's field is limited. They engage him, maybe, to stay the ravages upon clover and young wheat, or to thin the rabbits from out the pastures. He propitiates the farmer in many ways. Occasionally in the morning the farm lad finds half a dozen rabbits or a hare dropped behind the barn door. How these came there no one knows nor asks. The country

attorney is sometimes submitted to a like indignity. In crossing land the poacher is careful to close gates after him, and he never breaks down fences. He assists cattle and sheep which he finds in extremity, and leaves word of the mishap at the farm. Is it likely that the farmer will dog the steps of the man who protects his property, and pays toll for doing it?

And it frequently happens that the poacher is not less popular with the village community at large than with those whose interests he serves. It is even asserted that more than one of the county justices have in some sort a sneaking affection for him. The same wild spirit and love of sport take him to the fields and woods as his more fortunate brethren to the moor and covert. It is untrue, as has been said, that the poacher is a mercenary wretch who always sells his game; he as frequently sends in a brace of birds or a hare to a poor or sick neighbour. He comes in contact with the law just sufficiently to make him know something of its bearings. When charged with being in possession of 'game,' he reiterates the old argument that rabbits are vermin. Being committed for four months 'for night poaching,' he respectfully informs the presiding justice that at the time of his capture the sun had risen two hours, and that the law does not allow more than half the sentence just passed upon him. The old clerk fumbles for his horn spectacles, and, after turning over Stone's 'Justices' Manual,' solemnly informs the Bench that defendant in his interpretation is right. He remembers this little episode and chuckles over it. There is another which is equally marked in his memory. The 'Otter' poached long and successfully ere he was caught, and then was driven into an ambuscade by a combination of keepers. Exultant at his downfall, the men of gaiters flocked from every estate in the country side to witness his conviction. Some, who had only seen a vanishing form in the darkness, attended to see the man. This wild spirit of the night was always followed by an old black bitch. She, too, was produced in Court, and was an object of much curiosity. The 'Otter' had been taken in the act, he told the Bench. 'He deserved no quarter, and asked none. Poaching was right by the Bible, but wrong by the law.' One of the justices deigned to remark it was a question of 'property,' not morality. 'Oh!' rejoined the 'Otter,' 'because blue blood doesn't run in my veins that's no reason why I shouldn't have my share.' And after a moment's pause, 'But it's a queer kind o' property that's yours in

that field, mine on the turnpike, and a third man's over the next fence.' The end of it was, however, a fine of 5*l.* with an alternative. And so the case ended. But that day the keepers and their assistants had forgotten the first principles of watching. The best keeper is the one that is least seen. Only let the poacher know his whereabouts, and the latter's work is easy. It was afterwards remarked that during the trial of the 'Otter' not a poacher was in Court. This fact in itself was unusual, and significant. It became even more so when he was released by reason of his heavy fine being paid the same evening. More than one woman had been seen labouring under loaded baskets near the local game dealers, and these were innocently covered with mantling cresses, and so at the time escaped suspicion. Upon the memorable day the pheasants had been fed by unseen hands and had vanished. The only traces left by the covert side were fluffy feathers everywhere. Few hares remained on the land; these had either been snared or netted at the gates. The rabbits' burrows had been ferreted, an outhouse near the keeper's cottage being entered to obtain possession of the ferrets. It need hardly be said that, had the 'Otter' been aware, he would not have countenanced these lawless doings of his *confrères*. He claimed to 'poach square,' and drew the line at home—reared pheasants, allowing them 'property.' Those he found wild in the woods, however, were *feræ naturæ*, and he directed his engines accordingly.

Every poacher knows that the difficulty lies not so much in obtaining the game as in transporting it safely home. Their dogs are always trained to run on a couple of hundred yards in advance, so as to give warning of anyone's approach. If a police constable or keeper is met on the highway, the dog immediately leaps the fence and, under its cover, runs back to its master. Seeing this, the game-bag is dropped into a dry ditch, and dog and man make off in different directions. County constables loiter about unfrequented lanes and by-paths at daybreak. The poachers know this, and are rarely met with game upon them. Ditches, stacks, and ricks afford good hiding-places until women can be sent to fetch the spoil. These failing, country carriers and early morning milk-carts are useful to the poacher.

In one sleepy village known to us, both the postman and the parish clerk were poachers. The latter carried his game in the black bag which usually held the funeral pall. The smith at the

shoeing forge was a regular receiver, and there were few in the village who had not poached at some time or other. The cottage women netted fish, and shut the garden gates on hares and rabbits when they came down to feed in winter. Upon one occasion a poacher, taking advantage of a country funeral, had himself and a large haul taken to the nearest market-town, the hearse disgorging his questionable corpse behind the nearest game shop. Another of the poachers, nicknamed the 'gentleman,' was wont to attire himself in broad-brimmed hat and frock coat, similar to those worn a century ago by the people called Quakers. In the former he carried his nets, and in the capacious pockets of the latter the game he took. These outward guarantees of good faith away from his own parish precluded him from ever once being searched.

Of late years egg poaching has been reduced to a science, and this is one of the worst phases of the subject. In certain districts it is carried on to a large extent, and comes of artificial rearing. The squire's keeper will give sixpence each for pheasants' eggs and fourpence for those of partridges. He often buys eggs (unknowingly, of course), from his own preserves as well as those of his neighbours. In the hedge-bottom, along the covert side, or among gorse and broom, the poacher notices a pair of partridge roaming morning after morning. Soon he finds their oak-leaf nest and olive eggs. These the keeper readily buys, winking at what he knows to be dishonest. Ploughboys and farm-labourers have peculiar opportunities for egg poaching. As to pheasants' eggs, if the keeper be an honest man and refuses to buy, there are always London dealers who will. Once in the coverts pheasants' eggs are easily found. The birds get up heavily from their nests, and go away with a loud whirring of wings. In this species of poaching women and children are largely employed: at the time the former are ostensibly gathering sticks, the latter wild flowers. A receiver has been known to send to London in the course of a week a thousand eggs—probably every one of them stolen.

When depredations are carried on nightly, or game disappears in large quantities, warrants are obtained and search made for nets. Except for immediate use the poachers seldom keep their nets at home. They are stowed away in church tower, barn, rick, or outhouse. Upon one occasion it got abroad that the constables would make a raid upon a certain cottage where a large net was known to be. The dwelling was a disused tollbar on the turnpike,

and commanded a long stretch of road. The good woman of the house saw the constables approaching, and made the most of her time. Taking off her gown, she fastened one end of the net, which was long and narrow, to a projecting crook in the wall; then, retiring to the further side of the kitchen, she attached the other end of it to the whalebone of her stays, and, by turning round and round, wound the net about her capacious person. When the constables arrived she accompanied them into every corner of the cottage, but no net could be found.

The poachers often come to untimely ends. Here is an actual field incident recorded at the time of its occurrence, and taken from our notebook.—The blasts of October have stripped the leaves from the trees, and the dripping branches stand starkly outlined against a wild grey sky. Plashes of rain begin to descend, and a low muttering comes from out the dull leaden clouds. As the darkness increases occasional flashes tear zigzag across the sky, and the rain sets to a dead pour. The lightning only serves to increase the darkness. We are driving along an out-of-the-way country road, and can just see the mare's steaming shoulders butting away in front. Alternately her sensitive ears are thrown back and pricked out on the track. The pitchy darkness increases, the mare is given her head, and the reins hang loosely on her back. The lightning becomes terrible, the thunder continuous, and the mare comes to a dead stop. We descend and find her trembling violently, the perspiration pouring down her flanks. The frightened creature is white with lather, and we lead her to the welcome shelter of a huge chestnut-tree, waiting for a lull in the storm. As we stand here a black lurcher dog slinks along under the sodden hedge, and, seeing us, immediately stops and turns in its tracks. Having warned its master, the two reconnoitre and come on together. The 'Otter' (for it is he) bids a gruff 'good-night' to the enshrouded vehicle and passes on into the darkness. The man slouches rapidly under the rain and goes in the direction of extensive woods and copses. Hundreds of pheasants have now taken to the tall trees, and from beneath are visible against the sky. Hares abound on the fallows, and rabbits swarm everywhere. The storm has driven the keepers to their cosy hearths, and the prospect is a poacher's paradise. The 'Otter' works long and earnestly through the terrible night. At earliest dawn he staggers from the ground under a heavy load. . . . Just as the sun gets up behind the hills, the poacher's wife emerges from a poor

cottage at the junction of the roads, and, after looking about her as a hunted animal might look, makes quietly off over the land. Creeping closely by the fences she covers a couple of miles, and then enters a disused barnlike building. Soon she emerges under a heavy load, her basket, as of old, covered with crisp, green cresses. These she has had from last evening, when she plucked them in readiness from the spring. After two or three journeys she has removed the 'plant,' and as she eyes the game her eyes glisten, and she waits now only for *him*. As yet she knows not that he will never more come, and that soon she will be a lone and heart-broken creature. For although his life was one long warfare against the Game Laws, he was always good and kind to her. His end had come as it almost inevitably must. The sound of a heavy and unknown footstep on his way home had turned him from his path. He had then made back for the lime-kiln to obtain warmth and to dry his sodden clothes. Once on the margin he was soon asleep. The fumes dulled his senses, and in his restless sleep he had rolled on to the stones. In the morning the limestone burner coming to work found a handful of pure white ashes. A few articles were scattered about, and he guessed the rest. And so our poacher went to God. . . . The storm had cleared and the heavens were calm. In the sky, on the air, in the blades of grass were signs of awakening life. Morning came bright and fair, birds flew hither and thither, and the rich autumn flowers stood out to the sun. Even the larks went up and sang among the clouds. All things were glad and free, but one wretched stricken thing.

A LIFE'S MORNING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'DEMOS,' 'THYRZA,' ETC.

CHAPTER III.

LYRICAL.

Miss Hood did not, of course, dine with the family. Though, as Mrs. Rossall said, it was a distinct advantage to have in the house a governess whom one could in many respects treat as an equal, yet there was naturally a limit, in this as in all other matters. We have not yet, either in fact or in sentiment, quite outgrown the social stage in which personal hiring sets on the hired a stigma of servitude. Mrs. Rossall was not unaware that, in all that concerned intellectual refinement, her governess was considerably superior to herself, and in personal refinement not less a lady; but the fact of quarterly payments, spite of all this, inevitably indicated a place below the salt. Mr. Athel, though, as we have seen, anxious to indulge himself in humane regard whenever social regulations permitted, was the last man to suffer in his household serious innovations upon traditional propriety.

So Miss Hood—Emily, as she was called by the little group of people away in Yorkshire, to whom she was other than a governess; Emily, as we will permit ourselves to call her henceforth—always had the meal of tea with the children. After that the evening was her own, save that the twins kept her company until their hour of bedtime. The schoolroom was also her sitting-room. After half-past eight in the evening she had it to herself, and there she passed many an hour of quiet content, playing softly on the piano, reading, dreaming. In the matter of books she was well off; Mr. Athel and his sister had subscriptions at several London libraries, and of these the governess was invited to make free use. It was some restraint upon her that her choice of reading always passed under Mrs. Rossall's eyes, but not so much after the first few weeks. The widow was by this time well advanced in the resumption of purely mundane literature, and the really liberal tone which prevailed in the house

removed apprehension in the pursuit of modern studies. For it was rather an ideal towards which she was working than an attainment in fact, that eclecticism of which she spoke to Wilfrid Athel. The monthly library lists which came under her eyes offered many a sore temptation. She was true on the whole to her system; she did not read at random, and never read frivolously; but a taste strongly directed to the best in literature will find much in the work of our day, especially its criticism, which is indispensable as guidance, or attractive by its savour. This was not Emily's first access, fortunately, to the streams of contemporary thought; already she had enjoyed and largely used opportunities of the most various reading. She was able now to choose with discretion, and in a great degree to make her study serve directly the scheme of culture which she had devised for herself.

Few governesses had so pleasant a life. Mrs. Rossall, supported by her brother's views, imposed on her children a minimum of brain-work. Bodily health was after all the first thing, especially in the case of girls. A couple of hours' school in the morning, one hour given to preparation of lessons after tea—this for the present was deemed quite enough. 'Your companionship throughout the day will always be forming their minds,' Mrs. Rossall said, in one of her earliest conversations with Emily; it was pleasantly put, and truer than it would have been in the case of many instructresses. The twins were not remarkably fond of their lessons, but in Emily's hands they became docile and anxious to please. She had the art of winning their affection without losing control over them; had Mrs. Rossall's rather languid habits of mind allowed her to give attention to the subject, she would have been struck with the singular combination of tenderness and reverence which the two entertained towards their teacher. Little laxities of behaviour and phrase upon which their mother's presence would be no check, they did not venture to allow themselves when with Emily; her only reproof was a steady gaze, eloquent of gentleness, but it proved quite sufficient. The twins were in truth submitting to the force of character. They felt it without understanding what it meant; one other person in the house experienced the same influence, but in his case it led to reflection.

Wilfrid was at Balliol when Miss Hood first arrived; he saw her for the first time when he came to town after his collapse. All hastened away to The Firs together. Wilfrid suffered no positive illness; he shared in the amusements of the family, and,

with the exception of a good deal of pishing and pshawing at the restraints put upon him, had the appearance of one taking an ordinary holiday. There was undeniable truth in Beatrice Redwing's allusion to his much talking; without social intercourse he would soon have become ill in earnest; association with intelligent —all the better if argumentative—people was an indispensable condition of his existence. In his later school, and early college, days this tendency to give free utterance to his thoughts made him not altogether the most delightful of companions to such as were older than himself; his undeniable cleverness and the stores of knowledge he had already acquired needed somewhat more of the restraint of tact than his character at that time supplied. People occasionally called him a prig; now and then he received what the vernacular of youth terms a 'sitting upon.' The saving feature of his condition was that he allowed himself to be sat upon gracefully; a snub well administered to him was sure of its full artistic, and did not fail in its moral, effect: there was no vulgar insolence in the young fellow. What he received he could acknowledge that he deserved. A term or two at Balliol put this right; in mingling with some that were his equals, and one or two who were his superiors, he learned prudence in the regulation of his speech.

For a brief time he perhaps talked not quite so much. When his 'set' was formed, the currents of argument and rhetoric had once more free course, but they were beginning to flow less turbidly. His nature, as we know, was not merely vehement; he had the instincts of a philosophical inquirer, and his intellect speedily outgrew the stage of callowness. When he came down for his first 'long' the change in him was so marked that it astonished all who met him; that he appeared wholly unconscious of the ripening he had undergone only made his development more impressive. He had gone away a boy, and returned a man. He talked no less than ever, but in a markedly improved tone. He was graver, more seemly in the buoyant outbreaks in which he still occasionally indulged. One reason of his rapid maturing no doubt lay in the fact that he was already working too hard; his sprightliness was in a measure subdued by wear of tissue. His father was shrewd enough to suspect something of this, but it was difficult to interfere in any way. A month in Switzerland seemed to set things right. On the present more serious occasion, it had been deemed better not to set forth on a journey forthwith; perfect

repose at the house in Surrey was all that was advised in the first instance. But it was clear that Wilfrid must have some one to talk with. A succession of visits from such friends as were available was speedily arranged. By the end of the first week, Wilfrid had accommodated himself to his circumstances. His fretting at the regulations imposed for his health almost ceased. At first this change was viewed with suspicion, especially when he became more absorbed in reflectiveness, and seemed to have less taste for conversation. However, he was perfectly cheerful; there were no further symptoms to excite alarm. Nor did the brooding period last very long. The only permanent change was that he ceased to grumble at his hard lot, and appeared to find his position very tolerable.

'It is the physical reaction,' observed Mr. Athel to his sister. 'The body is indulging itself; recovery of health absorbs his energies.'

Opportunities for anything like sustained converse with Miss Hood, Wilfrid found very few and far between; only once before the long talk in the hollow had he been able to gratify his curiosity—perhaps already some other feeling—in a dialogue of any intimacy. In a situation such as this, delicacy prescribed a very rigid discretion; Emily, moreover, was not facile of approach. Throughout the day she was scarcely away from the children; of course he could and did often exchange words with her in the presence of the twins, but he felt himself held at a distance by a tact which was perfect; without undue reserve, without a shadow of unrefined manœuvring, Emily limited their intercourse in precisely the way that Mr. Athel or Mrs. Rossall would have deemed becoming. Then there were almost always guests at the house. With prudent regard to the character of these visitors, Mrs. Rossall chose opportunities for inviting the governess to the drawing-room during the evening, but Emily was not wholly at her ease under such conditions, and Wilfrid was withheld by only half-conscious motives from talking with her at these times. He shrank from subjecting himself to examination whilst encouraging her to speak on the subjects he would naturally choose; he felt, too, that she desired him not to address her, though this perception came to him in subtle ways of which he could render to himself no account. For all this, their acquaintance, nay their intimacy, grew. If ever eyes habitually expressed a self-respecting frankness, if ever any were incapable of ignoble artifice, they were

Emily's; yet as time went on Wilfrid began to long for the casual meeting with her glance for the mere reason that he felt it as an exchange of words between her and himself. Thus it was that, when at length the first real conversation came, it seemed the sequel of many others, seemed so to both of them. They had divined each other; speech did but put the seal of confirmation on knowedge gained by mutual sympathy.

It may be presumed that neither Mr. Athel nor Mrs. Rossall was altogether regardless of possibilities suggested by the abiding beneath the same roof of an impetuous young man, forced into idleness, and a girl who was above the average in mental endowments, whilst, on the whole, she might be considered interesting in appearance. They exchanged no remark on the subject; it was scarcely likely they should; but during the first few weeks both were observant. Their observations were reassuring to them. And indeed they had not anticipated trouble, for the simple reason that both believed Wilfrid's affections to tend already in a marked direction, and one of which they altogether approved. That he would some day take for his wife Beatrice Redwing was a conclusion upon which father and aunt had settled their minds; the conclusion was reasonable enough, and well supported by such evidence as the case admitted. Mr. Athel had at an earlier period entertained certain misgivings as to the desirability of such a marriage; misgivings which had reference to the disastrous story of the Redwing household; the conception of hereditary tendencies has become a strong force in our time, and pronounced madness in a parent cannot as easily be disregarded as it once was. But the advantages of the alliance were so considerable, its likelihood so indisputable, that prudence had scarcely fair play; besides, Beatrice had reached her twenty-first year without any sign of mental trouble, and seemed as sound a girl as could anywhere be discovered. The habitual sword-crossing between her and Wilfrid was naturally regarded as their mode of growing endeared to each other; their intellectual variances could not, by a sober gentleman of eight-and-forty and by a young widow whose interest in the world was reviving, be regarded as a bar to matrimony. 'Family,' Beatrice would not bring, but she was certain to inherit very large fortune, which, after all, means more than family nowadays. On the whole, it was a capital thing for Wilfrid that marriage would be entered upon in so smooth a way. Mr. Athel was not forgetful of his own course in that matter; he understood

his father's attitude as he could not when resisting it, and was much disposed to concede that there might have been two opinions as to his own proceeding five-and-twenty years ago. But for Beatrice, the young man's matrimonial future would have been to his father a subject of constant apprehension; as it was, the situation lost much of its natural hazard.

In Emily there was nothing that suggested sentimentality; rather one would have thought her deficient in sensibility, judging from the tone of her conversation. She did not freely express admiration, even in the form of assent to what was said by others. To interpret her reticence as shyness was a misunderstanding, or a misuse of words, natural in the case of an inexact observer like Mrs. Rossall. Four years ago, when Beatrice met her in Dunfield, her want of self-confidence was pronounced enough; she had at that time never quitted her provincial home, and was in the anomalous position of one who is intellectually outgrowing very restricted social circumstances. The Baxendales were not wrong in discussing her as shy. But that phase of her life was now left far behind. Her extreme moderation was deliberate; it was her concession to the fate which made her a governess. Courtesy and kindliness might lead those whose bread she ate to endeavour occasionally to remove all show of social distinction; neither her temperament nor her sense of comeliness in behaviour would allow her to shrink from such advances, but she could not lose sight of the unreality of the situations to which they led. Self-respect is conditioned by the influence of circumstance on character; in Emily it expressed itself as a subtle sensitiveness to grades of sympathy. She could not shut her eyes to the actuality of things; sincerity was the foundation of her being, and delicate appreciation of its degrees in others regulated her speech and demeanour with an exactitude inappreciable by those who take life in a rough and ready way. When engaged in her work of teaching, she was at ease; alone in the room which had been set apart for her, she lived in the freedom of her instincts; but in Mrs. Rossall's drawing-room she could only act a part, and all such divergence from reality was pain. It was not that she resented her subordination, for she was almost devoid of social ambitions and knew nothing of vulgar envy; still less did it come of reasoned revolt against the artificial ordering of precedences; Emily's thoughts did not tend that way. She could do perfect justice to the amiable qualities of those who were set above her; she knew no bit-

a dark corner; his father paced up and down the grass. Emily watched the first faint gleam of stars in the upper air.

Then lamps and candles were brought in. Beatrice was seen to be dressed in dark blue, her hair richly attired, a jewelled cross below her throat, her bosom and arms radiant in bare loveliness. Emily, at the moment that she regarded her, found herself also observed. Her own dress was of warm grey, perfectly simple, with a little lace at the neck and wrists. Beatrice averted her eyes quickly, and made some laughing remark to Mr. Athel.

'I know you always object to sing without some musical preparation,' said Mrs. Rossall, as she took a seat by the girl's side. 'I wonder whether we ought to close the windows; are you afraid of the air?'

'Oh, leave them open!' Beatrice replied. 'It is so close.'

Her cheeks had a higher colour than usual; she lay back in the chair with face turned upwards, her eyes dreaming.

'You are tired, I am afraid,' Mrs. Rossall said, 'in spite of your sleep in the hammock. The first day in the country always tires me dreadfully.'

'Yes, I suppose I am, a little,' murmured Beatrice.

'Not too tired, I hope, to sing,' said Wilfrid, coming from his couch in the corner to a nearer seat. His way of speaking was not wholly natural; like his attitude, it had something constrained; he seemed to be discharging a duty.

'Observe the selfishness of youth,' remarked Mr. Athel.

'Age, I dare say, has its selfishness too in the present instance,' was Mrs. Rossall's rejoinder.

'To whom does that refer?' questioned her brother, jocosely.

Beatrice turned her head suddenly towards Emily.

'Shall I sing, Miss Hood?' she asked, with a touch of her *ingénue* manner, though the playfulness of her words rang strangely.

'It will give me much pleasure to hear you,' was the sober reply, coming after an instant of embarrassment.

Beatrice rose. Her movement across the room had a union of conscious stateliness and virgin grace which became her style of beauty; it was in itself the introduction to fine music. Mrs. Rossall went to accompany. Choice was made of a solo from an oratorio; Beatrice never sang trivialities of the day, a noteworthy variance from her habits in other things. In a little while, Wilfrid stirred to enable himself to see Emily's face; it showed deep

feeling. And indeed, it was impossible to hear that voice and remain unmoved; its sweetness, its force, its skill were alike admirable. Beatrice conversing was quite other than Beatrice when she sang; music was her mode of self-utterance; from the first sustained note it was felt that a difficulty of expression had been overcome, that she was saying things which at other times she could not, disclosing motives which as a rule the complexities of her character covered and concealed, which were not clear to her own consciousness till the divine impulse gave them form. It was no shallow nature that could pour forth this flood of harmony. The mere gift of a splendid voice, wrought to whatever degree of perfection, would not invest with this rare power. In technical qualities she might have much still to learn, but the passionate poetry of her notes was what no training could have developed, and it would never evince itself with more impressiveness than to-night.

It seemed frivolous to speak thanks. Wilfrid gazed out into the dark of the garden; Emily kept her eyes bent downward. She heard the rustle of Beatrice's dress near her. Mr. Athel began to speak of the piece; the sound of Beatrice's voice replying caused Emily at length to look up, and she met the dark eyes, still large with the joy of song. Her own gaze had a beautiful solemnity, a devout admiration, of which it was impossible to doubt the genuineness; Beatrice, observing it, smiled very slightly before turning away again.

A quarter of an hour after, Emily withdrew. Mrs. Rossall played a little, and talk of an idle kind followed. Wilfrid was not disposed to take his usual part in conversation, and his casual remarks were scarcely ever addressed to Beatrice. Presently Mrs. Rossall wished to refer to the 'Spectator,' which contained a criticism of a new pianist of whom there was much talk just then.

'Have you had it, Wilf?' Mr. Athel asked, after turning over a heap of papers in vain.

'Oh, the "Spectator,"' Wilfrid replied, rousing himself from absentness. 'Yes, I had it in the summer-house just before dinner; I believe I left it there. Shall I fetch it?'

'It would serve you right if I said yes,' admonished Mrs. Rossall. 'In the first place you had no business to be reading it——'

'I will go,' Wilfrid said, rising with an effort.

'No, no; it will do to-morrow.'

'May as well get it now, he said indifferently, and went out by the window.

That part of the garden through which he walked lay in the shadow of the house; the sky was full of moonlight, but the moon itself was still low. A pathway between laurels led to the summer-house. Just short of the little building, he passed the edge of shade, and, before entering, turned to view the bright crescent as it hung just above the house-roof. Gazing at the forms of silvered cloud floating on blue depths, he heard a movement immediately behind him; he turned, to behold Emily standing in the doorway. The moon's rays shone full upon her; a light shawl which seemed to have covered her head had slipped down to her shoulders, and one end was held in a hand passed over her breast. There was something in the attitude which strikingly became her; her slight figure looked both graceful and dignified. The marble hue of her face, thus gleamed upon, added to the statuesque effect; her eyes had a startled look, their lids drooped as Wilfrid regarded her

'You have been sitting here since you left us?' he asked, in a voice attuned to the night's hush.

'I was tempted to come out; the night is so beautiful.'

'It is.'

He uttered the assent mechanically; his eyes, like hers, had fallen, but he raised them again to her face. It seemed to him in this moment the perfect type of spiritual beauty; the brow so broad and pure, the eyes far-seeing in their maidenly reserve, the lips full, firm, of infinite refinement and sweetness. He felt abashed before her, as he had never done. They had stood thus but a moment or two, yet it seemed long to both. Emily stepped from the wooden threshold on to the grass.

'Somebody wants the "Spectator,"' he said, hurriedly. 'I believe I left it here.'

'Yes, it is on the table.'

With a perfectly natural impulse, she quickly re-entered the house, to reach the paper she had seen only a minute ago. Without reflection, heart-beats stifling his thought, he stepped after her. The shadow made her turn rapidly; a shimmer of silver light through the lattice-work still touched her features; her lips were parted as if in fear.

'Emily!'

He did not know that he had spoken. The name upon his tongue, a name he had said low to himself often to-day and yesterday, was born of the throe which made fire-currents of his veins, the passion which at the instant seized imperiously upon his being. She could not see his face, and hers to him was a half-veiled glory, yet each knew the wild gaze, the all but terror, in the other's eyes, that anguish which indicates a supreme moment in life, a turning-point of fate.

She had no voice. Wilfrid's words at length made way impetuously.

'I thought I could wait longer, and try in the meanwhile to win your kind thoughts for me; but I dare not part from you for so long, leaving it a mere chance that you will come back. I must say to you what it means, the hope of seeing you again. All the other desires of my life are lost in that. You are my true self, for which I shall seek in vain whilst I am away from you. Can you give me anything—a promise of kind thought—a hope—to live upon till I see you?'

'I cannot come back.'

But for the intense stillness he could not have caught the words; they were sighed rather than spoken.

'Because I have said this?—Emily!'

He saw the white shape of her hand resting upon the table, and held it in his own, that exquisite hand which he had so often longed to touch; how cold it was! yet how soft, living! She made no effort to draw it away.

'I cannot say now what I wish to,' he spoke hurriedly. 'I must see you to-morrow—you will not refuse? I *must* see you! You are often out very early; I shall be at the hollow, where we talked yesterday, early, at seven o'clock—you will come? If the morning is not fine, then the day after. Emily, you will meet me?'

'I will meet you.'

He touched her fingers with his lips, took the paper, and hastened back to the house. His absence had not seemed long; it was only of five minutes. Reaching the open windows, he did not enter at once, but stood there and called to those within to come and admire the night; he felt his face hot and flushed.

'What is there remarkable about the night?' asked Mr. Athel, sauntering forwards.

'Come and look at this glorious moon, Miss Redwing,' Wilfrid exclaimed, once more with the natural friendliness of his habitual tone to her.

'It seems to have put you into excellent spirits,' remarked Mrs. Rossall, as, followed by Beatrice, she approached the window. 'Have you found the "Spectator"? that's the point.'

Wilfrid continued speaking in a raised voice, for it was just possible, he thought, that Emily might come this way round to enter, and he wished her to be apprised of their presence. All went back into the room after a few moments, and, as the air had grown cooler, the windows were closed. As Wilfrid seated himself in a dusky part of the room, he noticed that Beatrice was regarding him steadily. She had not spoken since his return, and did not do so till she presently rose to say good-night. To Wilfrid she used no form of words, merely giving him her hand; that other had been so cold, how hot this was!

She laughed as she turned from him.

'What is the source of amusement?' inquired Mr. Athel, who was standing by with his hands upon his hips.

'Indeed I don't know,' returned Beatrice, laughing again slightly. 'I sometimes laugh without cause.'

Emily had passed upstairs and gone to her bedroom but a moment before, treading with quick, soundless steps. When Wilfrid left her in the summer-house, she stood unmoving, and only after a minute or two changed her attitude by putting her palms against her face, as if in the gloom she found too much light. It was a sensation of shame which came upon her, a tremor of maidenhood in re-living, swift instant by instant, all that had just passed. Had she in any way aided in bringing about that confession? Had she done anything, made a motion, uttered a tone, which broke away the barrier between herself and him? When she could recover self-consciousness, disembarrass herself of the phantom moments which would not fleet with the rest of time, it was scarcely joy which she read in her heart; apprehension, dismay, lack of courage to look forward beyond this night, these oppressed her. Then, close upon the haunting reality of his voice, his touch, came inability to believe what had happened. Had a transient dreamful slumber crept upon her as she sat here alone? So quickly had the world suffered re-creation, so magical the whelming of old days in a new order, so complete the change in herself. One word she knew which had power from

eternity to do these things, and that word neither he nor she had uttered. But there was no need, when the night spoke it in every beat of time.

Fearful of being seen, she at length ventured to return to the house. Moonlight streamed full upon her bed; it would have irked her as yet to take off her clothes, she lay in the radiance, which seemed to touch her with warm influences, and let her eyes rest upon the source of light. Then at length joy came and throned in her heart, joy that would mate with no anxious thought, no tremulous brooding. This was *her* night! There might be other happy beings in the world to whom it was also the beginning of new life, but in *her* name was its consecration, hers the supremacy of blessedness. Let the morrow wait on the hour of waking, if indeed sleep would ever come; this moment, the sacred *now*, was all that she could comprehend.

She undressed at length, and even slept, fitfully, always to start into wakefulness with a sense of something to be thought upon, to be realised, to be done. The weariness of excitement perturbed her joy; the meeting which was to take place in a few hours became a nervous preoccupation. The moonlight had died away; the cold light of dawn began to make objects in the room distinct. Was it good to have consented so readily to meet him? Nay, but no choice had been left her; his eagerness would take no refusal; and it was impossible for things to remain as they were, without calmer talk between them. It was her resource to remember his energetic will, his force of character; the happiness of passively submitting to what he might dictate; sure of his scrupulous honour, his high ideal. Could she indeed have borne to go into exile from his presence, without a hope that this the noblest and most aspiring life that had ever approached her might be something more than a star to worship? If wealth comes, we wonder how we drew breath in poverty; yet we lived, and should have lived on. Let the gods be thanked, whom it pleases to clothe the soul with joy which is superfluous to bare existence! Might she not now hallow herself to be a true priestess of beauty? Would not life be vivid with new powers and possibilities? Even as that heaven was robing itself in glory of sunrise, with warmth and hue which strengthened her again to overcome anxieties. Was he waking? Was he impatient for the hour of his meeting with her? She would stand face to face with him in the full sunlight this time, but with what deep humility! Should she be able

to find words? She had scarcely spoken to him, ever, as yet, and now there was more to say than hours of solitude would leave time for. She knew not whether to bid the sun linger or speed.

There was nothing unusual in her rising and going forth early, though perhaps she had never issued from the house quite so early as this morning; it was not yet six o'clock when she gently closed the garden-gate behind her, and walked along the road which led on to the common. The sun had already warmed the world, and the sheen of earth and heaven was at its brightest; the wind sweeping from the downs was like the breath of creation, giving life to forms of faultless beauty. Emily's heart lacked no morning hymn; every sense revelled in that pure joy which is the poetry of praise. She wished it had been nearer the hour of meeting, yet again was glad to have time to prepare herself. Walking, she drank in the loveliness about her, marked the forms of trees, the light and shade of heavy leafage, the blendings of colour by the roadside, the grace of remote distances; all these things she was making part of herself, that in memory they might be a joy for ever. It is the art of life to take each moment of mental joy, of spiritual openness, as though it would never be repeated, to cling to it as a pearl of great price, to exhaust its possibilities of sensation. At the best, such moments will be few amid the fateful succession of common cares, of lassitudes, of disillusions. Emily had gone deep enough in thought already to understand this; in her rapture there was no want of discerning consciousness. If this morning were to be unique in her life, she would have gained from it all that it had to give. Those subtle fears, spiritual misgivings, which lurked behind her perceptions would again have their day, for it was only by striving that she had attained her present modes of thought; her nature concealed a darker strain, an instinct of asceticism, which had now and again predominated, especially in the period of her transition to womanhood, when the material conditions of her life were sad and of little hope. It was no spirit of unreflective joy that now dwelt within her, but the more human happiness extorted from powers which only yield to striving. Hitherto her life's morning had been but cold and grey; she had trained herself to expect no breaking forth of gleams from the sober sky. This sudden splendour might be transitory.

But who was that already standing by the hollow? Was it likely that he would be later than she at the place of meeting!

Emily stood with a shock of life at the gates of her heart. She tried to keep her eyes raised to his as she approached slowly, he with more speed. Would she not after all find voice for the things she had to say?

Wilfrid came to her with bare head, and took her hand; no more than took her hand, for he was in awe of the solemn beauty of her countenance.

'You thought I should keep you waiting?' he asked, in a low voice trembling with joy. 'I have watched the sun rise.'

'The door had not been opened——'

'My window is not high above the ground,' he answered, with an uncertain laugh.

They walked side by side over the heather, towards the beginning of a wood, young fir trees mingling with gorse and bracken. Beyond was the dense foliage of older growths. He had again taken one of her hands, and so led her on.

'Emily!'

She was able to look into his face for a moment, but the moving of her lips gave no sound.

'I could not sleep,' he went on, 'so I read of you till dawn in the Knightes Tale. It is a name I have always loved, sweet, musical, but of deep meaning. Will you not let me hear you speak, Emily?'

She uttered a few timid words, then they passed on in silence till the wood was all about them.

'May I tell you the plan which I have made in the night?' he said, as they stood on a spot of smooth turf, netted with sunlight. 'You leave us in two days. Before we start for London, I shall speak with my father, and tell him what has come about. You remember what I was saying about him the day before yesterday; perhaps it was with a half-thought of this—so daring I was, you see! I have no fear of his kindness, his good sense. At the same time, it is right you should know that my independence is assured; my grandfather left me far more than enough for mere needs. By the summer of next year I shall be free of Oxford. I care little now for such honours as those; you have honoured me more than any other voice has power to do. But my father would be disappointed if I did not go on to the end, and do something of what is expected. Now you must tell me freely: is there absolute necessity for your maintaining yourself in the meanwhile, for your leaving home?'

'There is,' she replied.

'Then will you continue to teach the children as usual?'

She was touched with apprehension.

'Gladly I would do so, but is it possible? Would you conceal from Mrs. Rossall——'

Wilfrid mused.

'I meant to. But your instincts are truer than mine; say what you think. I believe my father would countenance it, for it involves no real deceit.'

'If you wish it,' Emily said, after a silence, in a low voice.

'Of my aunt,' pursued Wilfrid, 'I have just this degree of doubt. She might make difficulties; her ways of thinking differ often from ours. Yet it is far better that you should continue to live with us. I myself shall scarcely ever be at home; it will not be as if I dwelt under the roof; I will make my visits as short as possible, not to trouble you. I could not let you go to the house of other people—you to lack consideration, perhaps to meet unkindness! Rather than that you shall stay in your own home, or I will not return to Oxford at all.'

Emily stood in anxious thought. He drew a step nearer to her; seemed about to draw nearer still, but checked himself as she looked up.

'I fear we must not do that,' she said. 'Mrs. Rossall would not forgive me.'

Woman's judgment of woman, and worth much more than Wilfrid's rough and ready scheming.

Wilfrid smiled.

'Then she also shall know,' he exclaimed. 'She shall take my view of this; I will not be gainsaid. What is there in the plan that common sense can object to? Your position is not that of a servant; you are from the first our friend; you honour us by the aid you give, efficient as few could make it. Yes, there shall be no concealment; far better so.'

'You have no fear of the views they will take?'

'None!' he said, with characteristic decision. 'If they are unreasonable, absurd, our course is plain enough. You will be my wife when I ask you to, Emily?'

She faltered, and held her hand to him.

'Is it worth while to go back to Oxford?' he mused, caressing the fingers he had kissed.

'O, yes; you must,' Emily urged, with a sort of fear in her

sudden courage. 'You must not disappoint them, your father, your friends.'

'My fair wise one!' he murmured, gazing rapturously at her. 'Oh, Emily, think what our life will be! Shall we not drain the world of its wisdom, youth of its delight! Hand in hand, one heart, one brain—what shall escape us? It was you I needed to give completeness to my thought and desire.'

The old dream, the eternal fancy. This one, this and no other, chosen from out the myriads of human souls. Individuality the servant of passion; mysteries read undoubtingly with the eye of longing. Read perhaps so truly; who knows?

She came nearer, imperceptibly, her raised face aglow like the morning.

'Wilfrid—you believe—you know that I love you?'

The last word breathed out in the touching of lips with lips. What could he reply, save those old, simple words of tenderness, that small vocabulary of love, common to child and man? The goddess that made herself woman for his sake—see, did he not hold her clasped to him! But she was mute again. The birds sang so loudly round about them, uttered their hearts so easily, but Emily could only speak through silence. And afterwards she knew there was so much she should have said. What matter? One cannot find tongue upon the threshold of the holy of holies.

CHAPTER IV.

A CONFLICT OF OPINIONS.

BEATRICE REDWING'S visit only extended over the second day, and during that there was little, if any, separate conversation between her and Wilfrid. The change in her from the free gaiety and restfulness of the morning of her arrival could not escape notice, though she affected a continuance of the bright mood. Mr. Athel and his sister both observed her real preoccupation, as if of trouble, and mentally attributed it to something that had passed during the afternoon's ride. Mrs. Rossall did not look for confidences. Beatrice would gossip freely enough of trivial experiences, or of the details of faith and ritual, but the innermost veil of her heart was never raised; all her friends felt that, though they could not easily have explained in what way they became conscious of this

reserve, she seemed so thoroughly open, not to say so shallow. She left The Firs to return to town, and thence in a week or two went to Cowes, a favourite abode of her mother's.

The next day, Emily also left, journeying to London on her way to the north. Wilfrid and she had no second meeting; their parting was formal, in the family circle. Mr. Athel displayed even more than his usual urbanity; Mrs. Rossall was genuinely gracious; the twins made many promises to write from Switzerland. Emily was self-possessed, but Wilfrid read in her face that she was going through an ordeal. He felt the folly of his first proposal, that she should play a part before Mrs. Rossall through the winter months. He decided, moreover, that no time should be lost in making the necessary disclosure to his father. Naturally it would be an anxious time with Emily till she had news from him. She had asked him to direct letters to the Dunfield post office, not to her home; it was better so for the present.

Wilfrid, though anything but weakly nervous, was impatient of suspense, and, in face of a situation like the present, suffered from the excitability of an imaginative temperament. He had by no means yet outgrown the mood which, when he was a boy, made the anticipation of any delight, a physical illness. In an essentially feeble nature this extreme sensibility is fatal to sane achievement; in Wilfrid it merely enforced the vigour of his will. As a child he used to exclaim that he *could* not wait; at present he was apt to say that he would not. He did not, in very truth, anticipate difficulties with his father, his conviction of the latter's reasonableness being strongly supported by immense confidence in his own powers of putting a case incontrovertibly. As he had said to Emily, he could scarcely allow that deep affection for his father dwelt within him, nor did the nature of the case permit him to feel exactly reverent; these stronger emotions were reserved for the memory of the parent who was long dead. He thought of his father with warm friendliness, that temper which is consistent with clear perception of faults and foibles, which makes of them, indeed, an occasion for the added kindliness of indulgence, and which, on the other hand, leaves perfect freedom in judgment and action. We know that it is for the most part a misfortune to be the son of a really great man, and for the reason that nature, so indifferent to the individual, makes the well-being of each generation mainly consist in early predominance over the generation which gave it

birth. Wilfrid suffered no such exceptional hardship. At three-and-twenty he felt himself essentially his father's superior. He would not have exposed the fact thus crudely, for he was susceptible to the comely order of things. The fact was a fact, and nature, not he, was responsible for it. That, and the circumstance of his material independence, would necessarily keep the ensuing interview well within the limits of urbane comedy. The young man smiled already at the suggested comparison with his father's own choice in matrimony. Wilfrid had never had the details of that story avowedly represented to him, but it was inevitable that he should have learnt enough to enable him to reconstruct them with tolerable accuracy.

Emily was gone long before the hour of luncheon. After that meal, Mr. Athel lit a cigar and went to a favourite seat in the garden. Mrs. Rossall was going with the twins to make a farewell call on neighbouring friends. As soon as the carriage had left the house, Wilfrid sought his father, who was amusing himself with a review.

'I thought you would have gone with your aunt,' Mr. Athel remarked, after a glance to see who was approaching him.

'I had an object in remaining behind,' Wilfrid returned, composedly, seating himself on a camp stool which he had brought out. 'I wished to talk over with you a matter of some importance.'

'Oh?'

Mr. Athel stroked his chin, and smiled a little. It occurred to him at once that something relative to Beatrice was about to be disclosed.

'What is it?' he added, throwing one leg over the other, and letting the review lie open on his lap.

'It concerns Miss Hood,' pursued the other, assuming the same attitude, save that he had nothing to lean back against. 'A day or two ago I asked her to engage herself to me, and she consented.'

Perhaps this was the simplest way of putting it. Wilfrid could not utter the words with complete calmness; his hands had begun to tremble a little, and his temples were hot. By an effort he kept his eyes steadily fixed on his father's face, and what he saw there did not supply encouragement to proceed in the genial tone with which he had begun. Mr. Athel frowned, not angrily, but as if not quite able to grasp what had been told him. He had cast his eyes down.

There was silence for a moment.

'I have chosen the earliest moment for telling you of this,' Wilfrid continued, rather hurriedly. 'It was of course better to leave it till Miss Hood had gone.'

On the father's face displeasure had succeeded to mere astonishment.

'You could have told me few things that I should be so sorry to hear,' were his first words, delivered in an undertone and with grave precision.

'Surely that does not express your better thought,' said Wilfrid, to whom a hint of opposition at once gave the firmness he had lacked.

'It expresses my very natural thought. In the first place, it is not pleasant to know that clandestine proceedings of this kind have been going on under my roof. I have no wish to say anything disrespectful of Miss Hood, but I am disposed to think that she has mistaken her vocation; such talents for dissimulation would surely have pointed to——'

Mr. Athel had two ways of expressing displeasure. Where ceremony was wholly unnecessary, he gave vent to his feelings in an outburst of hearty English wrath, not coarsely, for his instincts were invariably those of a gentleman, but in the cultivated autocratic tone; an offending groom, for instance, did not care to incur reproof a second time. Where this mode of utterance was out of place, he was apt to have recourse to a somewhat too elaborate irony, to involve himself in phrases which ultimately led to awkward hesitations, with the effect that he grew more heated by embarrassment. Had he been allowed to proceed, he would at present have illustrated this failing, for he had begun with extreme deliberation, smoothing the open pages with his right hand, rounding his words, reddening a little in the face. But Wilfrid interposed.

'I must not let you speak or think of Miss Hood so mistakenly,' he said, firmly, but without unbecoming self-assertion. 'She could not possibly have behaved with more reserve to me than she did until, three days ago, I myself gave a new colour to our relations. The outward propriety which you admit has been perfectly genuine; if there is any blame in the matter—and how can there be any?—it rests solely upon me. I dare say you remember my going out to fetch the "Spectator," after Miss Redwing had been singing to us. By chance I met Miss Hood in

the garden. I was led to say something to her which made a longer interview inevitable; she consented to meet me on the common before breakfast, the following morning. These are the only two occasions which can be called clandestine. If she has disguised herself since then, how could she have behaved otherwise? Disguise is too strong a word; she has merely kept silence. I need not inquire whether you fully believe what I say.'

'What you say, I believe, as a matter of course,' replied Mr. Athel, who had drummed with his fingers as he listened impatiently. 'It can scarcely alter my view of the position of things. Had you come to me before offering yourself to this young lady, and done me the honour of asking my advice, I should in all probability have had a rather strong opinion to express; as it is, I don't see that there is anything left to be said.'

'What would your opinion have been?' Wilfrid asked.

'Simply that for an idle fancy, the unfortunate result of unoccupied days, you were about to take a step which would assuredly lead to regret at least, very probably to more active repentance. In fact, I should have warned you not to spoil your life in its commencement.'

'I think, father, that you would have spoken with too little knowledge of the case. You can scarcely know Miss Hood as I do. I have studied her since we came here, and with—well, with these results.'

Mr. Athel looked up with grave sadness.

'Wilf, this is a deeply unfortunate thing, my boy. I grieve over it more than I can tell you. I am terribly disappointed. Your position and your hopes pointed to very different things. You have surprised me, too; I thought your mind was already made up, in quite a different quarter.'

'You refer to Miss Redwing?'

'Naturally.'

'You have, indeed, been mistaken. It was impossible that I should think of her as a wife. I must have sympathy, intellectual and moral. With her I have none. We cannot talk without flagrant differences—differences of a serious, a radical nature. Be assured that such a thought as this never occurred to Miss Redwing herself; her very last conversation with me forbids any such idea.'

Mr. Athel still drummed on the book, seemingly paying little heed to the speaker.

'You find sympathy in Miss Hood?' he asked suddenly, with a touch of sarcasm.

'The deepest. Her intellectual tendencies are the same as my own; she has a mind which it refreshes and delights me to discover. Of course that is not all, but it is all I need speak of. I know that I have chosen well and rightly.'

'I won't be so old-fashioned,' remarked Mr. Athel, still with subdued sarcasm, 'as to hint that some thought of me might have entered into your choosing' (did he consciously repeat his own father's words of five-and-twenty years back, or was it but destiny making him play his part in the human comedy?) 'and, in point of fact' (perhaps the parallel touched him at this point) 'you are old enough to judge the affair on its own merits. My wonder is that your judgment has not been sounder. Has it occurred to you that a young lady in Miss Hood's position would find it at all events somewhat difficult to be unbiassed in her assent to what you proposed?'

'Nothing has occurred to me,' replied Wilfrid, more shortly than hitherto, 'which could cast a shadow of suspicion on her perfect truth. I beg that you will not suggest these things. Some day you will judge her with better knowledge.'

'I am not sure of that,' was the rejoinder, almost irritably uttered.

'What do you mean by that, father?' Wilfrid asked in a lower tone.

'I mean, Wilf, that I am not yet in the frame of mind to regard the children's governess as my daughter-in-law. Miss Hood may be all you say; I would not willingly be anything but scrupulously just. The fact remains that this is not the alliance which it became you to make. It is, in a very pronounced sense, marrying beneath you. It is not easy for me to reconcile myself to that.'

It was Wilfrid's turn to keep silence. What became of his plans? They were hardly in a way to be carried out as he had conceived them. A graver uneasiness was possessing him. Resolve would only grow by opposition, but there was more of pain in announcing an independent course than he had foreseen.

'What are your practical proposals?' his father inquired, his mollified tone the result of observing that he had made a certain impression, for he was distinctly one of the men who are to be overcome by yielding.

'I had a proposal to make, but of such a kind that it is hardly worth while to speak of it. I shall have to reflect.'

'Let me hear what you were going to say. There's no harm in that, at all events.'

'My idea was, that, with your consent and my aunt's, Miss Hood should return just as if nothing had happened, and continue to teach the twins till next summer, when I should have done with Oxford. There appears to me to be nothing irrational or unseemly in such a plan. If she were our cook or housemaid, there might be reasonable objections. As it is, it would hardly involve a change even in your tone to her, seeing that you are in the habit of treating her as a lady, and with a certain degree of familiar kindness. I confess I had anticipated no difficulties. We are not a household of bigoted Conservatives; it is hard for me to imagine you taking any line but that of an enlightened man who judges all things from the standpoint of liberal reflection. I suppose my own scorn of prejudices is largely due to your influence. It is not easy to realise our being in conflict on any matter involving calm reasonableness.'

In another this would have been a shrewd speech. Wilfrid was incapable of conscious artifice of this kind; this appeal, the very strongest he could have made to his father, was urged in all sincerity, and derived its force from that very fact. He possessed not a little of the persuasive genius which goes to make an orator—hereafter to serve him in fields as yet undreamed of—and natural endowment guided his feeling in the way of most impressive utterance. Mr. Athel smiled in spite of himself.

'And what about your aunt?' he asked. 'Pray remember that it is only by chance that Miss Hood lives under my roof. Do you imagine your aunt equally unprejudiced?'

Mr. Athel was, characteristically, rather fond of side-glancings at feminine weaknesses. An opportunity of the kind was wont to mellow his mood.

'To be quite open in the matter,' Wilfrid replied, 'I will own that my first idea was to take you alone into my confidence; to ask you to say nothing to aunt Edith. Miss Hood felt that that would be impossible, and I see that she was right. It would involve deceit which it is not in her nature to practise.'

'You and Miss Hood have discussed us freely,' observed the father, with a return to his irony.

'I don't reply to that,' said Wilfrid quietly. 'I think you

must give me credit for the usual measure of self-respect; and Miss Hood does not fall short of it.'

The look which Mr. Athel cast at his son had in it something of pride. He would not trust himself to speak immediately.

'I don't say,' he began presently, with balancing of phrase, 'that your plan is not on the face of it consistent and reasonable. Putting aside for the moment the wretchedly unsatisfactory circumstances which originate it, I suppose it is the plan which naturally suggests itself. But, of course, in practice it is out of the question.'

'You feel sure that aunt would not entertain it?'

'I do. And I don't see how I could recommend her to do so.'

Wilfrid reflected.

'In that case,' he said, 'I have only one alternative. I must give up my intention of returning to Oxford and marry before the end of the year.'

The words had to his own ears a somewhat explosive sound. They were uttered, however, and he was glad of it. A purpose thus formulated he would not swerve from. Of that his father too was well aware.

Mr. Athel rose from his seat, held the rolled-up magazine in both hands behind his back, and took a turn across a few yards of lawn. Wilfrid sat still, leaning forward, watching his father's shadow. The shadow approached him.

'Wilf, is there no *via media*? Cannot Miss Hood remain at home for a while? Are you going to throw up your career, and lay in a stock of repentance for the rest of your life?'

'I don't think you quite understand me, father. I contemplate no career which could possibly be injured even by my immediate marriage. If you mean University honours—I care nothing about them. I would go through the routine just for the sake of completeness; it is her strong wish that I should. But my future, most happily, does not depend on success of that kind. I shall live the life of a student, my end will be self-culture. And Miss Hood is unfortunately not able to remain at home. I say unfortunately, but I should have regarded it as preferable that she should continue in her position with us. You and aunt Edith would come to know her, and the air of a home like ours would, I believe, suit her better than that of her own. There is nothing in her work that might not be performed by any lady.'

'What do you know of her people?'

'Nothing, except that her father has scientific interests. It is plain enough, though, that they cannot be without refinement. No doubt they are poor; we hardly consider that a crime.'

He rose, as if he considered the interview at an end.

'Look here,' said Mr. Athel, with a little bluffness, the result of a difficulty in making concessions; 'if Miss Hood returned to us, as you propose, should you consider it a point of honour to go on with your work at Balliol as if nothing had happened, and to abstain from communication with her of a kind which would make things awkward?'

'Both, undoubtedly. I could very well arrange to keep away from home entirely in the interval.'

'Well, I think we have talked enough for the present. I have no kind of sympathy with your position, pray understand that. I think you have made about as bad a mistake as you could have done. All the same, I will speak of this with your aunt——'

'I think you had better not do that,' interrupted Wilfrid, 'I mean, with any view of persuading her. I am afraid I can't very well bring myself to compromises which involve a confession of childish error. It is better I should go my own way.'

'Well, well, of course, if you take the strictly independent attitude——'

Mr. Athel took another turn on the lawn, his brows bent. It was the first time that there had ever been an approach to serious difference between himself and his son. The paternal instinct was strong in him, and it was inevitable that he should be touched by sympathetic admiration of his past self as revived in Wilfrid's firm and dignified bearing. He approached the latter again.

'Come to me in the study about ten to-night, will you?' he said.

It was the end of the discussion for the present.

Shortly after dinner, when coffee had been brought to the drawing-room, Wilfrid wandered out to the summer-house. Emily would be at home by this time. He thought of her . . . .

'The deuce of it is,' exclaimed Mr. Athel, conversing with his sister, 'that it's so hard to find valid objections. If he had proposed to marry a barmaid, one's course would be clear, but as it is——'

Mrs. Rossall had listened in silence to a matter-of-fact disclosure of Wilfrid's proceedings. In the commencement her attention

had marked itself by a slight elevation of the brows; at the end she was cold and rather disdainful. Observation of her face had the result of confirming her brother in the apologetic tone. He was annoyed at perceiving that Edith would justify his prediction.

'I am sorry to hear it, of course,' were her first words, 'but I suppose Wilfrid will act as he chooses.'

'Well, but this isn't all,' pursued Mr. Athel, laying aside an affectation of half-humorous indulgence which he had assumed. 'He has urged upon me an extraordinary proposal. His idea is that Miss Hood might continue to hold her position here until he has taken his degree.'

'I am not surprised. You of course told him that such a thing was out of the question?'

'I said that *you* would probably consider it so.'

'But surely—— Do you hold a different view?'

'Really, I hold no views at all. I am not sure that I have got the right focus yet. I know that the plans of a lifetime are upset; I can't get much beyond that at present.'

Mrs. Rossall was deeply troubled. She sat with her eyes drooped, her lower lip drawn in.

'Do you refer to any plan in particular?' she asked next.

'Yes, I suppose I do.'

'I am very, very sorry for Beatrice,' she said, in a subdued voice.

'You think it will——'

Mrs. Rossall raised her eyebrows a little, and kept her air of pained musing.

'Well, what is to be done?' resumed her brother, always impatient of mere negatives. 'He has delivered a sort of ultimatum. In the event of this proposal—as to Miss Hood's return—being rejected, he marries at once.'

'And then goes back to Balliol?'

'No, simply abandons his career.'

Mrs. Rossall smiled. It was not in woman's nature to be uninterested by decision such as this.

'Do you despair of influencing him?' she asked.

'Entirely. He will not hear of her taking another place in the interval, and it seems there are difficulties in the way of her remaining at home. Of course I see very well the objections on the surface to her coming back——'

'The objections are not on the surface at all, they are funda-nental. You are probably not in a position to see the case as I lo. Such a state of things would be ludicrous; we should all be laying parts in a farce. He cannot have made such a proposal o her; she would have shown him at once its absurdity.'

'But the fact of the matter is that she acceded to it,' said Mr. Athel, with a certain triumph over female infallibility.

'Then I think worse of her than I did, that's all.'

'I'm not at all sure that you are right in that,' observed her brother, with an impartial air. 'Pray tell me your serious opinion of Miss Hood. One begins, naturally, with a suspicion that she has not been altogether passive in this affair. What Wilf says is, of course, nothing to the point; he protests that her attitude has been irreproachable.'

'Especially in making assignations for six o'clock in the morning.'

'Well, well, that is merely granting the issue; you are a trifle illogical, Edith.'

'No doubt I am. You, on the other hand, seem to be very much of Wilf's opinion. I am sorry that I can't do as you wish.'

'Well, we shall not gain anything by giving way to irritation. He must be told how matters stand, and judge for himself.'

As Mr. Athel was speaking, Wilfrid entered the room. Impatience had overcome him. He knew of course that a discussion was in progress between his father and his aunt, and calm waiting upon other people's decisions was not in his nature. He came forward and seated himself.

'I gather from your look, aunt,' he began, when the others did not seem disposed to break silence, 'that you take my father's view of what he has been telling you.'

'I am not sure what your father's view is,' was Mrs. Rossall's reply, given very coldly. 'But I certainly think you have proposed what is impossible.'

'Yes, you are right,' rejoined Wilfrid, to the surprise of both. 'The plan was not well considered. Pray think no more of it.'

'What do you substitute?' his father inquired, after another long silence.

'I cannot say.' He paused, then continued with some emotion, 'I would gladly have had your sympathy. Perhaps I fail to see the whole matter in the same light as yourselves, but it seems to

me that in the step I have taken there is nothing that should cause lasting difference between us. I involve the family in no kind of disgrace—that, I suppose, you admit?'

Mrs. Rossall made no answer. Mr. Athel moved uneasily upon his chair, coughed, seemed about to speak, but in the end said nothing.

'I am afraid I shall not be able to leave England with you,' continued Wilfrid, rising. 'But that fortunately need cause no change in your plans.'

Mr. Athel was annoyed at his sister's behaviour. He had looked to her for mediation; clearly she would offer nothing of the kind. She was wrapping herself in a cloak of offended dignity; she had withdrawn from the debate.

'Come with me to my room,' he said, moving from his chair.

'I think it will be better to have no further discussion,' Wilfrid replied, firmly, 'at all events to-night.'

'As you please,' said his father, shortly.

He went from the room, and Wilfrid, without further speech to his aunt, presently followed.

(*To be continued.*)

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UNCLE JOE.

CONCLUDING PART.

CHAPTER III.

I HAVE now to introduce the reader into the privacy of Mrs. Walker's bedroom. One morning that lady got up at six o'clock, and devoted two hours to her correspondence. It will simplify matters if I give a copy of her letter; it was addressed to

Mrs. Martha Wilson,
Brownlow Street,
High Holborn,

and it ran as follows:

'Much of importance has occurred, dear Patty, since my last, and new and unexpected difficulties have arisen. Never believe the penny tracts when they tell you the ways of the wicked are set with snares; it is the path of virtue that is full of briars and thorns, and I am much torn and damaged by them already. You will be surprised to see that I address you from the Rookery; but I am actually established here, boxes and all. A day or two ago, when Joe and I came in from our walk, who should we find awaiting us but his sister-in-law and his cousin, one Joanna Armstrong. Joe had only just written to his brother to announce our engagement, and here suddenly were these ladies dropped from the skies. Of course the object of their visit was quite plain. Joanna told a glib little tale about visiting a friend in Richmond, but of course they came to have a look at me, and to snatch Joe out of my hands. I mastered the position at a glance, and scored a point

'The woman's a mystery to me. She has a certain amount of ladylike bearing, she speaks decently; but after that song, and in the face of that very yellow hair, I'm sure she's in some way connected with the stage. I wish I could get Bob down here to see her. If she is well-known, he'd know her. It would be almost worth while to arrange some private theatricals just to test her.'

Bob was Joanna's brother; a youth about town, much given to theatres and music-halls, and supposed to be on speaking terms with several of the lesser luminaries. Joanna had always set her face against the luminaries of whatever rank. Now, apparently, one had swum into her own orbit, and threatened dire mischief. Therefore, Joanna wrote a very diplomatic letter to Bob. She cast about in her mind how to account for her sudden interest in star artistes and pets of the ballet, and at last decided to be perfectly frank with him and avow her reasons. She laid the whole case before Bob. She described Mrs. Walker at great length, and asked him if any such lady were known in the London theatres or music-halls, and if any such person were now temporarily absent.

Bob's reply was couched in the most deplorable slang. Joanna had some difficulty in interpreting it. He evidently felt himself master of the situation. He pointed out that his sister's description of the fair Imogen would apply to many ladies of light and leading in the theatrical world. He could enumerate scores of ladies who rejoiced in golden hair and preposterously dark eyebrows and eyelashes, and whose lips outvied the cherry, but he remarked *en passant* that this was the general type (he spelt it tipe) of celebrities in that particular branch of art, adding—'You might as well ask me to spot a painter fellow by saying he had long hair and a velvet coat.' But towards the end of his letter, Bob stated that London was plunged into mourning, and the Pavilion music-hall into special desolation, by the temporary disappearance of Peggy Jenkins. Peggy was a person of superior abilities and bewitching appearance; no one could do a breakdown as Peggy could. He gave an able *résumé* of Peggy's distinguished career since she had been before the public; and wound up by saying that if Joanna was ever so blessed as to hear her sing 'Houp la!' it would be a regular eye-opener to her. Everybody sang 'Houp la!' now, but it was Peggy who first gave that lyrical gem to a grateful London.

When Joanna finished that letter, she felt she was on the right track. One oracular sentence in Bob's letter was beyond Joanna's comprehension, and Maggie was equally at sea. Bob finished his letter by saying, 'Peggy lifts her elbow.' Maggie thought it meant she had a nervous jerk or kind of St. Vitus's dance, perhaps. Joanna inclined to the view that it was a gesture appropriate to 'Houp la!' or was a necessary portion of a breakdown, though Joanna had not the remotest notion of what a breakdown really was.

'I'll think till I'm blue in the face,' she said to Maggie, 'but I'll find it out. I'll practise before the glass all the morning, and lift my elbow in every direction, and see what it suggests.'

Just before lunch Maggie ran into the room and found Joanna before the long glass.

'Shut the door,' said Joanna; then, advancing to Maggie, she said solemnly:

'Peggy drinks! look here.' In a moment she caught up a tumbler, threw herself into a Bacchanalian attitude, her head tilted well back and her elbow well lifted in the air, as she poured the supposed liquor down her throat. Maggie at once gave up the theory of St. Vitus's dance, and admitted that Joanna had settled the question.

Meanwhile, Uncle Joe was getting every day more and more enamoured. The great work on Dürer entailed much writing, and Imogen had offered to act as his amanuensis, and they were shut up in the study for hours together. To Joanna's great disgust she found it impossible to secure ten minutes alone with Uncle Joe; if she beguiled him to go for a short stroll alone with her, Mrs. Walker would glide from behind a corner, also going for a stroll, and would lovingly link her arm in Uncle Joe's and accompany them. Once at breakfast Joanna said:

'Joe, I have had some tiresome letters. Will you let me have a little business talk with you by-and-by?' Before Uncle Joe could answer, Mrs. Walker said with a little playful laugh:

'I'm sorry to veto that proposal, but I must, I really must. Dearest Joe's brain is so overworked just now with Dürer study that he must not be troubled with business of any kind.'

'That's the truth. No one knows,' said Uncle Joe, 'the trouble that that sleuth-hound in the "Knight and Death" is giving me You see, Joanna——'

'No, Joe, I don't see. I don't think sleuth-hounds or Dürers or

anybody else ought to prevent my having a quiet talk with you, if I want it.' Mrs. Walker intervened again.

'I am sorry I can't permit it. Joe, you promised to be guided by me in matters like this.' Joanna's temper boiled over.

'I think, Mrs. Walker, it will be time enough for you to give your orders in this house when you are mistress of it.' Then Mrs. Walker actually made a little mocking grimace at Joanna, and said:

'Accept the inevitable, dear, and don't lose your temper. Really Joe is useless in business; now I'm clever at it, won't I do instead of him?'

'No, you won't!' said Joanna fiercely, the grimace rankling in her mind. 'If I want "Houp la!" sung, I'll come to you to do it.' With this Parthian dart she left the room.

That evening Maggie said to Joanna:

'You work on your line, and I'll try to open his eyes to her ridiculous art. I'm convinced she coaches up for the occasion. Did you hear her glibly telling him of her overwhelming impression when she first went into the Tribuna at Florence?'

'Bother her impressions and the Tribuna too!' said Joanna, still raging at her defeat.

'I have no art books handy, and I forget most of what I knew, but there's a St. Ursula series of pictures at Venice by Carpaccio, and another at Bruges by Memling, and she muddled up the two, and that idiot Joe was holding her hand under the table all the time and didn't observe it.'

'Write to Mrs. Hogarth,' said Joanna.

'Happy thought,' cried Maggie, 'so I will; she'll post me on these points, and I will lay pitfalls for Mrs. Walker.' But that adroit lady was not easily beguiled into pitfalls; she descried them afar off, and avoided them. It became clear to her that the ladies were plotting against her, and that if she intended to marry Uncle Joe she would have to be exceedingly quick about it.

As appears by her letter, Mrs. Walker was indeed the true and only Peggy Jenkins; the solace and joy of all music-hall frequenters. She began life as a governess, and was then a sharp-witted, pretty girl—not sharp-witted enough, however, to withstand London life and London temptations when she was flung into them. Peggy made a false step, and then, having a good voice and some rough idea of using it, she secured an engagement at a music-hall—an extremely humble place of amusement to begin

with, but Peggy 'took.' She had a few lessons from a music-hall tenor who was much enamoured of her, and in consequence taught her for nothing, and she was quick at picking up the slangy airs and graces which are essential to success in that walk of life. So Peggy rose in her profession. Champagne took the place of beer, and hansoms replaced the twopenny omnibus; her photographs appeared in the shop windows between a Bishop and a Prime Minister. Peggy made hay whilst the sun shone, but made it a little too fast. During the process she imbibed too much champagne, and partook of too many little suppers at Richmond: she developed a cough, and her voice began to get shaky. Then the doctor, who was a blunt but kindly old gentleman, said plainly:

'Look here, my girl, unless you throw London up for a time, secure perfect rest and quiet in the country, you'll go to the dogs; you're half-way on your journey there already.'

Peggy disliked country air very much, and quiet still more, but she said she'd compromise matters by going to Harrogate. Might she ride?

'Yes,' said her doctor, 'ride all day long, if you like; take your maid with you, and go into quiet lodgings. Drink the waters if you like, but don't drink anything else.'

Peggy actually followed his advice, and in about a fortnight she began to feel better; she delighted in horse exercise, and scoured the country for miles. It so happened that, riding one day through Hillbeck, her horse had a nasty stumble and threw her, wrenching her ankle badly. Peggy had to put up for the night at the village inn, and there was quite an excitement that evening in Hillbeck. The excitement penetrated to the Rookery even, and ruffled the calm of Uncle Joe's life. When he heard that a young lady had been thrown from her horse and was lying at the inn with several ribs broken (so said report), he felt impelled to call and make offers of help. Peggy received him graciously. She was reclining on the extremely hard horsehair sofa that every country inn boasts. Uncle Joe was extremely touched; filled with admiration. He thought her the most lovely creature he had ever seen. His Dürer studies were abandoned for the rest of the day. When he left her, Peggy sent for the landlady and made particular inquiries about Uncle Joe. Rumour had transformed her sprained ankle into three broken ribs, and rumour had exaggerated Uncle Joe's eccentricities and his riches in the same generous way: his little capital of twenty thousand pounds became forty thousand.

Peggy liked adventure of any kind, and stayed for two days at the inn: she sent for her maid, and for some of her nice dresses. Whilst lying there she amused herself with picturing how she could help Uncle Joe to spend the forty thousand pounds. Supposing she made love to the old gentleman! Peggy was so tickled with the idea that she laughed till the bandages on her damaged foot became loosened; but, to her surprise, that evening Uncle Joe (who called every day and sometimes twice a day) began to make unmistakable love to her himself. This set Peggy thinking seriously, and Peggy said to her maid (who was her dresser at the Pavilion):

'I shall pose as a widow, marry the old gentleman, rattle through the forty thousand pounds, and then give him the slip.' Peggy, reclining on the hard sofa, made all her plans and rehearsed her little comedy. It was a difficult part to play at first. Peggy transformed herself into Mrs. Walker (Christian name, Imogen); she arranged the details of the defunct Walker's career, and a few interesting incidents in her own life.

Uncle Joe was too much in love to be a sharp critic; some of the incidents did not dovetail together very neatly, but a man in love is superior to ill-fitting details.

Peggy got quite interested in her adventure, and entered into it with zest. She soon found the forty thousand pounds was an exaggeration, but there were certainly a good many thousands. When the ladies came on the scene, Peggy was put on her mettle. The light of battle glowed in her eyes; it added a new joy to the prospect of squandering Uncle Joe's thousands, if at the same time she triumphed over her two enemies. Already she had extracted some lovely presents from her adorer.

'Always give me something that won't wear out,' Peggy said to him, by which she meant jewelry: she knew by experience that diamonds were always convertible into cash.

One morning at breakfast Uncle Joe astonished the two ladies by saying that the marriage was arranged to take place next week. Mrs. Walker could not manage a blush, but widows are supposed to be superior to those maidenly weaknesses, and it did not matter.

'I thought that amanuensing would lead to that,' said Joanna, directly after breakfast. 'I must write to your husband, my dear, and explain to him that not a moment is to be lost; and somehow,

by hook or by crook, I must see Uncle Joe alone and put it plainly to him.'

'It's my belief,' said Maggie, 'that if she does turn out to be Peggy Jenkins, he is so infatuated that he would marry her all the same.'

That morning Joanna wrote to the Dean and told him how critical matters had become. That very reverend gentleman had left the matter contentedly in the hands of his wife and Joanna. 'They'll open his eyes,' he said, 'if any women can;' but when Joanna's letter arrived, he perceived that the battle was going sorely against them, and that the little widow would score all the tricks. Joanna had given him full details of the position.

With a beautiful decision, which he had acquired at Capel Court, the Dean at once drove to Scotland Yard. The services of an experienced detective were secured, and the Dean laid the entire case before him, and desired to be put into possession of all the previous history of Peggy Jenkins. Scotland Yard asked the Dean if he remembered the case of Captain Sinclair, and expressed much surprise when the Dean admitted his complete ignorance of that famous historical personage. Peggy figured in that case, and it was then that it became necessary that the authorities should hunt up all her previous history. This Scotland Yard did in a callous, but complete manner, and the inspector had merely to take a certain folio volume down from his shelves, and in ten minutes the Dean became possessed of an able *résumé* of Peggy's career. The Dean's respectable blood curdled at the idea of such a sister-in-law. Worse still, the detective took a very black view of the Dean's chance of success.

'At present,' he said, 'your evidence of the identity of Peggy and Mrs. Walker is, in a legal sense, decidedly weak, but I'm bound to say if it *is* Peggy it's ten to one on her winning the game. The old gentleman will be so infatuated that, if you proved she were the devil himself, he'd marry her.' The Dean threw up his hands in amazement.

'Give me notes of the evidence,' said he, 'and I'll go down there myself to-morrow.'

'It shall be ready,' said the officer, 'and I will supply you with photographs of the lady. Perhaps I had better include one of her in her famous character of Psyche, although the dress is—well, scarcely clerical.' The Dean said with dignity that he thought that would be very desirable.

Then the Dean wrote to his wife, and to Joanna also, announcing that he would be down next day, but desiring them not to let Uncle Joe know of his intended visit.

Meanwhile Maggie took a very hopeless view of the situation. She had written to her learned friend, Mrs. Hogarth, and become duly posted up in various matters relating to art and literature. Those pitfalls had been craftily laid for Mrs. Walker, but in most cases she avoided them with extreme ingenuity.

'Did you hear her last night,' said Joanna to Maggie, 'chatting glibly to Joe about Cinque-cento? I haven't the remotest notion what it means, have you?'

'Not the least,' said Maggie, 'except that the word is Italian for five hundred; but it's perfectly useless tripping her up, she always falls upon her feet.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE next day the Dean arrived at the Rookery. In his portmanteau were the photographs of Peggy and the history of her private and public career.

Joe met him in the hall, blank amazement displaying itself in his face.

'You seem surprised, Joe,' said the Dean.

'I have come to escort the ladies on their way to Miss Mackenzie's.'

'You seem to have got very fond of Miss Mackenzie all of a sudden,' said Uncle Joe, suspiciously.

'Then, of course,' said the Dean airily, 'I want to see my sister-in-law that is to be.'

'Ah! and no doubt you'll get fond of her, too,' said Uncle Joe, with a shrewd look.

He had to put up with an attic. His wife helped him unpack his portmanteau, and whilst she was fumbling at the straps, Joanna burst into the room.

'Is she Peggy Jenkins, or is she not?'

'Peggy's photographs are in my portmanteau,' said the Dean; 'you can identify her.' Joanna had it open in a moment, tore the photographs out of the case, then screamed and clapped her hands.

'It's the creature herself!' Then she came to the one in which she appeared as Psyche, dropped it suddenly, and said—

'Disgusting!'

'Ah!' said the Dean, 'that point is settled then. She's a tidy-looking little woman. In my young days the town was wild about——'

'Spare us these unnecessary reminiscences,' chimed in his wife austerely.

Joanna announced to the Dean that she had secured a quiet half hour with Joe, and urged upon him the danger he was running. She pointed out that Mrs. Walker was involved in mystery, that they had good reason to believe that she was very different to what she professed to be. Whereupon Josiah had flashed into sudden fury, and said that he would not permit his future wife to be so cruelly slandered, that he loved her and she loved him, and that, once for all, he meant to marry her.

'Did he say anything about settlements?' said the Dean.

'No; worse than settlements, he said she was such a woman of business that he intended her to manage all his money affairs in the future.'

The Dean sat down on the edge of the bed and groaned: words were manifestly inadequate at such a crisis.

'It's my belief,' said Joanna, 'that you may prove her to be Beelzebub, and he'd marry her just the same.'

'I have a complete body of evidence with me as to her entire career,' said the Dean. 'If he marry her in the face of that he's mad.'

Then the Dean went downstairs and was introduced to Mrs. Walker. That redoubtable lady was prepared for battle. She was dressed in exquisite taste; her manner was the perfection of ladylike ease, with a touch of dignity thrown in. The Dean owned that she was a very beautiful woman, but, notwithstanding her ladylike ease, it was the same face that figured in the unclerical photograph of Psyche. After dinner Uncle Joe retired to his study for a nap, and Mrs. Walker was left alone with her three enemies. She was lying back in her chair, very silent, very resolute, very dangerous.

No sooner were they alone than the Dean said in an extremely familiar voice:

'Have some more wine, Peggy.'

Mrs. Walker looked him straight in the face, and rose from her chair with great dignity.

'I wish you good-evening; I cannot stay here to be insulted.'

'It is not an insult to address a lady by her real name; any way, I think you will find it to your advantage to give me half an hour's conversation. Take a glass of wine, and hear what I have to say.' Mrs. Walker paused, laughed softly to herself, and sat down again.

'If you are again wanting in respect I shall certainly retire. Whatever you have to say to me is best said alone; your wife and cousin had better withdraw.'

'Withdraw!' echoed Joanna. 'Wild horses wouldn't get me from this room.'

The Dean undid his pocket-book and arranged his papers and photographs on the table. Mrs. Walker, leaning back in her chair with her hands folded in her lap, watched him with a quiet smile.

'Perhaps I can help you, Dean,' she said. 'Let me clear the ground for you. I intend to marry your brother, and you don't mean to let me. Your point seems to be that I, Imogen Walker, am Peggy somebody; this is Peggy, I suppose?' She leant across the table and took up the photographs one by one.

'Not a bad-looking girl, Dean.' When she came to Psyche she shook her finger at the Dean, and said, 'Oh, fie, Dean! Oh, fie!' The Dean was taken aback at the extreme coolness with which she met him, and his wife beholding her levity felt her pity merging into indignation.

'In my pocket-book I have a detailed account of your entire career, tracing you up to the very day that you came to Harrogate.'

Mrs. Walker laughed.

'Dean, Dean, at the end of every sermon there used to be what they called the application; your present little address seems to lack that. I dare say you have a very complete history of this Peggy's life, but how does that concern me? Your case breaks down at this point; how do you prove I am Peggy? The photographs prove a general likeness; she is fair and so am I, but beyond that vague resemblance you haven't a shred of evidence.'

'The photographs speak for themselves, and I can bring a hundred people from London who could swear to your identity.'

'Yes; but I am going to marry Joe the day after to-morrow.

Joe believes me, and would not believe them; if you had five hundred witnesses it would be useless. I always like to save people trouble, and in this case believe me you are fighting a losing game. You want Joe's money for your children; I want it for myself; you see I am perfectly frank with you. One thing more; if you did prove I am this Peggy, and that I did masquerade in this fashion' (she pointed to Psyche), 'Joe would marry me all the same.' Mrs. Walker rose and rang the bell, and told the servant to ask her master to come to them at once. 'Joe shall speak for himself,' she said.

When Josiah came in, Mrs. Walker rose and linked her arm in his, and spoke as follows:

'Dear Josiah! as you know, your brother and these ladies have opposed our marriage throughout. The Dean has come down from London to-day to prove that I am Peggy Jenkins, a music-hall singer, and he has photographs of the woman, and he thinks her like me. He says he can bring a hundred people from London to prove I am this woman.'

'Damn the fellow!' cried Joe, his face flushing as he turned on the Dean. 'What business is it of yours whom I choose to marry? When I went into tallow you took upon yourself to scold and rage; then when I bought my unique Cyprian vase you presumed to find fault—you who do not know a lachrymatory from a pewter pot; and now again you come interfering between me and my future wife, with your Peggies and your lies! Out you all go, the whole lot of you! You will be pleased to understand that I——'

'Calm yourself,' said the Dean, 'and listen to me. The lady you intend to make your wife is Peggy Jenkins, a music-hall singer from London. Here are the details of her life, furnished me from Scotland Yard. All I ask of you is, before you bring her into the family, read those papers and sift my evidence.'

'I decline to do either,' said Uncle Joe.

'And all I ask of you, Josiah,' said Mrs. Walker, 'is to choose finally betwixt them and me. If you believe one word he says, let us separate.' The little hands closed pathetically on his arm. Josiah took one look at the pleading face looking up to his with tear-brimmed eyes, then he placed his arm round her waist, and said with great dignity and feeling:

'I have chosen once and for all. I take this lady to be my honoured wife.' Then, turning to her, he added, 'I know all they

tell me is a string of lies, but if you were this woman and had sung at a hundred music-halls, what matters it to me? I love you!' Josiah stooped and kissed her before them all. Then he turned to the Dean and the ladies.

'The only difference this little storm will make in my plans is that we shall be married to-morrow instead of Wednesday. I need scarcely add that if you intend to honour us with your company, you must first of all apologise to this lady.' Then Mrs. Walker intervened:

'Dean, the battle was sharp while it lasted, but the strong can afford to be merciful. I will forgive and forget. Let us now drop our weapons and shake hands.' The Dean hesitated, then said:

'Whoever you are, you're a very clever and a very plucky little woman.' Then he gave her his hand. Said Josiah in his old voice:

'Now that's all right. We'll all go and have our tea, and spend a jolly evening together, and to-morrow——' But Mrs. Walker playfully placed her hand on his lips, and they sailed out of the room together.

'She really is a deuced clever little woman,' said the Dean to Joanna. Said Joanna to the Dean:

'My turn comes next. You have tried and failed. I have my card to play, and I shall play it to-night.'

CHAPTER V.

A VERY cosy evening they had; you would never have thought there had been any disturbance. The light of triumph was in Peggy's eyes, but it only made her more beautiful. She was loving to Joe, courteous to the Dean, and only just a shade patronising to his ladies. They had much cheerful chat and a little music. The Dean's wife played her one piece with great *éclat*, when Uncle Joe said maliciously:

'It's very nice, dear, but I think I have heard it before.'

Maggie said laughingly, 'Then to punish you you shall hear it again,' and insisted thereupon on playing it all through again. As for Joanna, she was the life and soul of the party. Never had she been in such spirits; she infected them all with her wild gaiety.

'Uncle Joe,' she said, 'this is the last day of your bachelorhood. Let us have a bottle of champagne to drink your health in.'

'Well, well, my dear, that's very nice of you,' said Uncle Joe; 'you certainly shall—the very best champagne my cellar contains.'

'Champagne is all very well in its way,' said the Dean, 'but I suppose the health-drinking will be equally efficacious in old-fashioned whisky-toddy.'

'Or in milk,' chimed in Maggie, who was a teetotaller.

It was a glorious summer's night, the moon nearly at her full. Mrs. Walker drew Uncle Joe to the window.

'See, my dearest,' she murmured, 'not a cloud in the sky. Let us take it as an omen of our future.' Uncle Joe kissed her again in a most audacious way, and then trotted off to his cellar to get the champagne.

As they stood at the window, Maggie went quietly up to Joanna.

'It's a dreadful thing to do! Is there no other way but this?'

'None,' said Joanna.

The Dean said to Mrs. Walker:

'Will you give me your royal leave and license to smoke, Imogen?' It was the first time he had called her by that name.

'Cigars and cigarettes I admit,' she replied, 'but I draw the line at horrid old pipes.'

'These are Egyptian cigarettes,' he answered, 'of the finest brand.'

'How I wish I could and might smoke,' she said merrily. Then she put an unlighted cigarette in her lips, and placing her hands on her hips swaggered about the room in imitation of the modern British youth.

It was indeed a happy evening. What a daring little speech Joanna made as she tossed off her glass of champagne; and how modest and pretty Mrs. Walker looked as she clicked glasses with Uncle Joe, and gently sipped her own.

It was true, Maggie, between bursts of rather forced gaiety, had tears in her eyes, but that perhaps was sentiment.

Joanna installed herself as toast-mistress. First of all, Mrs. Walker's health had to be drunk (she called her Imogen), and then Joe's, and then the two together. Joanna brewed the whisky-toddy for the Dean, and he insisted on Mrs. Walker sipping his tumbler.

'Just to leave a kiss in it,' he gallantly said.

Joanna was surely getting confused, for no one was taking whisky-toddy but the Dean, and yet she had brewed two tumblers, and then the second had to be wasted, and stood on one side untouched.

Mrs. Walker's spirits kept pace with Joanna's. Such jokes as she and the Dean had! such funny stories as he told her! Her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkled, when suddenly up jumps the Dean and says:

'Well, you are a shabby lot! Everybody's health has been drunk except mine. Now you'll just have to toast me,' but the bottle of champagne was gone, and there was nothing left but the whisky, brewed to perfection by Joanna. Very tempting did it smell, nicely flavoured with lemon and sugar. In a twinkling Joanna had washed out the champagne glasses and had brewed three tiny jorums for Mrs. Walker, Uncle Joe, and herself. Her own was water only with a drop of spirits, but Mrs. Walker's was in the inverse ratio. After that things got more lively. Uncle Joe and Maggie sat together by the open window quietly talking, but the three others kept the merriment going. The little jorum of toddy was enough for poor Peggy, all her prudence was flung to the winds. High and shrill rose her laughter, her manner too had changed. She kissed the Dean, slapped him on the back, and snatched his cigarette from his lips and actually smoked it through, and wound up by addressing him as 'old bloke.' The wilder she got the calmer did Joanna get, steadying down into a deadly watchful stillness.

Maggie and Uncle Joe had sauntered out arm in arm, and were strolling along the terrace in the moonlight. Suddenly Joanna and the Dean got arguing about the weather for to-morrow. Joanna wanted to bet about it, and then they ran off into the hall to consult the weather-glass.

Directly she stood outside the door Joanna's gaiety changed to tears.

'Heaven forgive me! It is the only way.'

They waited five minutes. When they got back to the dining-room the spare glass of whisky-toddy that they had left half full was empty; the bottle itself was empty. Mrs. Walker was pushing the furniture up on one side.

'Let's have a dance,' she cried, rushing up to the Dean and whirling him round. The ladylike Mrs. Walker had changed into a raging menad. Her hair had fallen down, her speech was

thick, and there was a dreadful light in her eyes. The neat spirit had mounted to her brain, and the whole woman was on fire. Peals of idiotic laughter broke from her; one moment she was in a fit of ungovernable rage, using frightful language, the next drivelling and crying. She shouted bits of dreadful songs, and at last broke into a wild dance, a drunken reminiscence of some caperings that had delighted half London; now it became the wildest Bacchic whirl.

'Go and fetch him,' said the Dean to Joanna. She left the room and found Joe and Maggie on the terrace.

'The time has come,' she said, in a hard voice. 'Come and see your future wife in her true character.' Joe walked to the window and looked in. He had left a pretty ladylike woman, and in her place he saw a wild, dishevelled, whirling mad woman. As she danced she shrieked out the frightful songs. Josiah stepped into the room.

'Imogen,' he cried, in a terrible voice. In answer she sprang to him reeling wildly, spluttering, stuttering, and grimacing.

'Who's Imogen? I'm Peg. Peggy Jenkins. I'm going to marry old Joe and rattle through his cash. Come and have a dance, old boy! Let's have a drink! Where's Charlie?' She snatched at the empty whisky bottle; then, catching at the table to steady herself, she pulled it over and all went down in a crash on the floor. He turned and left her. The three met him on the terrace. His face was very white, and his voice broken. He turned to Joanna.

'I suppose I ought to thank you, but I can't yet awhile.'

'Believe me, Joe,' she made answer, 'it was the only way left.'

'But it's dreadful to purchase my liberty at such a price.' Then he turned to Maggie, and said:

'She can't be left lying there; go to her and do the best you can.' Maggie's heart bled for the poor creature. She ran back gladly enough.

Peggy was huddled in a heap on the floor, all the *débris* of the table lay around her; her hair and dress were all clotted with candle-drippings, blood, and stale whisky. She lay upon her back in the dead sleep of complete intoxication, breathing heavily, her mouth wide open; the flowers in the bosom of her dress were crushed and torn, a piece of broken glass had cut her arm, and all the place reeked of blood and whisky. Never had Maggie seen such an awful wreck of womanhood, but she leant over her

pitifully, a beautiful compassion gleaming in her eyes. She raised her up to the sofa, staunched the bleeding arm, and tried to tidy up the room; then she called her husband, and they carried her to her bedroom.

Maggie got her to bed, and made her as comfortable as she could. Once or twice the heavy eyes opened and gazed at her for a moment.

'I pity her awakening,' she said, as she closed the door, 'but it has been a bad evening for everybody. Heaven forgive us all!'

CHAPTER VI.

PEGGY slept heavily far on into the next day. Maggie looked in several times and found her still sleeping. At twelve o'clock she and Joanna went to her room, Maggie bearing with her a cup of tea. Very ill and ghastly looked poor Peggy; she raised her hand to her aching head.

'Has anything happened? Was I ill last night?'

'Yes, dear,' said Maggie, kindly. Peggy lay quiet for a moment, then began to cry. Maggie brought some eau de cologne and bathed her forehead with it. Then Peggy asked in a low voice:

'Did anybody give me whisky last night?' Joanna blushed.

'Yes, I gave you some, but don't talk about it now; try to go to sleep again.'

In the afternoon Peggy sent for them.

'I remember it all now,' she said. 'It comes back to me in all its shame. You made me drunk, and then I spoke the truth.'

'I left the whisky in your way, and you were tempted,' said Joanna.

'I am going away to-morrow,' she answered; 'I may as well speak the truth now. To-day I should have been married,' she added softly: a great change had come over her; she was very quiet and humble. 'All that the Dean said was true. I am Peggy Jenkins; I have been very bad, but Heaven knows how I have suffered.'

Maggie's hand stole into hers.

'Heaven is pitiful, dear: give up the old life; try to make a fresh start.' The tears ran down poor Peggy's face.

'How kind and tender you are! and you have a right to be so hard and cruel.'

'No,' said Joanna, 'nobody has a right to be that; you have known me only as your enemy, but if you will let me I will be your true friend hereafter.' Then, seeing that Peggy was sorely crushed and broken, and very penitent, these two good women grew sweet and tender to her, sitting by her side and giving her wise and tender counsel.

Peggy rested all that day, and the following day they helped her to pack. Just before they left the house Peggy said, very tearfully:

'Uncle Joe was fond of me; might I say good-bye to him?'

'I don't think it would be wise,' said Joanna. 'It would only upset you both.' Then they walked back to the inn with her, but Uncle Joe never set eyes on poor Peggy again.

When the Dean and his wife were dressing, the next morning, she perceived by the elaborate care with which he shaved that his mind was set upon some great enterprise.

'I don't intend to leave this house,' said the Dean, 'until I have spoken my mind pretty freely to Joe. We have saved him from utter ruin. I intend to place him and his money beyond the reach of any future Peggies.'

'Don't be harsh with him,' said Maggie, 'for he feels it terribly; he was really very fond of her.'

'Well, in future he must confine his affections to pots and pictures.'

After breakfast the two gentlemen retired to the study. For the next hour the Dean was very terrible. So greatly did he improve the occasion, so masterful and overpowering was he, that poor Uncle Joe was reduced to a state of speechless collapse. Viewed in the light the Dean poured upon recent events, he perceived that he was indeed the basest of mankind, that he had imperilled the family honour, flown in the face of Providence, and committed other crimes of the greatest turpitude.

As Secretary to the Sustentation Society, the Dean had been accustomed to cope with a whole committee of recalcitrant old gentlemen. When, therefore, his entire vigour was brought to bear on one old gentleman only, you can fancy he soon reduced him to powder.

'Oh, Andrew!' said Joe, humbly, 'if only you will go away

and leave me in peace, I will promise to avoid all entanglements of this kind for the future.'

'No,' said the Dean, vigorously; 'promises are useless. Your little bit of money makes you the prey of any adventuress. It is all due to your confounded trick of living on your capital. I don't leave this house till your money is safely invested in Consols —in our joint names, too. It will reduce your income by a hundred pounds, but if you are hard up you can sell your precious clay pot.'

Poor Joe was too reduced even to resent the gibe at that sacred utensil. He merely said plaintively:

'Well, pray take the money and put it in Consols, and don't worry and go on so.'

Then the Dean, having got his point, changed his key, and was kind and sympathetic, and even made inquiries about the book on Albert Dürer.

The next day he took back to London a nice fat roll of bank-notes, and Joe's little fortune was duly invested in their joint names in Consols.

'One good thing is,' said the Dean to his wife as he buttoned up his coat, 'it will save probate duty.'

'So ends our little comedy,' said Joanna, as they drove to the station. 'One might call it "Love's Labour Lost."'

'By no means,' said the Dean, patting the fat roll of bank-notes.

'No,' said Maggie, 'I consider it "Much Ado about Nothing," for I always have said, and always shall say, that Uncle Joe never would marry.'

EPILOGUE.

FIVE years rolled by, when one day Maggie was calling upon Joanna.

'I often wonder what's become of poor Peggy.'

'So do I,' said Joanna; 'and I constantly look in the paper for her name, but I have never seen it. I hope she's kept clear of drink, and that Charlie has married her.'

Just then the servant brought in two cards, 'Dr. and Mrs. Duncan.'

'Dear me, Mary,' said Joanna; 'I don't know any such people. Are they begging-letter impostors?'

'La, no, mum! they drove up in a very neat brougham.'

A lady and a gentleman entered, the lady closely veiled. When she lifted her veil, Joanna screamed out:

'Why, it's Peggy!'

And Peggy it was, but vastly altered for the better. Hers was now a bright healthy face, with honest eyes beaming with happiness. She was dressed, too, with a sombre rich grace that spoke of both wealth and culture.

'This is Charlie,' she said, introducing her husband, a handsome young fellow of twenty-eight. 'We have both turned over a new leaf. Charlie, in the old days, was a wild medical student; now he is a fashionable doctor in the West End. And I—well, I was Peggy; now I am Mrs. Duncan, and a happy woman.'

Presently, Dr. Duncan said he would drive on to see a patient, and leave Peggy to finish her chat. When they were alone Peggy said tearfully:

'I was half afraid to come, but I took courage.' Then she flushed painfully, and said, 'I know you'll both be glad to hear I have conquered the old habit, and never touch anything now.'

'Thank Heaven for that!' cried Joanna, giving her a hearty kiss, and Maggie followed suit, but she could not speak for sheer gladness of heart. Then they all had tea together, and Peggy told them of a wonderful pocket edition of Charlie, who was just two years old, but as wise and clever as if he had been twenty. And this was the first of many happy chats, and the beginning of a lifelong friendship.

Meanwhile, Uncle Joe plods away steadily at his book on Dürer, and says that if he is only spared for twenty years longer, he quite hopes to finish it.

SOME CLERICAL REMINISCENCES.

'I WISH you would set down some reminiscences,' a friend (?) said to me one day, after we had been idly turning over some years of common recollection. Then he added, 'You must have made many interesting notes at one time or another.' That is just what I have never done. I cannot understand how a man keeps a diary of solitary gossip, and daily turns the key of his book lock (which anybody can open) upon his written thoughts. I have many a time put angry or savage feelings into ink, and even addressed them to some offender, but then I have never gone the length of putting them into the post. If I wanted them to be set down in black and white, and then securely kept from other eyes, I have hidden them in the only box which cannot be broken —*i.e.* I have written and then burnt them. There is no safe like the fire. Give me a bundle of lucifers, not a bunch of keys, and then I will take care that no one shall read your libellous document.

But about these reminiscences. There were some after all, though they had never been caught and caged. So, in an hour of gossiping mood, I began to put them into written words, and finding (I was going to say) a faint pleasure (but that would not be fair, for the enjoyment has been distinct) in so doing, have yielded to such a belief in simple sympathy as to stick them on the slide of an editorial microscope and push them into place, while the editor's eye was glaring into the little end of the instrument. And if he has not wiped them off, they will be here. They are memories of no overshadowingly mighty men and things, and yet personalities need not be gigantic in order to be pleasant. Nor are they recorded in order. Though each result of recollection is accurate enough, they are all mixed up together.

The man of whom my early memory retains the most vivid impression was the famous Doctor Valpy, of Reading School, who was a great friend of ours. Indeed, my maternal grandfather, a scholarly old Bencher of the Middle Temple, who wrote a beautifully small and distinct hand, helped him a good deal in the preparation of the Delphin Classics, which were published by his son Abraham John. There are heaps of annotated Virgils and

Ciceros about our house now. Well, the Doctor was stone blind, and staying with us. I was a mischievous little boy, secretly pleased that the Doctor couldn't find me. But he used to haunt the house (I see him now) with his hands stretched out as if about to bless. I didn't associate that purpose with his gestures. He had been an insistent flogger, and was, indeed, a Grand Past Master in the birching craft. An uncle of mine, under him (often) at Reading, used to tell me that half a dozen boys were to be seen any morning before breakfast outside the Doctor's study, sitting on a large stone (which had the credit of being exceptionally cold), in order to go into the presence 'numb.' Now—so it comes to be at last with the athlete himself—the Doctor was very old and weak, and went about the place with (apparently) palms of benediction. Nevertheless, one day, he wheeled round in his benignant course and suddenly got me into a corner. The trembling hands came down upon my head. There was no escape. Immediately the schoolmaster pulse began to beat, and he bade me bring a Virgil that I might 'construe' to him. Fortunately, my dear mother was a Latin scholar, and (I do not remember ever having seen an English grammar, or been taught to read) had gone through part of the 'Æneid' with me when I was quite small. So I construed; and the Doctor gave me half-a-crown—'exfurcavit semi-coronam.' That is the clearest of my early clerical reminiscences. The next to it is of Samuel Rickards. He was intimate with Keble and Newman, who used to visit the Rickardses, and whose sisters helped to work the altar-cloth now in the church. The cardinal is still called 'Mr. John' by an old couple who to this day live in the lodge at the rectory gate. Moreover, so faintly does the ecclesiastical pulse beat in that little village, with its almshouse and grey flint-patterned church tower—with such deliberation does modern history grow in its atmosphere—so distant is the echo there of religious polemical din, that only the other day they expressed (to the present rector) their genuine surprise and regret at realising that he (Cardinal Newman) had 'joined the Church of Rome.' To them he had never been other than 'Mr. John.' There is a touch of divinely beneficent indifference in this lack of perception, in this superiority to time. And it may well be asked, 'When all is said and done, when the brilliant career is over, may not the verdict of the simplest soul be the most true and befitting of all?'

How well do I recollect Mr. Rickards! He used to wear a

red dressing-gown (as if a cardinal himself) in his study, and always began shaking hands with a friend while ten yards off from him. He had the character of being morally courageous (that was impressed by elders on my young mind), and didn't care a straw what he said in the way of personal rebuke to a man's face. One day he met an old neighbouring parson in our market town. Said the parson, 'Wet day. Wettest day I ever knew, I think. By George!' 'Why *by George?*' replied Rickards. The other turned on his heel and never spoke to him again. The reproachful question was not polite, and seemingly uncalled for. Mr. Rickards, however, was certainly original as well as brave. On another occasion I was passing his garden, and saw him capering about with a battledore in one hand and a long clay pipe in the other, at which he every now and then sucked hastily, drawing his cheeks in, and then disposing of the smoke inartistically, and with gestures of distaste.

What was he about? His servant was 'taking' some honey from the bees; and the parson, being curious to see the process, and at the same time apprehensive, had armed himself with one of his children's battledores and a pipe of tobacco which he had read of in some classic or cyclopædia as being deterrent to bees. It did not seem to be so on this occasion. They 'came about' him viciously, and he was as one playing a sort of invisible tennis with imperceptible balls.

Mr. Rickards was a theologian, and keenly sniffed the stir which the 'Tracts for the Times' made even in the still air of our country side. I was too young to apprehend the matter, but, learning that, on conscientious grounds, he would no longer attend the Bible Society meetings which my father held (in the church), I recollect wondering what made a religious man set himself (so the matter then showed itself to me) against the Scriptures.

Those Bible meetings were holidays to children. We didn't take the slightest interest in their object, and felt the profoundest (concealed) contempt for those devout little boys who (in tracts) gave up having sugar with their tea in order that they might promote the good cause. Nevertheless, we enjoyed the meetings hugely, without any display of irreverence, or sin of hypocrisy. And we were cheerful givers of some coppers when the business was over, and men stood in the porch with willow-pattern soup-plates to waylay the retiring audience. The gatherings—I don't

mean of money, but hearers—were popular. A row of speakers stood in the front seats of a gallery which ran across the church, and talked thence to the audience, who sat the wrong way in the pews. That in itself gave a fresh, if not a revolutionary taste to the proceeding. Altogether the occasion was delightful. The speakers were mostly neighbouring parsons, who always were in the habit of reading their sermons, and could not utter ten words easily in public without a manuscript—rigidly prohibited on these occasions. Thus they floundered prodigiously—all but the 'deputation,' a confident garrulous old gentleman with no end of mild stories, which being however told in 'church' created a sense of half-questionable naughtiness, and opened the door to daring young unformulated conjectures about the liberty of ritual and purposes of consecration. Not that it occurred to me then that possibly freer use might be made of our places of worship, and that sober scientific and literary lectures without an accompanying 'service' need not necessarily be reckoned as profane or out of place in a building used by people who professed a desire to be guided 'into all truth.'

But Mr. Rickards struck, and would have no more even of a Bible meeting in the church. Those (not altogether unwholesome) departures from ordinary procedure presently died out. The gallery was pulled down, the church was 'restored,' and the cheery old deputation has long since slept with his fathers. Ah, well! I suppose many people are satisfied by any access of seeming 'propriety.' But it is possible to be too stiff.

As I turn back to the earliest leaves of recollection which got themselves written in the memory of a child living in a quiet country household, the two most frequently recurring figures are, perhaps, Crabbe Robinson and a daughter of Arthur Young. They both (he most) brought whiffs of a greater and older world into our book-lined parlour, and I see now that there was far more 'conversation' going on than I could apprehend. But I well recollect her talking about an interview she once had with Dr. Johnson (no details survive), and the exceedingly contemptuous way in which she, a strong-minded woman of her time, spoke of her fellow-women. One sentence went into the child's brain and stuck there. 'Any man,' she said, 'might kill his wife, hang her skin out of the window, and marry whom he pleased the next day.' How little our elders realise the notice taken by brats! Of Crabbe Robinson's sayings I can recall none.

They were, indeed, not sayings so much as continuous bass deliveries of words which my seniors seemed to enjoy, and which occasionally went on the whole day, from breakfast to bedtime, like a waterfall or Cheapside. I have an impression that both he and Miss Young disliked boys (no wonder) with a candour they took small pains to conceal. There was also among our occasional guests a magnificent lady (in dress) who had been a notable owner of slaves, and who bewailed the mistaken liberality of the Government in emancipating them. I turn to my Haydn's 'Dictionary of Dates' and read, 'Slavery terminated in the British possessions on Aug. 1, 1834, and 770,280 slaves became free.' My lady was thus, when I saw most of her, bleeding fresh from her iniquitous treatment. She told us how pleased the slaves had been to see the jewels which she wore when she descended among them, and how their simple happiness was now marred by Radical legislation. What did they want with such nonsense as 'liberty'? How well I, as a small boy, noted the air of contempt with which she spoke of the reforms of the day, and thought that the pleasure of seeing the diamonds of their owner might be bought at too high a price! But the tone in which English peasants were often talked of and to in those days presented little contrast to her carriage towards her slaves. Of course a labourer (though a householder, &c.) was never 'Mister.' The old men were 'Masters,' but the younger were never called anything but Tom, John, or Dick, and often spoken to with an insolent familiarity or open disdain. There is enough of this discourtesy remaining now, but it was very marked when I was a little boy, and thus friends of the labourer met with sharp rubs. I know that my father did. He was the first promoter of allotments in our neighbourhood, and was bitterly and openly taken to task for his care concerning the matter. I remember a substantial farmer (who had just built a warm bin to ripen his madeira) crying out that my father 'wanted to send him and his family to the workhouse' with his new-fangled revolutionary proposals in favour of the peasant and his acre.

Though he had his insistent mouthpieces, the agricultural labourer did not in my boyhood (I think) trouble himself much about politics, at least in respect to the conduct of elections. These last were long and lively in the neighbouring borough town, but I do not remember any village assembly of would-be voters. There must, however, have been some considerable gathering of them

around the hustings, especially when the county members rode in, for great battles were fought by multitudes of people with banners —or their poles. What a sea of heads it was when one looked down from the new deal sawdust-smelling hustings! and how heartily the opposing mobs charged one another! But I don't recollect hearing of anybody being hurt. Though they had no votes, the working classes had plenty of voice at elections. All those who were present hallooed, cheered, speechified, or groaned. I did. Once (I was under ten years old) I came home in the evening voiceless. 'What is the matter?' said my father. 'Oh,' I whispered, 'I have been all day groaning Lord ——.' 'Indeed! then you had better go to bed at once,'—which I did, supperless. Unfortunately I had hooted the wrong man, quite openly, at the range of about a yard.

The elections and the country fairs were reckoned in the same row by us children, both being equally devoid of political interest. Naturally I did not in the least distinguish between the merits of the questions represented by opposite candidates. All contests were purely personal. I hooted Lord —— till I was hoarse solely under the (mistaken) impression that my friends objected to him as a possible member, and that inarticulate groans were the most acceptable forms of public opinion. Perhaps, after all, I was right; or at least a fair specimen of an elector at any time. What proportion of our millions of voters decide to vote after an unbiassed judgment of the 'principles at stake' (whatever be the derivation of this familiar phrase), and without any regard for the position of the candidate in society, the ties of personal friendship, or the more remote interest felt in him as a mere acquaintance? And even when a man has (as he thinks) discarded all these social and friendly considerations, and arrived at his conclusion upon 'purely independent grounds,' I should like to know what constituent has been uninfluenced by the probable way in which he will be touched himself. He can hardly escape conjecturing the possible effect any particular measure, or line of legislation, will have upon his own pocket and place. Seeing that many men, of equal culture and apparent ability to estimate the effect of an Act upon the 'people' generally, hold keenly opposed views, I am at a loss to explain this antagonism in some cases, except in a way offensive to most virtuous judges. I do not say that these judges are wrong. Far from it. They are right, and all ultimate judgment will go their way. And yet in fact, in spite of our

oppressive civilisation and boasted Christianity (hardly as yet out of its childhood), London clubmen and country bumpkins, the colleges of the universities and the children of the gutter, are often equally moved by motives which are less noble than those of personal regard for another. The 'righteous' soul is the salt of the nation. It keeps the national carcass from stinking past Divine endurance, and yet it is the exclusive possession of no one class. In this sense there are no privileged classes. In all there are factors of redeeming righteousness. Nevertheless, in all, I fear, it must be allowed that self is the most popular candidate, and the most insistent hereditary legislator. Indeed, when I think of it, I took a precociously high position when I hooted Lord —— on the sole ground that I believed his candidature to be harmful to others.

It is a mistake, however, to assume that boys never think. They seldom do, perhaps, though sometimes in adult (supposed) wisdom I have been unpleasantly suspicious that a perceptive monkey has seen a flaw in my own arguments, though he may not have seen his way to a formulation of his criticism. I particularly bear in mind two old gentlemen who passed as especially learned and wise, and in whose walks and talks (they were always walking and talking) I was occasionally allowed to share as a little boy. They were both fellows of their colleges, and authors of grammars. Sometimes (too often, indeed) the charm of their companionship (and it was a charm, for I liked one of them, and loved the other) was disturbed by sudden elementary inquiries about my grammatical acquirements, which were very limited. They would, *e.g.*, smilingly turn upon me and ask unsuitable inappropriate questions about Greek verbs as we crossed some pleasant field. But I used to listen as they talked, and more than once convicted them (silently) of gross ignorance. One day they conversed about the economy of superficial space, and inquired of each other in what way most ground would be available for the growth of corn. At last one suggested that as the two sides of an equilateral triangle were obviously twice as long as the third, if the soil were thrown up into ridges the slopes of these would provide twice as much surface as if the whole of the field had been left flat. Fact. These two philosophers at last agreed that landowners missed the doubling of the productive power of their acres by failing to perceive the benefit of the arrangement suggested. Unfortunately wheat does not grow all over a mound

like hair, but has upright stalks. Thus the spaces between these, and therefore the number of ears, are the same, whether they spring from a slope or a flat. You get no more from the two sides of the ridge than you do on the level ground on which it stands. Now I am not altogether surprised to recollect that this occurred to a boy, but the failure of its occurrence to my dear old learned friends has often since left me with a very humiliating estimate of distinguished fellows of colleges. One of these two had, moreover, some astonishing theories about the mischief which was likely to be done to the air breathed in England by the smoke of steamers in the sea which (since it is an island) surrounds it. He did not apparently bear in mind that the smuts of the 'black' country were incalculably more numerous than any which could reach our shore from funnels in the horizon. But he stuck to his prophetic fear, and augured the advance of national pollution from the sources I have mentioned. The ignorance of the learned is equalled only by the folly of the wise. The seer is dead. No one perceives what is about to come, though on its arrival it is seen to have been advancing as plainly as a waggon. Take, *e.g.*, the distress and dismay now felt at the importation of American corn. It was only a very few years ago that farms in England were let at an increased rent. Men ignorant of tillage and void of capital rushed into agriculture as a business sure to pay. Meanwhile America had been discovered for centuries. It was well known to be a large fertile region, and its fertility was supposed to be unbounded. At the same time we British were congratulating ourselves at the rapidly increasing ability of our ships and the spread of ocean-crossing commerce. And yet no one (beside two or three wholly obscure, unlearned, and sagacious prophets, to whom not a soul gave heed for a moment) put these facts together and perceived that a revolution must come from abundant production and facility of carriage. The idea of anything affecting the price of corn was so absurd and unlikely to be justified, that when the Tithe Redemption Act was passed corn was taken to be the sole and safe measure of agricultural value; and now it is least to be depended upon, or rather has become the lowest standard of worth, and makes no promise of becoming better. The discovery of any better paying crop will leave the tithe-owner in a hole. I am here only stating facts, and giving no opinions. And the fact is that the terms of careful provision for the tithe-owner made by the generation immediately before

this bid fair (or foul) in many places to disendow the Church. So much the better, some of my readers may think. Still that was not the purpose of the promoters of the Act in question, though it was projected and framed by experts.

The same want of prescience appears in several ways. How short a time ago, *e.g.*, cautious legal advisers, in grey hair and spectacles, long accustomed to forecast 'eventualities,' used to wag their wise heads and say to a hesitating investor, 'You will do as you please, sir, but recollect that LAND does not run away.' If he had replied, 'My friend, I prefer GAS as a more solid security,' he would have been scouted as mad, being conspicuously right all the same. The soil is now (in an investor's sense) not more hard than the mist which hangs upon it for a little time and then vanisheth away. The steam which our grandfathers scorned fetches a better value in the market than the acres on which they planted their sturdy legs. Water (especially if it takes the shape of a salmon river or loch) is often more precious than the solid earth which surrounds it, or the banks through which it flows.

Indeed, when a boy, I think I prized our little mere of some ten or twelve acres above any (small) landed possession of my people. I think of it this moment as providing an item of solid reminiscence which I enjoyed at the time, but now look back on with surprise. My maternal grandfather was a Liberal, not to say an advanced Radical. Though, as Chairman of Quarter Sessions, he was sometimes compelled to pass sentence upon poachers, he always disliked and protested against the game laws. But he was Conservative in respect to those which concern 'trespass,' and curiously fierce with boys who bathed in the mere. On one occasion he came upon a bevy (like Actæon), and, routing them with a black oak stick, delayed their dressing till they got through the hedge into the gritty road which skirts the water and now leads to the station. But when I was a boy there was far more freedom in the matter of trespass and less care in the preservation of game than there is now. Partridges abounded nevertheless. I remember having seventy shots with a muzzle-loading single gun on my first 'first' of September. And that was over ground which knew no gamekeeper whatever. Of course the pheasants were fewer, though hares abounded. As to birds, there were enough and to spare even, as well as I can recollect, for poaching cats. Now every pet is shot or trapped by blood-thirsty keepers. These men, too, have so killed down all hawks,

&c., that the balance of nature is upset, and small birds multiply unchecked by the natural provision made for their restraint. One collateral harm follows from this in some places where the excessive persecution of sparrows by the farmer swings the balance too far the other way. An impression prevails that they do unmixed harm, and they are killed accordingly; whereas at certain seasons of the year they are busy in ridding the soil of countless hurtful insects. The hawk and his kind would keep them sufficiently down, but these correctors of bird appetite are destroyed. Thus (let alone that evil temptation to the village lad with sportive tastes which is provided by excessive game preserving) the present 'keeper' (though small blame belongs to the man himself) really promotes the undue multiplication of small birds by his protection of the pheasant, and in more ways than one is a mischievously artificial member of our modern country society. There would be plenty of 'shooting' for those who like it, without him; or at least with a moderate and not costly amount of precaution in 'egging' time. The best security, however, for eggs is found in the good-will which exists between the tenant and the landlord. If only the latter shoots, the former may not much appreciate (especially in these days) the pleasure of seeing him blaze about his fields, and thus would be rather blind to a man who may be seen dawdling down a hedgerow or brow of a ditch; though nests might be found there.

Those old days of deliberate shooting with a muzzle-loader and dogs were very pleasant, though perhaps we were rather drowsy. But 'repose' is the virtue to be preached and practised now. I remember, however, one parson of my youth who somewhat overdid this combination of performance and doctrine, since, one Sunday, he went fast asleep while he was preaching. Fact. A friend of ours was present, and saw him do it. He was always slow, and on this occasion got slower and slower till he stopped altogether. This woke up those who nodded, and on looking towards the pulpit they saw him sleeping while he stood; like a horse. I forget the end of the story. But he passed from a sermon into a snore. So did another man. That was in Rutlandshire. A parson there told me of it. This second sleeper had gone kindly to take the duty for a neighbour a few miles off; in August. He walked to the church, and being well in time looked into the vicarage. The kindly servant said, 'You seem tired, sir; won't you have a glass of ale after your walk?' Yes, he would; and did—and felt

refreshed. The day however was very hot, the afternoon was its hottest part, and the freshly dined rustic congregation (who had been reaping and binding all the week) mostly fell asleep. There was a (nasal) murmuring among the people. The doors, too, were wide open, and bumble-bees sailed slowly down the aisle adding to the hum. Thus when the preacher went into the pulpit he caught the sentiment of the congregation, and after putting his face reverently between his hands for a few seconds remained in the same attitude, fast asleep. There was no record (at least I remember none) on this occasion either of the awakening of any-body. My friend learnt of the incident from the rustic clerk.

How irresistibly, imperatively importunate is the demand of the god of dreams when he bids us slumber in the midst of worship! and how very mistaken those are who blame the sleeper severely! Of course you may carry the thing too far, as (in the well-known story) when Mr. A. was twitted by Mr. B. with having sent a man to sleep with his sermon in his (Mr. B.'s) church. On the next Sunday Mr. A. sat in the congregation and B. preached. He was maliciously pleased at seeing on this occasion, too, one of the audience in a nap. Presently he called B.'s notice to it. 'Yes,' replied Mr. B., 'he is asleep. But he is the same man. We have not been able to wake him.'

Though the religious attitude in my young days was far from eager, there was much steady 'pastoral' work in which the parson was helped by the farmers of the parish. Our Sunday school, I recollect, was assiduously taught, and some of the boys performed prodigies of Scriptural repetition. One of the most distinguished of these reciters soon took to the reading of 'Tom Paine,' and finally (though there is no inevitable connection between these phases of departure from a Christian conversation) to drink. He became apparently the most conspicuously dilapidated personage in our small rustic circle. How well as a child I remember the boast of his teacher that he had said the longest Gospel in the Prayer Book without a mistake!

The poorer sort of people used to attend Divine service well. Clergy, including all ranks, were not so bustling as they now are. Indeed, some bishops seemed to take their duties with an equa-nimity for which they did not anywise deem it necessary to apologise. There was one who held a confirmation near my home years ago, and a judicious clergyman who had been present told me after-wards that he had heard such a charge given to the candidates as

they all attended to and would be sure to remember always. He said it contained words of one syllable only; that these were well chosen, and such as the young people, however ignorant, were able perfectly to understand. 'And then,' he added, 'the charge contained excellent advice, worthy to be acted on throughout life.' In fact, the only words uttered by the bishop (beyond those printed in the service-book itself) were 'Stand up.' He might have done worse.

There was not much 'visiting' among the poor, and the costume of many clergymen was very 'unclerical.' I well recollect one scholarly gentleman, who represented an old county family, and dined out a good deal. In summer he used to wear nankeen trousers as 'dress.' Some of my readers need to be told that these (though cool and suitable to the season) were of linen or calico, and yellow. But I never heard of any bishop in my boyhood troubling himself about any such thing as that. Indeed, I well recollect hearing of one who would not be bothered by taking part in any service beyond those to which he was exclusively committed by his office.

The laxity and official slovenliness in the discharge of clerical function which was permitted, and really passed without comment not so very long ago, would be almost incredible to some of our ardent and devout spirits in these days. Ordinations, *e.g.*, now attract much public notice. They are reported in other papers beside the clerical. A great multitude attend, especially in London. And they treat the business as no mere spectacle, but come with the reverence which belongs to public worship. This is well; but it was not well when I and some dozen other men were bidden to be at a chapel in Regent Street at eight on a midwinter morning to be ordained. No one was there beside two or three pew-openers who fussed about, and evidently thought that we might stay so long as to interfere with their regular 'sitters.' It looked like it at first, for no bishop made his appearance till twenty minutes had passed. Then he hurried in, unshaved, and got through the service at as fast a pace as he could, and that was not slow, inasmuch as he was hindered by no choir, congregation, sermon, or address. And he was a popular bishop (not my Lord of London) who did this, only between thirty and forty years ago. It was inconvenient for him to use his own cathedral, so he borrowed a chapel in town for the performance. Nowadays, moreover, bishops 'use hospitality' to the young men whom they ordain,

frequently having them at their 'palaces' during the previous week, and giving them kindly advice. I saw nothing of my 'spiritual' father whatever; and as to 'provender,' all we knew of it came from a chop which we could smell going into the chaplain's room for lunch. We were examined on the first floor of 27 Parliament Street, and turned loose for an hour at one o'clock.

I have skipped on here, but I will not go back to dwell on college recollections. They of all others retire most rapidly into the past, inasmuch as three years instead of thirty go to make a generation. But how vivid some of them are! I wonder, though, if we were as young-looking in our days as undergraduates are in these? A little time ago I was staying with the distinguished president of an Oxford college, and spoke to him about the youthfulness of his men, adding, 'Two, I noticed yesterday, are mere boys.'

'Which do you mean?' said he. So I pointed them out, and to my humiliation found that they were about the most advanced and distinguished pair under his care. But age in itself is a disqualification at college. I heard of a couple of university men who were discussing an unpopular tutor. After having alleged against him all that they could think of, they paused from sheer exhaustion of material for disparagement, and went their ways. But as they parted one said to the other, 'Yes. The brute. And he's thirty.'

A visit to one's old college, however, kindles a consciousness of wholesome vitality which undergraduates would consider the mere childishness or affectation of age. Not long ago I was charged with some passing honourable duties at my own university, and was the guest of the hospitable Vice-Chancellor. It was pleasant to see the young faces and realise the reserve of strength which nothing but a school or college can show.

With all this, however, there are phases of university life which recall mediæval procedure, or caution, after a way which strikes the man who has been ever so little about the world as unnecessary or incongruous.

The lower windows, *e.g.*, of colleges which give upon the street are barred. Perhaps it is well, but somehow it hardly fits in with the ways of this modern world and a certain amount of trustfulness which has marked some recent rule. One day I had sought to sponge the slate of my mind, and prowled about ready to receive fresh impressions. On my return the Vice-Chancellor asked me for

them. 'The place,' I replied, 'strikes me as a city of prisons.' And it well might, though neither he nor I had thought of it before.

Not so an old peasant woman who visited the place for the first time. She was walking down a chief street skirted by a college whose lower windows were heavily ironed. An undergraduate was standing at one of them with his usual smile. 'Ah!' cried the candid old lady, 'you may laugh, but you aren't in there for no good.' She thought it was a jail.

I suppose that the reminiscences of most clergymen touch (legitimately) more matters outside conventionally professional duties than do those of the members of any other calling. It is true that parsons may not couple the duties of the doctor and lawyer with their own, but they belong to the army and navy as well as to the church, and (to their great loss) are supposed to be able to cultivate their glebes. Thus they may be farmers and cattle dealers; and as almost all of them have official residences, and are frequently responsible for the structure and repair of the chancel and village schoolhouse, as well as of the vicarage, they are expected to know something about the business of the architect and builder. The laws concerning these last ought specially to be borne in mind by them. There are occasionally 'ancient lights' (I don't mean 'Venerables' in the clerical sense), able to give them trouble. Here let me interpolate an incident which shows (though I escaped in this case) how a man may unwittingly get into mischief while in the discharge of highly commendable work. Once I was building a much-needed set of schools in London, and my workmen were suddenly challenged by a neighbour. It appeared, to my surprise and great regret, that they were clearly in the wrong, and the offended neighbour might easily have got an injunction in Chancery (I think they call it) and stopped me. But fortunately he lost his temper, and came bursting with indignation to my house. He was a poor man, and we should not really have done him two-pennyworth of harm. But he had (or might have had) the law on his side. So I mildly expressed my regret, and offered him a cheque for 10*l.* on the spot. This he instantly closed with, though, having me literally in a corner, he could have got more. So I hastened to my solicitors and set them at once to draw up a quittance from all opposition on his part. This he signed. Meanwhile my men had gone on building (like, say, the Maccabees when engaged on the walls

of Jerusalem), while the (Irish) friends of the complainant abused them out of a window till, brick by brick, all reproach was cut off by an intervening wall, the curses becoming gradually indistinct, and then inaudible.

Sometimes the best intentions are frustrated either by sheer inability to comply with the law, or by such a prospect of delay as to justify a short cut. Several years ago I coveted a marble font in a City church which was about to be pulled down, and asked the rector to give or sell it to me. He said it was really not his, but that I must consult another rector from whose church it had been brought and who still claimed it. Applying to him, I was told that as it had been moved out of his church I was welcome to it as far as he was concerned, but that the matter rested with the Bishop of London. I wrote to the Bishop, and got as answer that he would much like me to have it (for use in my church), but that the final decision lay in the hands of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. This looked hopeless. The worm will turn. So I sent four men, with a truck, to the church where the coveted font stood, and bade them, without any attempt at concealment, carry it bodily away, giving the beadle five shillings. I might have had it for half-a-crown. Presently the laden truck appeared at my church, in which we fixed the font, and never heard a word about the transaction. Sometimes, however, it is possible to approach still more dangerously near to the infraction of a law. One afternoon I arrived at the Liverpool Street Station, and straightway walked towards a hansom which a porter had called for me, having myself picked out my small hand-portmanteau from a heap of luggage. I had not got many yards before an attempt was made by some one in the crowd to snatch it out of my hands. I dragged it roughly from the intending thief, who suddenly disappeared. When I reached the cab there was a smiling porter touching his cap and pointing to my own luggage, which he (knowing me and mine by sight) had placed in the hansom. The portmanteau which I had rescued from the thief *belonged to him;* and his sudden disappearance (which I attributed to a desire for escape) meant that he had gone to fetch a constable. I drove quickly out of the station.

To return to the legitimate accompanying occupations which are permitted to a parson. Take literature. The publication of sermons (though I cannot say that I have personally had much reason to complain on this score) is not always so agreeable in

fruition as in prospect. I heard the other day of a clergyman who put forth a volume of his discourses, and by means of a ready reckoner (which showed that 720 volumes at *5s.* a volume would bring in 155*l.*) found much pleasure in counting his new-born chickens. He did this with greater confidence as they were actually hatched—and mostly bound, or full feathered. Well, one Sunday he got a letter from the firm which had acted as hen, and though it was just before service, could not resist having a peep at the price brought by the firstlings of his brood. Alas! poor man. It was his first experience of literary outlay, and included the cost of printing, corrections, binding, advertising, and of other (to him) mysterious though recognised deductions. In the course of his sermon that morning (betrayed by the initial sound of a well-known biblical word), he quite unconsciously spoke of 'publishers and sinners.' I would advise most clergymen to hesitate before attempting to put a little fringe to a narrow income by the printing cf sermons. It is possibly better for a man to try his luck with some periodical. Then at the worst he wastes a few sheets of paper, and since the first manuscripts which he offers to an editor are probably short, the spare time spent in their preparation (however honestly and deliberately they have been prepared) will not be very much. But the openings for magazine articles from an outsider are, I venture to think, much more limited than the aspirant imagines. I refer to those which bring fair payment. It is true that London produces about 400 monthly publications, about the same number of newspapers (daily or weekly), and some sixty 'quarterlies.' But a large proportion of these are concerned in some special object or craft; some promote an exclusive religious sect, others are little more than trade circulars, or devoted to sporting and dramatic interests. The residue to which a clergyman could look for any addition to his income thus comes to be whittled down into a very small number, and when I come to 'Clerical Reminiscences,' I begin to wonder how I could have had the courage to shove my first little manuscript under an unseen editorial eye.

There is, however, one kind of literary work which even now I cannot think of without an immediate confusion of brains. Once I was asked to be the editor of a monthly shilling periodical, and sat in the master's chair for a year. 'Master's' chair, indeed! I had a roomy office and a 'sub,' who was an old 'press-man.' He was punctual, methodical, full of ingenious and useless sugges-

tions, and wrote the best hand I ever read. I was the 'editor,' and very decently paid, but I was expected to carry out the mind of a committee. Now I don't object to a so-called committee when the members never attend, and I am in the chair. But my masters were most conscientious. They were fond of sending me for publication articles of their own manufacture, but there I had (or didn't have) them. Protect an editor from committees! The first day that I sat down at my desk I found matter enough set up in type to fill three or four months' numbers of the magazine in advance. And this was mostly the work of my chief committee-men. Of course an editor must be responsible to the 'firm' or 'house' which employs him, but he should not be expected to swim with his hands and legs tied. If he blunders he can (like any other prime minister) be dismissed; but he should be allowed to blunder, or at least to propose some unacceptable measure before being sat upon by his masters. Some literary work may be a pleasant recreation; here I had a touch of its severe and exacting side, and I look on an established editor not merely with the awe which befits an 'occasional' contributor like myself, but with a perception that however he may disappoint me by 'declining' what I have ventured to think acceptable, his faculties are unique. Some obviously do not dislike the business. Well, what is one man's meat is another man's poison. I resigned my post, i.e. I began the note which contained my resignation of it while the clock was striking the first possible hour of release.

Clergymen generally misuse their vacations. They are, to begin with, by no means less conventionally official than men in other professions, but they often give themselves no chance of getting out of the professional rut. The town parson, e.g., often 'takes duty' in the country. Thus, though his congregation may change, he never gets out of the pulpit. Lawyers are wiser. They don't seek a provincial job when they become free of the London courts. The parson, perhaps above all men, ought to break fresh ground whenever he can. Thus he sees other sides of life than that which is most before his eyes. I did, certainly, when, during some autumn weeks of that summer in which the great French and German struggle began, I got myself engaged by a newspaper to go out to the 'seat of war' (so my instructions called it) and report on the ambulances. I hastened off to Sedan, which I reached after the battle within the month of September. Small and limited as my experience was, I saw at once that no

description whatever can give a really true picture of what 'war' means. I do not refer to the strangely affecting moment when you first meet a load of white-faced wounded men. Those I thus saw were in a waggon, with bloody bandages, pale skins, and countenances of apparently utter unconcern. I don't recollect which side they belonged to. Anyhow they had been shot by neighbours who possibly have since been adorned with medals for the deed. War may be carried on now (they say it is) with regard to the feelings of the nineteenth century (whatever they may be), but the sensation which meets you on entering an area of military strife for the first time is so confused as to be temporarily perplexing or, rather, inexplicable. You lose your measurement of circumstance. There is a curious subverting of all the undefined accepted instincts and aspects of common life. Roads lead to bridges broken with astonishingly explosive violence. Trains come to a sudden stop in the middle of turnip fields, and when you look out there is no line. Decent people (obviously unused to camping out), who have fled from some village which the torrent of war has flooded, are seen trying to settle themselves by the roadside after a blundering bewildered fashion. Private grounds, kitchen gardens, farmyards, and 'rights of way' lose their meaning with a rude and pathetic utterness, and the war-tourist, of course, is put to queer shifts for a lodging.

I didn't, for example, in the least know where to go in Sedan, and presently found that there was no place in which to lay my head. At the most hopeful or promising inn (which had a great ragged hole, caused by a shell, in the wall of the salle-à-manger) the surviving landlord shrugged his shoulders (till his shadow presented no sign of a head at all, but looked like that of a coffin set up on its small end), and ruefully declared that there was not a corner in which I could lie down. So I wandered aimlessly forth, and found myself at last in what seemed to be a barrack (how I got in I don't know), with the gloom of evening increasing every moment. The building was seemingly devoted to the custody of slightly wounded Frenchmen, with a sprinkling of Turcoes. I walked further into the place in a tentative and curiously conjectural mood till I couldn't see more than a yard before me, and then I stood still. Presently a voice (to my surprise, in English) came out the darkness saying, 'Who is that?' I gave my name, and said that I had lost my way and was looking for some place in which to sleep. 'Did you write so-and-so?' replied the voice.

'Yes.' 'Then you shall have my room,' was the gratifying and wholly unexpected response. The voice belonged to a lady-nurse, whose business lay (she was then herself lying down to sleep in a corner of the barracks) among the wounded, but who had secured an apartment in the very inn I had been driven from. So I took her card to the rueful landlord, who embraced me, and put me comfortably up, blessing the English nurse, and taking immense pinches of (seemingly adhesive) black snuff which stuck about his face in patches, when, in his agitation, he missed his nose.

But though the poor French were politely grateful for the attention shown to them by the English nurses who went out, I am inclined to believe that our hasty philanthropical procedure could not practically be impartial. We offered our services to both sides. In divers instances, indeed, they were declined by the Germans; nevertheless, our presence freed them from some hindrances when they were eagerly following up a victory, and thus told in favour of the invaders. I was assured on the spot that Von der Tann left a number of impeding sick to English care so eagerly that they were hardly counted. They were in sore straits, poor fellows! There was, especially, one large gentleman's house outside Sedan seemingly full of sick, or rather, I should say, dying Bavarians. They filled room after room, lying upon their backs on the floor. Typhus had hold of them. When I first passed through, they watched me with fevered eyes and followed every movement silently and with motionless attention, being too feeble to speak or move a limb. On inquiring about them some weeks later I was told offhand, 'Oh! they all died like flies.'

What piles of rubbish (partly in the shape of cast-off worthless books) as well as cases of good wine, chloroform, and surgical appliances were hurriedly sent out to the seat of war. What a 'scraping of lint' went on throughout the land! Every schoolgirl thought that she could make 'charpie,' but much of it was burnt, not being clean. The 'port,' however, was appreciated by patients, though divers ladies who went out with romantic eagerness to nurse the wounded had to learn that their duties were not fulfilled by giving repeated 'nips' to the sick. Indeed, the business of a war-nurse especially is so repulsive that most volunteers were choked off at once. The Sisters of All Saints', Margaret Street, did good service. I took out a bag of letters and papers to them, the post being dislocated, and even they told me how much they needed help to do some of the roughest of their work. The Dutch ambu-

lances seemed to be the best managed. But what queer camp-following gentlemen 'tourists' turned up! One found himself 'caught' in the railway station at Sedan during the engagement. Of course he couldn't go out except at the risk of his life. So he amused himself within the innermost doors of the office, and appeared to be absolutely unaffected by the awfulness of the scenes around him. They were merely historic and entertaining in his eyes. 'Look here,' he said to me, opening a small bag full of railway tickets. 'I've got some souvenirs of Sedan.' They were all marked 'Sedan Sept. 1,' and indicated an immense number of quite impossible journeys, such as that to Metz, as having been made on that day. While the storm was raging around he had stamped all the tickets he could lay hands on with the date of the battle, till the ink gave out. 'These will be curiosities,' said he, adding, 'and I've got money out of the pocket of a dead soldier; they say it's lucky.' He showed me some silver of which he had robbed a corpse.

I met another Englishman (of a well-known name) who had been clapped into custody as suspicious, and had there caught a fever. He looked rather glum. 'I can't speak German,' he said, 'but I know four words of French and get along with them.' 'What may these be?' I asked. 'Partant pour la Syrie,' was his reply. One heard queer tales, the gossip of the war, with little incidents, too small to be reported, but significant enough. Among the oddest sensations I felt in those days was the going into an inn and helping myself to food without leave. One expected an arrest at the hands of a waiter, but nobody was there. The people of the house had vanished away—for a time. It was very difficult to get about, especially so as to see fighting. Making an essay one forenoon, and being smartly stopped by a grim German sentry, I tried to explain myself. Never was an attempt more futile. He glowered at me in a bloodthirsty way, and lowering his rifle to the 'charge' proceeded without a word of apology to poke at me with the sharp end of it. I withdrew myself—speedily. Of course I was nervous. Some people wanted me to go into Metz with a load of surgical and toothsome things for the sick. I helped to pack the waggon, but declined the expedition as they said I should probably be shot as a spy or franc-tireur. The story of the battle of Sedan has hardly been told to the world yet. It is known that the march of the French army was delayed in order to give a ball to the ladies of Sedan, but none

will ever say how many officers stayed in the town while the early part of the engagement was going on. Men, being disgusted, laid down their still loaded 'chassepots' in large numbers on the ground. There were printed notices put up in the city after the battle was over (I read them myself) bidding the inhabitants not to be alarmed at the firing which still went on in the fields, since it was caused only by the German fatigue parties who were discharging the French rifles as they gathered them up. These were made into piles which, at a little distance, looked like stacks of rusty iron hurdles, waiting to be carted away. The sight of churches filled from the altar to the west end with wounded men (the dead being put hurriedly outside, like luggage at an inn door waiting for the station omnibus) was made familiar enough to all readers of contemporary papers, but nothing written could convey a true idea of the bewildered pathos of some with whom life-long placid peace had been suddenly replaced by wholly unrealised war. I remember a secluded cottage with honeysuckles about the porch and a velvet lawn across which a torrent of fighting had roared. Its inmates had fled. The grass had been 'cut,' not with a 'mower' but with cannon wheels. Nevertheless, the cat was asleep in the sunny bay window, through which one could see an opened piano, with music set out before an empty stool.

Sometimes the pathos was almost grotesque. In one place I came across an old family servant, a gardener, who still clung to his master's house and had to bury men among the flower beds. 'The officers,' said he, 'will be dug up and sent home into Saxony.' The digging up of the dead was new to me, not having seen mention of it in any correspondent's letters. But, in fact, those of any rank, buried in the shallowest field graves (there is no time to make deep ones), are removed as soon as possible. It is more than embarrassing to a farmer to have fifty or sixty dead bodies eight inches below the surface in a wheat stubble which he wants to plough. Thus the whole area over which a battle has been fought is presently searched for the dead who have been hastily covered with soil. I saw, indeed more than *saw*, gangs of men engaged in this awful malodorous work, and ceased to blame Hotspur's fop. This was a little while after the battle outside Saarbrücken. By the way, the much boasted success of the mitrailleuse (when the Prince Imperial received his 'baptism of blood') was very doubtful, if not wholly delusive. There are two bridges over the Saar, and the French force, which occupied a flat poplar-bordered field

commanding the town, was said to have swept them clear of some German troops who were seen crossing the river, and on whom the new weapon of war played with deadly effect, so it was reported. I was curious to test this, and examined the bridges closely and carefully. Not a spot could I find which had been struck by a bullet. 'How is this?' I asked of one there. 'The men were said to have been shot down on the bridge by scores.' 'Not a bit,' said he, 'the French fired over their heads, and they, hearing the whizz, bobbed down under the parapet and made off on all fours like a flock of sheep.' So I was told. Certainly I could find no sign of the bridge having been peppered. And yet the papers said truly that it was soon cleared of Germans.

Now this occasion no doubt provided the gravest and rarest kind of change which a clergyman could take, and rapidly created memories which still retain the sharpness of their edge. I got it all into an autumnal vacation of some six weeks, and omit much that I might say about Strasbourg (which capitulated while I was in its neighbourhood) and the lines around Metz. Of course one had to 'rough' it occasionally, but that short experience has given me the power of understanding much (especially in current history) which otherwise I should read with small perception. Such a holiday, moreover, inevitably helps to a better interpretation of the Old Testament, which is grievously filled with tales of war. Altogether it shows sides of human nature, of its suffering and passions, which ought to make the world more real to an officer of religion.

But of all tours one in Palestine is the chiefest for him to make. I am fortunate in having some acquaintance with the Sinaitic desert (to find it quite unlike what I expected), but it was long before I could manage a visit to the Holy Land. I had been favoured with an invitation to visit Mr. Holman Hunt there, which I was hindered in accepting. At last the day came when I rode towards Jerusalem from the 'Wilderness of the Wandering,' and found that every volume of the Bible which I possessed became at once an 'illustrated' copy. I read of scenes in the study or the church, and, as I read, I see Bethlehem. I stand on the Mount of Olives. I look upon the Lake of Galilee itself. I watch Jehu driving towards Jezreel, his little company showing like a dot upon the great flat green plain of Esdraelon, and visible for miles before any watchman on a tower (having no telescope) could distinguish the furious driving of its leader. I realise from the

multitude of their relics what the coasts of Tyre and Sidon were like 1800 years ago, and Nazareth shows itself to me when its name comes before my eyes. The value of this panorama or vision to any official exponent of the Bible is obviously incalculable, if he can use it. American congregations are alive to the indirect supposed advantage to themselves in this matter, and thus not unfrequently send their ministers to Palestine. Among my clerical reminiscences (though I was not haunted by the reflection that I was accountable for them to my parishioners), those which date from the Holy Land are the most vivid and valuable to myself. There was change, and profoundly impressive information or instruction every day. The country was a commentary ; and if it could not be included among the subjects required by Bishops for examination, at least it ought to be admitted into the list, and proficiency in sacred geography at first hand made account of by the examiner.

I have been very fortunate in my colleagues, but sometimes an advertisement for a 'curate' has brought comical replies. On one occasion the good qualities of the first gentleman I interviewed were tempered by an exceedingly obtrusive cork leg which he didn't manage well. While I listened in my study to the approach of the second who had been asked to favour me with a call, a heavy stumping in the passage made me say, 'Surely there cannot be another such a one?' But there was. So in the letter of invitation to the third on my list, I expressed a hope (with many apologies) that he was not 'lame.' The reply which came was very satisfactory, till I reached the postscript. There my correspondent wrote, 'You ask if I am lame. It is unfortunately too true that I have lately lost my right leg, but I am assured that an artificial substitute . . . . .' The most pathetic application I ever had was from a sort of Dominie Sampson who had been from his youth chaplain and librarian to some rich man whose heir had turned him adrift. He was much older than myself, and carried a tin snuff-box. While I beat about the bush thinking how to decline his offer without offence, he (supposing that I hesitated in regard to the stipend of the post) tapped his box, took an emphatic pinch, and looking hard at me said, 'Sir, I am prepared to come for thirty-six pounds a year.' I represented his case to Archbishop Tait, who took pains to find a nook into which to place this learned and modest gentleman. There may be as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, but occasionally

one brought up in the net of an advertisement is clearly bad—or mad. Once a man in a shovel hat and a waistcoat like a large black dish-cover (he had sent in his card with 'Jehovah Jireh' upon it) called, and almost insisted on my securing him as a colleague. All know the story of the Irishman who, finding himself obliged to address a negro congregation, said by way of prefatory self-commendation, 'My friends, I may have a white skin, but I have a black heart.' Nevertheless there is a clerical—well, say 'grey'—which the parson who fishes for help by advertisements should be always able to spot.

Every one goes to America now; and the sooner they set off the better. On the ground that a parson especially should seek for 'change' when he gets the chance of a fairly proportioned vacation I have paid more than one visit to the States, and have then been partly accompanied by a fellow traveller. A companion, however (except, say, in the desert, where you have none but Arabs to speak to, and have your conversation checked by the drawback that you can neither understand nor address them) is sometimes a mistake. I mean a companion whom you take with you from Charing Cross or Liverpool. I owe exceedingly agreeable acquaintanceship, which indeed has led more than once into the finding of a friend, by simply floating in the (to me) nameless stream. Of course solitary touring is open to the objection that if you fall sick, meet with an accident, or happen to be killed, you may be a nuisance to other people, and especially in the latter case expose your friends at home to some needlessly abrupt information. To avoid this I have been used to carry, not merely my name and address in my pocket-book, but clear instructions as to what should be done with the 'body' in case of death. It is well to mention the name of some firm of, say, solicitors, to whom the needed information should first be sent, and who would be prepared to defray any expense incurred in paying the physician, post, or undertaker. Once I suddenly showed these instructions (given plainly in the fly-leaf of my diary) to a chance (clerical) companion, and he was foolish enough to fail in perceiving the considerate common-sense I thereby showed, and to look on me as one who treated grave matters with too light a hand. I was to him a profane person, though the little entry in my almanac was written in the simplest words.

Talking of the hindrances to conversation when you deal with people who can't understand what you say, I am not sure whether

this ignorance (when complete) is not sometimes desirable, provided you have an interpreter for emergencies. You may thus relieve yourself in vigorous and reproachful English without any offence or danger of recrimination. Then too, you yourself fail to be stung by even the sharpest verbal insult, and can smile softly at spoken wrath.

In speaking of the use of their vacations by the clergy, I have said that the sight of Bible lands ought to be reckoned as part of their training rather than as recreation, and I would add that (especially in the present 'expansion of England') young men who are going to be ordained ought to go forth and see how their business is done in some one or other of the British Colonies. As it is, many a young fellow is set down in a curacy without any due conception of the stir which is going on throughout the world, particularly in respect to the position and work of the ministry. Some villages, charming in various respects, are so brooded over by a traditional atmosphere of social and religious procedure, that an initial acquaintance with, say, Canada, might well protect him from their creeping dulness. He will have felt the pulse of a young nation, and can never lose the memory of its touch. No doubt there is the chance of disillusion in such procedure. A 'people' in its cradle may suggest a vestry, and often a turbulent one. The founders of a nation are necessarily limited in number, and have to look too closely to the safety or solidity of their surroundings to give much scope for the interesting speculation which lends its charm to much settled and ripe converse. Still it is not a bad thing to get a few disillusions done as soon as may be. And some acquaintance with the setting of the most ancient scenes in history, and with that of the last revealed or realised possibilities of expanded civilisation, is especially needed by those whose profession leads them to deal with the ancient and modern world. Anyhow, I would advise the parson whose weeks are full of work to take a holiday whenever he can get it, and inasmuch as he labours on Sundays when others rest, he has a right to the layman's share of holidays, with fifty-two in addition.

AFTER WINTER.

I.

Not yet the infant Spring
Hath changed her russet gown for robes of green,
But lieth slumbering,
Hid in the covert of a wood, unseen:
Folded in shadows deep,
Ethereal visions flit across her face in sleep.

II.

Like memories of the dead,
Winter revives and fades, mid days of blue,
And thrusts his snowy head
Upon the landscape, whitening all the view;
With shrilly voice and thin,
High singing o'er the downs the chilly breezes spin.

III.

Here, by the sharp blast switched,
The ruddy drifts about the road are swayed,
Dancing like sprites bewitched
In whirling somersaults of light and shade;
The hollow forests ring,
Shuddering with leafless music as the lank boughs swing.

IV.

Upon the cottage wall
The Jasmine lingers in a listless dream;
O'erhead the sparrows call,
And twitter out the day in dolorous theme;
Whistling a sober tune,
The ploughman drives his team the long dank afternoon.

V.

Far o'er the marshy fen
The vaprous ghosts worn travellers waylay ;
In dale and dyke and glen
The brittle leaves of Autumn waste away ;
The snowdrop, bowed with grief,
Broods like an angel o'er its chastened leaf.

VI.

Not sorrow, nor yet scorn,
Nature wears on her face, but calm distress :
Like to a child new-born
The Year's dim senses grope for consciousness :
Through all the stilly wood
Stirreth the soul of Being, bursting blade and bud.

VII.

Soon shall the violet bloom
Beneath the hedge, and scent each sheltered nook ;
The primrose gild the gloom
Where pale anemones peep o'er the brook,
And laughing waves shall swell
Of golden daffodils in every mossy dell.

VIII.

Hasten, sweet birds of song,
Wing o'er the waves, and fill the woods with voices ;
Spring tarrieth, slumbering long,
She waketh not, but in her dream rejoices ;
Quicken thou magic sod,
Burst to a sea of flowers, and greet the priests of God !

SECTION LIFE IN THE NORTH-WEST.

Some few years since I formed one of a gang of men employed on a section of the Canadian Pacific Railway; and, that line being one of the world's greatest thoroughfares, the public may be interested to hear something of the mode of life of those who help to keep it in repair. A section, I must explain, is a stretch of railway, or 'track,' presided over by a ganger, in Western parlance 'boss,' who has under him a complement of men. I will confine my remarks to the section I belonged to, which was on the lonely prairie, within clear view of the Rockies, blue and snow-capped, to the west.

We lived in one of the frame-built houses which, all on the same model, are stationed along the track at intervals of twenty miles or less. In each are lodged two gangs, one keeping the line in repair ten miles east, the other ten miles west. The head of one of them having the additional duty of keeping the section-house and boarding the men. Our boarding-boss was an Englishman, a frank, straightforward fellow, whose buxom wife, besides her maternal duties, did the cooking for both gangs; her work, moreover, being often increased by the quartering upon us of the 'surface-gang,' a large roving detachment which worked sometimes on one section, sometimes on another, as their services might be required.

Our pay was a dollar and a half a day, but our fellow-gang received two dollars; not owing to any difference in their work, but to its lying west of ours, labour being of more value in that direction, and the line having been drawn, as ill-luck would have it, at our section. Four dollars a week was deducted from our wages for board, and, considering the excellence of the fare, the charge was moderate. Beefsteak and potatoes, beans and bacon, porridge, or 'mush' as it was called, bread and butter, sweets, pies, &c., with the unvarying accompaniment of tea, figured abundantly at the three 'square meals' to which we sat down daily; Sunday's bill of fare being extra good. We were certainly fortunate in our boarding-boss and his wife; but as far as my experience went the other sections fared equally well, with some few exceptions.

At six a.m. we rose, awakened by the stentorian cry, 'Come, arouse!' of the boarding-boss. Breakfast followed, and at seven nominally, for it was often later, our boss, a genial, burly Austrian, yclept for shortness 'Joe,' would summon us to our duties with a 'Nŏw, poys, all aboord!'—in allusion to the hand-car on which, when we had placed it on the rails, we drove to the scene of our labours, which was sometimes close by, at others several miles distant. In the latter case we would occasionally take our dinner with us, when the excursion would be facetiously spoken of as a picnic.

A word as to the hand-car which figured so prominently in our work. It was nothing more than a flat open truck on wheels, which raised it about a couple of feet above the rails, on and off which it could be lifted by four men, two at each end. It afforded comfortable standing-room for six, though more were often crowded on it, the men standing up to 'pump,' as working the handles by means of which it was propelled was called. To the genuine old railroad man this little machine is an object of much interest and care. There is a sort of dirge-like chant concerning it, the only line I can recall being that with which each verse concludes—

And, Jerry, go ile the car!

a duty which, however the said Jerry may have attended to it, was always most conscientiously performed by Joe.

Our gang was a strange mixture, headed by the good-natured Austrian, our boss—whose knowledge of English, by the way, was very limited. Under him were two young Prussians, brothers, who, having been prospecting in the Rockies, had lost their outfit in attempting to cross the Bow River; an old Irish-Canadian, whose chief characteristic was a strong disinclination for any sort of exertion, save that of talking; a young Chicagoan, who was something of a dude, and evidently greatly dependent on the toothbrush which ostentatiously protruded from the outside breast-pocket of his coat; and two Englishmen, of whom I was one. An old army-pensioner was with us for a time, a native of Dublin, and overflowing with amusing reminiscences of his soldier-life in India. But section work was not congenial to him, and one fine day, with his little bundle slung over his shoulder, he bade us good-bye, and tramped down East. I had wellnigh forgotten our Birmingham man, who, cut adrift as he was from civilisation, clung desperately to his last vestige of it in the shape of a dingy linen collar, which

he persisted in wearing long after it had ceased to be anything of an ornament.

The sections, indeed, are made up of all sorts and conditions of men, including almost every nationality. The gang who boarded with us was no less curiously composed than our own, the most noticeable member of it being a young Creole, a somewhat mysterious subject to our old Irish-Canadian, who would allude to him indiscriminately, yet not without a touch of awe, as 'that Kamtchatkan,' 'Norwegian,' or by any other out-of-the-way designation which might occur to him at the moment; expressing his belief, moreover, that quiet though 'the nigger' now appeared, he only wanted opportunity, and to be backed up by some of his own people, to work havoc in our little commonwealth, and perhaps murder the whole lot of us.

On a section not far from ours was an old man, a quondam London clerk, who had come over to the States to better his fortunes, and, failing in this, had drifted out here into section life, for which, notwithstanding the indomitable spirit that possessed him, his previous habits and shattered health rendered him wholly unfit. It must not be supposed, however, that the work was particularly hard, for to the ordinary British navvy it was nothing. I once heard such an one, who had been a section hand for some months, assert that during all that time he had not done one good day's work. Seeing me, as he considered, putting too much weight on my shovel, this easy soul advised me not to exert myself, for 'section men were not supposed to work'—appealing for corroboration of his statement to none other than the boss, who turned off the question with a half-deprecatory chuckle.

The work consisted in keeping the track in good level order, for which purpose we used a jack to raise the sunken rails, shovelling earth beneath the ties to keep them in their place. It would sometimes happen that after we had raised a length of track and had not finished 'tamping it,' as the latter operation was called, a train would come thundering along over the shaky spot, making the ties heave up and down in a manner remarkable to behold, and necessitating our doing the work all over again.

A piece of work having been satisfactorily accomplished, and there being scarcely time to finish off another, Joe, regarding the job with a critical eye, would remark, 'Dot's pooty goot; leetle rest now.' And, reloading the pipe, which was rarely out of his mouth, he would bring himself comfortably to anchor, an example

we were not slow to follow, only arising on the stereotyped call, 'Shoofels on de car!'—which, being interpreted, meant that we were to gather up our tools and prepare for our homeward journey.

Joe, though a thorough and conscientious worker, was yet of an easy-going disposition, and most of his gang were ready enough to impose upon him. This state of things was not peculiar to our section, there being an almost entire absence of supervision in these parts, the roadmaster (ours, by the way, was an Englishman, and had risen from the ranks) only occasionally traversing the line. Retribution, however, is nearly sure to overtake the habitual idler. The boss on the section adjoining ours was reported to spend working hours playing cards with his gang. This young man ultimately got his dismissal.

The monotony of our work was now and then enlivened by some incident of prairie life, such as a party of Indians coming up to us and gravely shaking hands all round, after a gruff but cordial salutation, consisting of the one word 'Nichee' (good man) —and which, with admirable impartiality, they bestowed on all alike. I remember a young buck—far above work on his own account—being greatly interested in the mechanism of our jack, handling it with much guarded curiosity, as not knowing what dangerous properties it might conceal. Totally unlike are these representatives of the noble savage from the spruced-up specimens one sees in shows—their faces thickly bedaubed with red and yellow, their gay-coloured, but usually grimy blankets wrapped around them, and their stony glare, which we would back any day against that of Tennyson's Britisher.

Once, but this was in the section-house, we were honoured by a visit from no less a personage than the ex-chief of the Crowfeet —a splendid and savage old man, such as Walt Whitman would have delighted in, yet not unused apparently to the ways of society, judging from his courtly bow in shaking hands with us. He showed us an exquisitely finished rifle, a gift of former days, allowing us in turn to examine it, he looking on the while much as a mother might who had consigned her offspring into strange hands.

Those of us who were sportingly inclined took our guns with us on the car in autumn, and many a shot did we have at the prairie-chickens, as they were called—though no chickens in size. Wild ducks and geese also abounded in the marshy pools with which the prairie around was studded; but they did not seek us out, as did the chickens. Wonderfully tame birds these, or else weary

of life, for they seemed absolutely to enjoy being shot at. Approaching to within a distance of a dozen paces or so, they would come to a dead stop, watching us stolidly. One of them once took its stand close to the telegraph-operator's shanty—or depôt, to give it its proper designation—and it was ludicrous to observe that gentleman potting away at it with his revolver, the bird regarding him with contemptuous indifference. At each shot, the operator, a tall, grave-looking man with a stoop, stealthily advanced a step, and there is no saying but that he might eventually have accomplished his purpose had not one of the young Prussians, whose ardour had been kindled by the sounds of firing, rushed, shot-gun in hand, upon the scene, and dropping on one knee to ensure his aim, put an end to the Englishman's little game and the suicidal fowl at one and the same moment; gleefully making off with the 'ploonder,' as he would have called it.

When there was nothing in particular to be done on the section, we would drive the car to a spring several miles off and fetch home a barrel of good water. Not far from the section-house was a small pool, or 'sluice,' from which all the water used for cooking and drinking purposes was ordinarily obtained. But when I mention that in ladling it out we had to exercise some care to avoid taking up any of the tadpoles and other small fry with which it was stocked, it will be seen that our sallies after a purer supply were not quite labour lost—so far at least as our own comfort was concerned.

Pleasant it was, this car-driving over the track, in the fine autumn mornings, when the oppressive heat with its swarms of mosquitoes was over. Around us stretched the prairie, illimitable on every side, its air of loneliness relieved perhaps by a cavalcade of Indians on their ponies, moving slowly over the plain, accompanied by their squaws and papooses, the latter attached in some ingenious fashion, along with the rest of their household-gods, to the trailing ends of the tepee-poles, their yelping dogs bringing up the rear. Failing this spectacle, there was never wanting the smaller game of the prairie to divert our gaze. Now we would scare a gopher out of the track, where it had been burrowing to itself a hole; anon a badger would be spied making along as fast as its unwieldy body would permit, this latter apparition never failing to cause intense excitement amongst the gang, most of whom, armed with shovels, would jump off the car, and haste to the massacre of the unoffending beast, towards whose

species they seemed to entertain an inexplicable but deep-rooted spite. On one of the luckless creatures succeeding in reaching its hole in time to elude its pursuers they, with fiendish malignity, used the shovels with which they had hoped to smash its head, to earth up the opening of its lair, stamping the ground down viciously to make sure of their prisoner. It was our two Berliners, I must in justice state, who were the perpetrators of this gentle deed.

More rarely a fox would bound, flashing, tail in air, over the prairie, with the rapidity of lightning, till I could fancy the hounds were in pursuit, and hear in imagination the blast of the huntsman's horn. In the twilight, as we were driving home, an owl would now and then alight on the rail, waiting till our car was nearly on her, then sluggishly flying on a few paces ahead; repeating the manœuvre in solemn fashion, as if impelled to it by some mysterious impulse. At this hour, too, might be heard the wailing of the foxes, conveying an impression of unutterable woe, or the distant barking of coyotes.

Later on in the season the ground would be covered with snow, the frosted rails glistening brightly in the clear sunshine, and giving forth a cheery ring beneath the wheels of our car. Away we would spin over the track, pumping leisurely while on the level; with greater vigour up the long steep grades; and resting, so to speak, on our oars on gaining a summit, leaving the little car to rush of herself down the reverse slope, the keen air whistling in our faces, imparting a sense of exhilaration akin to that produced by tobogganing.

Occasionally we would be surprised by a train, and then indeed we were forced to pump our hardest, straining every nerve to reach a handy spot where we could get our car off the line, and succeeding perhaps just in the nick of time, the train speeding past us the moment we were safely off.

In connection with this I may relate an incident which might have cost us our lives. We had received orders from the roadmaster to unload a gravel-train which, he said, would stop at a point he indicated—about a mile up the track—at eight o'clock that evening. Toward that hour accordingly, seeing from afar the light of an approaching train, we got our car on the rail and drove down to meet her. Joe was in one of the excitable moods to which, notwithstanding his usually phlegmatic disposition, he was subject; and, urged on by his repeated injunctions to 'poomp,' we made our car fly over the frosted rails.

The night was dark, and we did not perceive till it was too

late that the train was coming upon us, having trusted to her stopping at the place indicated. But no, on she came, her red light looming dangerously near. Joe made frantic efforts to stop the car, pressing heavily on the brake, and in tones of concentrated energy bidding his crew 'no poomp,' somewhat needlessly, as may be imagined. But the rails were slippery, the car going down an incline, and the train was on us in a flash. We had barely time to leap off to the right and left, landing in a variety of unstudied attitudes, before the cow-catcher struck our car and sent her flying, a broken splinter hitting our old Irish-Canadian, though without serious injury, in the back. The train pulled up immediately, when we discovered that it was not our expected gravel-train, but the pay car, which travels the line periodically, freighted with the men's wages, and which had been long overdue.

In the midst of our confusion appeared the pompous paymaster, resplendent in snow-white shirt, the engine-driver, lantern in hand, following closely after. Joe responding manfully to their remonstrances, in a strange new jargon which was neither Dutch nor English, but born evidently of the excitement of the moment, poured forth in torrents his explanations, which, judging from his tone and gesture, were all of the exculpatory order, and which did not throw much light on the affair.

This scene being ended, and the train having vanished into darkness, we disconsolately gathered together the fragments of our shattered car and piled them in a heap at the side of the track. Then, sadly shouldering our shovels, we marched home, a crestfallen band, poor Joe, on whom was thrown the brunt of the catastrophe, and who, moreover, had to bear the incessant nagging of the old Irish-Canadian, whose shoulder still smarted from his recent hurt, at the head of it. Our fellow gang, to whom the news had travelled, were waiting to greet us with derisive jeers, accusing us of having attempted to wreck the pay-car that we might enrich ourselves with the booty. It was not until the following morning that the gravel-train, after which we had gone such a disastrous journey, arrived.

Our new hand-car—for of course the old one had to be replaced—nearly came to grief likewise shortly afterwards. We were working away leisurely one breezy morning, never thinking of our car, which we had left close by on the rails, when one of our men, chancing to look up, noticed that she had given us the slip. The wind had set her a-going, and the line sloping at that part, there she was, about a mile off, placidly continuing her

course, and—alack for the 'cussedness of things in general'—a train was rushing up to meet her. Making after her with all speed we overtook the truant just in time to lift her off the track before the train went past.

These were not the only tricks our hand-car played us. Once, as we were going rapidly over a switch, one of her wheels came loose, and she toppled sideways, sending our gallant chief flying—alighting on all fours. Another time, when we were returning home laden with logs which we had picked up for firewood, one of them fell off on the rail, and the car, bumping over it, gave a violent jerk, forcing me, without an instant's preparation, to the performance of a complete somersault. Hand-car accidents are not always of this light nature. On a section not far from ours, a man fell off on the track in front of the car, which went over him, seriously injuring his back.

There are often heavy rainfalls in the summer, during which no work is thought of. In my time it once rained three consecutive days, we occupying ourselves meanwhile with card-playing, reading, or doing nothing, as suited us best—the pay going on as regular as clockwork. Moreover, if a man wanted a day off for any reasonable purpose, he could get it for the asking. Not a cent, either, would be deducted from his wages if he laid up through sickness for a time. Amongst a party of men who had tramped from Montana and were taken on the section was a Swede, who almost immediately complained of rheumatism, and fully a month did he spend within the precincts of the house, on the flat of his back for the most part, losing never a day's pay, and carefully tended the while. His health improving, he was afterwards employed in light house-work.

Besides the regular pay, we made overtime when there was any special work to be done, as the unloading of gravel-trains, &c. Occasionally also we worked on Sundays, greatly against the principles of our old Irish-Canadian, who asserted that money thus made never did one any good. But his scruples on this head, I suspect, fell in very conveniently with his constitutional love of repose. One evening towards the end of summer, on our way home we extinguished a prairie fire, beating the flames out with our all-serviceable shovels; and for this exploit, which occupied us scarcely over an hour, the grass being low at this part and the wind moderate, we were booked for half a day's overtime.

For some days afterwards it fell to our regular work, when the wind suited, to burn the grass to within a distance of about sixty

feet on either side of the track, to guard against fires being kindled by sparks from passing engines. Joe would march ahead, trailing a bundle of lighted rags which he had saturated in oil and fastened to a wire. With this he fired the grass, his trusty gang leisurely following him in single file, armed each with an old sack with which to smite out the flames when their appointed limit was reached.

These precautions having been neglected on the section west of the house, a fire broke out in that direction and, speeded by the wind, made straight for our abode. We were working at some distance off, the other gang being miles away on their section. It was a race between us and the fire, and we were not in time to burn all round the house. In this extremity we had to rely almost solely on the buckets of water with which the good wife supplied us from a barrel at hand, handing them to us quick as lightning, with never a word, and not for one moment losing her presence of mind. We owed it, I believe, to her that the house was saved. As it was, two fine haystacks close by, worth some sixty dollars each, were destroyed. And, if it had not been for the forethought of one of the young Prussians in driving the two little squealing pigs into a place of shelter, our boarding-boss would have sustained still further loss.

Very sparingly disposed were those same Prussians, as I discovered afterwards to my cost; for in an evil moment I yielded to their persuasions to set up housekeeping with them on our own hook in a miserable though curiously ingenious little hovel of their own construction. Here I learned how far the force of economy could go, and the lesson certainly was not worth the price. We took it in turn to cook, but their watchful eye was rarely off me in my experiments in that line. If I were to put what they considered a grain too much sugar in the cakes, or committed any like extravagance, one or other of them would be sure to jump up excitedly and stay my hand, exclaiming, with an assumption of playfulness, it is true, but in tones vibrating with the most genuine solicitude—'Du bist verrückt, mein Kind! Know you not dere vas von hunered cents in von dollar? Yah, it all counts oop, I tell you.' From having had enormous appetites in the section-house, they became abstemious to an almost dangerous degree. The younger of the two would frequently throw himself at dinner-time on his couch, light his pipe, and, smoking furiously, assert that he had 'no hoonger.' I could

almost have found it in my heart to follow his example on the days when prairie chicken—a dish I had once delighted in—figured on the table, I having had the plucking and otherwise revolting preparation of it for the oven the night before. Their incessant fussiness, moreover, and perpetual 'monkeying' over some unnecessary contrivance or other, were not a little trying to my British phlegm. And it was certainly aggravating, at what should have been the peaceful close of day, when the section work as well as my own additional labours of cooking, baking bread, and other incidental items were over, to be asked to assist in the furtherance of some scheme which to me seemed wholly useless.

This was in the fall. Such close quarters during the hot season, especially at night, with the windows shut against the mosquitoes, would have been unbearable. In the section-house, if by chance a window were left open, they would swarm in by myriads, rendering sleep utterly impossible. On one such occasion I and some others sought refuge outside, where we made a dense smoke by burning a pile of dry plants, the only way to keep our tormentors off. It was amusing to watch the old cow making for the fire, into the smoke of which she eagerly thrust her head, as grateful as we were for the relief it afforded.

A very intelligent animal was this cow, and an object of just pride to the boarding-boss. However far off on the prairie she may have strayed, appearing but as a speck in the distance, her master had only to make himself visible, and call out in rousing accents 'Cow-a! Cow-a!' and she would come bounding clumsily towards him to be milked, whisking her tail in the exuberance of her affection. There came a time, however, when she no longer responded to his appeal, a number of other cows whom he had introduced upon the scene having exercised a demoralising effect upon her. It was sad to see him stand shouting, with all the strength of his lungs, the old familiar cry—she turned a deaf ear to it, and one or other of us would have to act for the nonce the part of cow-boy.

Besides the plague of the mosquitoes, though fortunately not in their numbers, or soon nothing of us would have been left, there was a species of large black fly, with a pair of huge mandibles and a voracious appetite, which it sought to appease on our blood. Sharp and sudden was the onslaught of this monster—one hasty nip, as from a pair of scissors, and it was gone, but, looking at the smarting spot, you would see its token in a drop of blood.

One broiling summer's day I ventured on a bathe in the marshy lake near the section-house. Not one of these flies was visible when I reached the water, and, armed with a handkerchief in case of emergency, I boldly waded in, scaring off a flock of ducks who had been placidly sunning themselves on its glassy surface. The lake was of pretty wide extent, lying level with the prairie, and, as far as I could judge, no more than knee-deep in any part. No sooner had I got well out beyond its sedgy border than the fun (for the flies, that is) began, and one came hovering near me, my unprotected state no doubt presenting most unusual attractions. I flicked it off, and was sharply bitten in the rear by another, of whose presence I had not till then been aware. Gradually the number of my assailants increased, and fierce and fast waged the unequal combat—flick here, bite there. In vain I sought refuge in the none too pellucid shallows of the lake—my head was still at their mercy. In vain I grovelled altogether beneath the surface; want of breath forced me up again, until the battle degenerated on my part into a sort of wild Indian war-dance, the handkerchief, which I swept madly about, doing duty for a tomahawk. And something of the old brave's delight in slaughter inspired me when I laid an enemy low. But the 'raskils' were too many for me, and, sore discomfited, I at last beat a hasty and ignominious retreat, closely followed by my adversaries, who kept skirmishing around to the bitter end.

Winter sets in early in the North-West, and from the commencement of the dark mornings we never started to work before eight o'clock, sometimes, after driving out to raise a piece of track, finding the ground impenetrable to our shovels, owing to the frost. On such occasions we were free to occupy ourselves as we chose, some of the men preparing traps for foxes, or else investigating results with regard to those they had set overnight—fox-skins meeting with a ready sale. Only a few of the hands are kept on after November, two on each section, the rest getting free passes east, there being next to no work on the track until the frost breaks up.

It is in the spring that the majority of the labourers find their way to these parts, and many of those fresh from the old country probably know little of the sort of life awaiting them. For one thing, the sale of intoxicating liquors being prohibited, the uninitiated and thirsty pilgrim experiences a rough awakening when, at one of the western towns his train may stop at, making straight for a saloon, of which there are no lack, he, in the

innocence of his heart, demands refreshment for his failing spirit in the shape of beer. Not that his request is denied, for he is immediately supplied by the obliging bar-tender with a glass—fortunately for him a small one, though its cost is ten cents—containing a villanous compound, looking, it is true, not unlike the genuine article at its muddiest, but the only effect of which, if taken in any quantity, is to producc unlimited nausea. Such, however, is the force of imagination, or of habit, for I can attribute it to nothing else, that men will sit playing cards by the hour, the stakes being that delectable concoction, which they make believe to toss off with a relish, though next to the pleasure of winning the game, in this case if in any, must certainly have been that of losing it. But for all the care taken to keep intoxicants out of the country, spirits are smuggled and surreptitiously sold up here. Some of our men going up to Calgary got as drunk as any British navvy could desire on the wretched stuff palmed off as whisky, and at the most exorbitant price.

The great drawback to section life, when remote from any town, is the dreariness and monotony of its surroundings, which would be apt to depress the spirits even of a Mark Tapley, and few of us were sorry to receive our discharge.

It was late one bleak November night, the snow lying thick upon the ground, that the train which was to bear us to Winnipeg, a distance of several hundred miles, came down from the Rockies, already nearly full of men it had picked up from the sections on its way. Short time was given us to get 'aboard,' and the two young Prussians, who were to stay on with Joe for the winter, obligingly helped me in with my box (having, as I afterwards discovered, greatly lightened it of its contents). The last image on my mind was that of Joe, standing somewhat disconsolately watching our departure, his honest countenance scantily illumined by the light from the telegraph operator's shanty. The scene of our sometime labours was soon left far behind, as on we sped, stopping at each section on our way to take in living freight, until the cars were crammed. A motley crew we were, and cooped up together through what seemed an eternity, the only diversion being the passing of the train-boy at intervals through our midst offering his wares for sale, and the occasional quarrelling of the men after the whisky region had been reached.

HORVATH.

ON March 31, 1782, Pope Pius VI. gave his benediction to the people of Vienna from the balcony of the Hof Church. He had come to Vienna to use his influence with the Emperor Joseph II., who had instigated a series of reforms in the Church in Austria and Hungary and Bohemia, that alarmed the Pope.

The Emperor was much annoyed by the visit, and took no pains to conceal his annoyance. By his order the back door of the palace accorded to the Pope was walled up, that Pius might receive no visitors unknown to Joseph; and guards were placed at the entrance to scrutinise those who visited his guest. After five weeks spent in Vienna without having effected anything, the Pope was constrained to depart, but not before he had given his blessing to the people from the balcony of the Jesuit Church. An eye-witness says: 'He was seated on a throne under a gold-embroidered canopy. Fifty thousand persons must have been assembled in the great square. Windows were full of heads, every roof was crowded. The Pope wore his triple-crowned tiara, and was attended by three cardinals and two bishops in full pontificals. His voice was far-reaching, and the Court choir of four hundred voices was in attendance, singing. At the Amen, the cannons boomed from the citadel, and were answered by all the artillery on the fortifications of the city.'

The Emperor Joseph studiously kept away. He had out his carriage before the ceremony, and drove forth on an airing beyond the walls of Vienna. As he was thus driving away, a little incident happened which was afterwards—two years later—to be remembered, and to lead to important results to one individual.

There lived at this time in Vienna a wealthy man, named Horvath, a Hungarian by origin, by trade a butcher. Horvath had trodden in luck's way; he had received the custom of the palace, and as he was Court butcher, the princes and nobles thought that they also must have their meat of him, and among the citizens it was supposed that Horvath's beef and mutton surpassed in quality any beef and mutton to be had from any other butcher in Vienna or elsewhere. Consequently, Horvath did an exceedingly

good business with people who were not particular as to the price they paid for their meat. To the great houses he, of course, only sent the prime cuts, but he sold to the poor what he could not dispose of to the wealthy, and poor men's pence soon mount up,—and they flow more readily than princes' silver. Accordingly, Horvath not only did a very good business with the rich and noble, but he also did a very good business with the poor and unknown.

Horvath made money in other ways. Great men who could not pay their butcher's bills in cash from their own pockets, paid them out of other people's pockets,—it was the way of the times, and princes, counts, and ministers did not blush to relieve themselves of debts by putting those to whom they owed money into the way of recouping from the public what was due from themselves. They gave them privileges. In this manner, Horvath had got hold of some very valuable monopolies. He was given the purveyorship of meat to the barracks, he supplied beasts for the troops garrisoning Linz and Pressburg. It was whispered that he also lent money to the sons of great princes and nobles on heavy usury.

Every year found Horvath a richer man, and as he grew rich he grew proud. He was proud of his wealth, and proud of the power his wealth gave him among the citizens and on the council of Vienna. Because he was rich, he met with much respect. He was saluted and bowed down to in the street, and his favour was solicited by those who wanted to get on in the capital, and were ready to pay a *douceur* to the man who would speak a word for them in high quarters.

Of course, when the Holy Father came to Vienna, his table and the tables of his servants were furnished with meat from Horvath; and when the Pope was about to give his blessing to the city and citizens, Horvath said, 'He has eaten my meat, so I suppose I must receive his benediction. It will be expected of me. What a stir there would be among the people and the burgesses if his Holiness pronounced his blessing and I were not there. I will go.' So he ordered out his carriage that he might drive to the Hof Square before the Jesuit Church. Those of our readers who know Vienna will remember the square in the old city, with the arsenal on one side, and in the middle the column surmounted by the figure of the Virgin, and the fountains at the side representing Faith and Agriculture. The Jesuit Church is now that of the garrison.

As Horvath was driving along towards the square his coachman suddenly drew up, to allow another carriage to pass.

'Halloa! you scoundrel!' shouted the butcher, 'what do you mean by stopping and giving the way to that shabby little trap?'

'Sir,' answered the coachman, 'it is the Emperor.'

'Pshaw!' said the proud Hungarian. 'He stop me? Who knows, some day I may make his carriage stay for mine.'

His coachman had heard the boast, and repeated it to a friend, and in a day or two the proud words of Horvath the butcher were talked about, laughed at—throughout Vienna. They were repeated even to Joseph II., who also laughed,—and then they were forgotten,—yet they were not destined to fall to the ground.

. . . .

Two years had passed. Prosperity still attended Horvath. He launched out into fresh ventures, he obtained additional monopolies. He did not well know how to spend his money. He resolved in time to give up butchering, purchase an estate, buy a Baron's coronet—titles were always for sale in Austria—and play the magnate.

His wealth had made him overbearing. He was a man of rough manners; and now, flushed with success, he had come to regard himself as a mighty genius, one under special favour from Providence, and one who could never touch anything that did not turn to gold in his fingers.

Suddenly, the news flew through Vienna that Horvath had murdered his wife, was arrested, and in prison awaiting his trial.

The news was true. His wife, a quiet woman without pride in her, a good humdrum woman, had not advanced in her views and mode of life along with her husband. They could not keep pace together. This led to continual irritation and occasional outbursts, in which Horvath was the violent party, his wife giving way to lamentations and tears and remonstrances. At last, one day matters reached a crisis. Some small subject of dispute arose between them, and Horvath, unable to endure contradiction, in a moment of passion knocked down his wife with the poker, and broke in her skull. She died within a few hours, and Horvath, full of remorse and despair, at once delivered himself up to the magistrates, and made full confession of what he had done.

The trial of Horvath created the liveliest interest in Vienna, and was talked of in the streets, at table, in the taverns, and at Court. Of the fact of the murder there could be no doubt. The

trial did not take long, as the murderer confessed his guilt. The quarrel had taken place in private, no one had seen the blow dealt, but the nature of the fracture in the poor woman's skull exactly agreed with the weapon which had dealt the blow, according to Horvath's own account. He was sentenced to death—to be hanged. No effort was made to obtain a remission of the sentence; Horvath was unpopular: his wealth and his pride had united to make him an object of dislike.

The day of execution arrived. It was a dull cold morning in late autumn, a few months after the tragedy. The execution was to take place in the High Market, and the scaffold had been erected overnight. The market-place and the streets leading to it were thronged from midnight. Punctually, as the clocks struck six, the gates of the prison opened, and a detachment of infantry issued and lined the way down the Wipplinger Street. Then out of the gates came a plain wooden waggon drawn by two horses, and in it sat Horvath, in prison garb, deadly white, with his hands bound, and two warders by him holding the end of the rope that fastened his hands. In the waggon was also a minister of religion, who addressed the criminal and prayed with him. All the pride and fulness of life had gone out of the wretched man; his black hair beside his white face looked raven-black, and his eyes seemed unusually large and lustrous. Behind the waggon followed a cavalry escort.

In old Vienna there was a street with arcades on each side, and under these arcades cloth-dealers sold their wares. This cloth street opened at right angles on the Wipplinger Street as it enters the market-place. As the procession came along the street into the square, a little cabriolet which had been rattling down the Tuchlauben Street was brought to a halt. The populace blocking the opening of the street, hearing the prancing of the horse behind, turned their heads and at once removed their hats and stood aside. The driver was in white uniform. He was the Emperor Joseph himself. As one after another of the lookers-on recognised him, they drew back, and he whipped up his horse and moved on—and all at once was close to the waggon which stayed him.

'Good heavens!' exclaimed the Emperor; 'what is it? What is being done?'

'Sire,' said his attaché, 'Horvath is on his way to execution.'

At the same moment the condemned man looked up, and his great, horror-filled, luminous eyes met those of the Emperor.

His words had been fulfilled to the letter. His carriage had made that of the Kaiser give it the pass. Did he remember his vain boast at that moment? None can tell. But the Emperor did. He suddenly turned to his attaché:

'Who was the judge who heard this case?'

'Counsellor Stern, your Majesty.'

'Here, I will see him immediately. Stay the execution.'

Joseph drove at once to the magistrate's office, and in his short decisive manner asked the particulars.

'Give me a sheet of paper. The fellow must not die. He killed his wife in an access of passion, but there was no premeditation, and no attempt to conceal the crime when it was committed.'

Joseph took a pen and wrote a few lines on it.

'There,' said he, 'a pardon. Send it at once. I have stayed the execution till my pleasure was known.'

Horvath was sent back to prison, where he was detained for a while, and then released. He owed his life to that vain boast, which came true at the most awful moment for himself, but also at that when alone it could avail him.

A true saying is it, that a boastful word comes back in the guise which is least expected. Many a scheme is formed and laboured for with patient toil and sacrifice, and comes to nothing; a light boast slips from the tongue, passes away, is forgotten, and yet fulfils itself. It goes forth as the boomerang, describes a sweep, returns, perhaps to the hand that sent it on its way, perhaps as a weapon to strike him down when least expecting a blow, and from a quarter to which he was not directing his eyes.

NOTES BY A NATURALIST.

HAUNTS OF THE OTTER.

A VILLAGE clock strikes four as I stand putting my rod together on an old weir which reaches across the river Mole, a spot noted as a rare place for fish. The water runs quietly over the sloping moss-grown boards, causing that gentle dribbling current in the pool below which all true anglers value; for the fish head up to it in quest of the food which it carries down to them. It is a quaint-looking spot, picturesque in the full sense of the word. The water-wheel is covered with dark-green moss, and the roof of the house and its old walls and woodwork with lichen. It is not a mill, but the point where the water is carried up from a splendid spring close at hand to the mansion of a great estate on the left hand. High banks covered with grand old beech-trees rise abruptly from the river. The roots of the trees show like net-work all over the surface, and they are covered with velvet-like mosses. In front, and reaching right across the river, is a beech which the water has undermined and the wind blown down. On the opposite side of the river is moist meadow land and alder copse; from that cornfields reach to the foot of Boxhill, and the range of hills which runs the whole length of the beautiful Holmsdale valley.

The vapour is gently lifting from the water, and the sun lights up the tops of the trees with the soft golden light that belongs to early summer mornings only. From the fine old avenue of lime-trees which run up to the ruins of the ivy-covered castle, comes the cawing of rooks mingled with the sharp chatter of jackdaws, and now and again the yikeing laugh of the green woodpecker. Across the fields, floating along like a lump of thistledown, comes the barn-owl on his way home to some nook in the ruins. Often, in the days gone by, the pilgrims on their way to the tomb of Thomas à Becket must have paused on the track at the foot of the hills which still bears their name to look over that glorious stretch of woodlands.

The wheel is not yet going. There is a trickle of water from the sluice, which is just what I require. Baiting the line with a well-scoured dew-worm, I gently drop it over some piles that

have been driven in to keep a portion of the gravelly bank from being washed away by the rush of water from the wheel. Twelve feet in depth or more it is here; many a header have I taken into that rush of water, and come up again, otter-fashion, somewhere a long way down. A regular perch-hole this is.

Not a nibble! What can it mean? Impossible to have a better morning; the wind southward, too. Must have a change of bait. Very likely Mr. Pike is there, upsetting the Perch family. Selecting the finest gimp trace, I remove the perch tackle, and then take a bright, lively gudgeon from the bait-can. Temptation in this case will be placed in the way of Mr. Pike, for I intend to spin for him. The cast is made; well spins the bait; once, twice, three times, and never a run. What can be the matter? They may be at the other side of the weir. No sooner thought about than acted on; but I spin and spin there, until, disgusted with my want of luck, the rod is laid on the edge of the weir, and a mild invitation is given to the fish to take the bait when they think fit, and no need to hurry about it.

The angler's consoler, the pipe, is brought out. After a few whiffs, just to compose myself in order to think this matter out, I hear a footstep coming in the direction of the weir, and looking round I recognise one of the oldest workmen in this grand domain. We have known each other for many years, and his sons have been my companions in many a fishing adventure in all weathers, by night as well as day. His gruff voice is abrupt to a degree, but a kinder heart one would hardly find.

'What luck, my boy?'

'Not a touch of any kind.'

'I don't wonder at it. Now you just look here.' And taking his basket from his shoulder, he drew out the remains of a pike which weighed about five pounds, he said, when captured. The belly and shoulders had been eaten. 'That ain't all; look here!' added he, showing me the tail and head of an eel a good two pounds in weight. 'I found 'em in the medder just above. Them otters have just about harried the water both above and below the weir this last night. It ain't often they do it here. They mostly goes further down or up to fish, and comes back to their home under the bank close to that 'ere big beech what lays across the river; but when they does take it in mind to chivy this 'ere bit o' water, they makes a job of it and no mistake. By what I can track, they ain't come home yet; most likely they've

slip through the alders and 'cross the river. If you bide here quiet-like, round that corner by the wheel, you may get a glint of 'em, for they suns themselves a bit on that beech stam at times. I've sin 'em. My job fur to-day is close handy, so you can come and tell me if they show up. The back water would be my pitch, if I was you; that ain't bin worked, I know, for the bream was showin' well up there. Some of 'em looked as big as a pair of bellows. If they ain't much to eat they give good sport, an' I reckon you like that.'

I put my pipe away as a first precaution, for a scent of tobacco will give the alarm at once to wild creatures whether furred or feathered, and then sit down nearly hidden by the timbers of the weir, keeping very quiet, and my eyes wide open. There is hardly a ripple on the surface by the fallen beech; the river is deep and narrow here just now. A few days' rain alters the whole look of things, and the now sluggish Mole, pent close by the hills, receives all the water from their sloping sides and rushes like a mountain torrent over meadows and paths, beside mills and bridges, making many of them impassable for a time. The high banks in some places close to the edge are only held together by the roots of the trees above. You could swim in under the banks and look up at the network of roots and tangled fibre if you are curious that way. There are some uncanny-looking places of the sort. Then, too, you can get a better notion of the haunts of the otter—that king of fishers.

Once, after being out fishing all day without getting a bite, I came on a nice perch hole when the fish were on the feed. The water was deep but clear, and my seat on the mossy bank all that could be desired. Visions of a full creel rose before me; at last my patience was to be rewarded; but alas! it was not so, the treacherous bank gave way and through the roots I shot, rod and all, into that deep perch hole. I went to the bottom and frightened the perch out of their wits, and, when I came up to the top again, made hurried and wet tracks for home.

Nothing is to be seen yet in the water or on the banks. A flash of bright blue shoots over the water and vanishes in a hole in the bank. It is the kingfisher, who has made his nest in a spot secure from harm.

The bird has taken my attention from the tree in the water for a few moments. There is the otter sitting on the grey trunk in the warm sunlight. He is near enough for me to study his

appearance and all his movements well. Like a large cat he looks, which has been thrown in the water and crawled out. Some people think that the fur of the otter throws the water off like the feathers on a duck's back. That is not the case; his fur protects his body in a different way. Any one who has seen a water-rat come up on a bank after a dive will have a good idea of the general appearance of the otter's fur. Now he gives his coat a shake and combs his fur a bit with his short webbed feet. That powerful tail of his hangs half out of the water, and his head is turned in my direction, looking for the moment just like that of an infuriated tiger in miniature, as, with ears drawn close to his head, he snarls and shows his teeth.

When properly treated the otter is easily converted into an affectionate and playful pet. For those who may not be familiar with him, let me describe his appearance more exactly. He is a trifle larger than a cat, having a very cat-like head, only flatter, which is provided with a fine set of teeth, and he can use them with terrible force for his size. On his lip he has a lot of strong bristles. His eyes are small and have a watchful look about them; the neck is almost as thick as his chest; his body is long and round; the legs are very short, strong, and flexible; the toes webbed for a great part of their length, and the claws on them sharp. The tail is thick at the root and tapers off to a point; it is very powerful, as I said before, and is, in fact, his swimming machine. In colour he is dark brown as a rule, with the sides of his head and throat brownish grey.

He has been sitting in the sunlight whilst I have sketched his portrait, now he thinks he will get a little more into the shade; so, with a peculiar loping gait, he moves further up the trunk and rests by the side of a large limb. Now he shows himself to perfection, and I have managed to slip down on the boards of the weir, where I lie, flat as a flounder, and can study the animal, where an animal shows himself most naturally, in his own home.

There is just a little swell in the water, and his mate shows her head above the surface. She has her feet on the trunk, and is just about to join her lord and master, when a moorhen flies from the meadow into the river, squattering with her feet in the water. That is enough; with one gliding plunge, leaving not a trace on the surface, they are under the bank in their own quarters.

Getting up from my flat posture I pick up my rod and walk

into the water-meadows. There I come on my old friend, tackling up a gate.

'Have ye sin anything?' he asks.

'Yes, the pair of them; they are at home.'

'Ah, it's strange, ain't it, that shy things like them should git so near where work's goin' on. Ye see there's only the bank and just a strip o' sward betwixt them an' the work sheds. Make the most on it, it ain't more than a dozen yards away, and there's waggins and carts goin' backards and forrards most days, and dogs very often with 'em. There's somethin' about that air bit o' gravelly bank as suits 'em, and they wun't budge. My mate clapped a trap down; it warn't baited, ye know; he just sets it under water, only just under, ye know, where they lands, and he had one quick. Well, the other one knowed she was fixed and tried to get her away. They could see by the prints of his feet what he'd bin tryin' at. She was dead when my mate got her out. In the night, when he was comin' home, as he passed by the place he could hear him blowin' and whistlin' for her to come. They're cu'ous outlandish lookin' creeturs to my eyes, but they're mortal fond o' one another, that I be sure of. Are ye goin' to have a try for any o' they big bream?'

'No; bream are no favourites of mine. You and I will have a chat, and then I will take a stroll through the alders and willow holts to the back of the old ruined castle.'

'Ah,' he replied, 'that was a place once. There ain't such a drive for miles round as that between they lime trees in double rows, what used to go right up to the hall door. The parties as lived there thought a lot of 'em. I've sin the gardeners sweepin' in it of a mornin', right from the top to the bottom. They did keep a lot o' folks round about 'em, of one sort or another; it was a fust-rate place to go to. I reck'lect goin' there as a youngster an errand for some one, an', as I come away, the butler he sings out to me, "Young man, have you had your ale and somethin' to eat?" "No, sir," says I, "my job didn't take me a minit, an' I never give a thought about anythin' like that." "Come into the kitchen," he sez, "and make the buttons of your weskit tight. Why, man alive, you would bring disgrace on the house if you left it without refreshment." Ay, it was a sight to see the carriages with their lamps lighted come up and down they limes when they'd one o' their gran' dinner parties on. The castle it was always called, I dun know why. There was sore hearts about, I can tell ye,

when they gentry went away, and the old squire what bought all this land round about give the order to pull it down; for they was good to all the poor roun'. No one 'd think it was done in my time for to look at it now, covered with ivy, and the trees that have shot up all about it. The order was giv' to pull it down to the first floor, and then leave it. Folks said he done it because he couldn't abide a place like that near his own house; for the castle, mind ye, was a fine place. Anyway, he giv' the order for it to come down, and another place with it, over the far side of the park, and about the same distance from his house as it was. The people round about didn't hackle to the squire much for having 'em pulled down; for the gentry that lived in 'em was beliked by all. But they was forgot too, after a time, mind ye; and, when all's said an' done, a man can do what he likes with his own. And, oh massey, wasn't that old October what they brewed there real Stingo!

'The old squire's house is reckoned one o' the finest in the country, inside and out. He layed out a mint o' money on it, and they've kept a lot at work ever since the estate came to his hands, and folks, rich people too, come a long way to see the picters and marble figgers in the big hall, what the squire brought from furrin parts. Now he's dead, I fancy changes 'll be comin', and not for the better. I've passed nearly all my life on this estate, an' I don't like new-fangled ways. But they wun't trouble me much, for my sand-glass is nearly run out. I'm getting old and feeble, boy.'

'Have you seen any large pike lately?' I ask him.

His eyes twinkle at the question. 'No, not since they two come to grief. Warn't they big uns? You wun't forget that one in a hurry. He did look mortal spiteful as he laid there close to the spring. But that charge o' shot in the head settled him, and if one o' the haymaker's rakes hadn't been handy he would a' gi'n us some trouble. Twenty pounds he weighed, if you reck'-ect. His teeth was like a dog's more than a fish; he was grand to look at, but no good to eat, for he was dry as a chip. Big fish nor big folks isn't allus the best. Where there's one big un there's mostly sure to be another. Two days after that, mind you, there was a flood. Jim went home the weir way, and on the cart bridge he see another lay, just that minute washed up, for the water was runnin' over the boards. So he took his stick and give him a crack over his noddle to keep the great brute quiet like, and put him in his basket and brought him home. We found out

why the flood washed him on to the boards when we looked down his gullet. He'd got another there of his own sort, that had only just been bolted. That one weighed three pounds good weight. It had half choked him. He weighed nineteen pounds, he did. They two was a nice pair to have put in a glass case.'

Telling my old friend that I would give him a call in the evening and smoke a pipe with him, I left him at his work, and entered the swampy alder copse. A few oaks, ashes, willows, and aspens are there; but it is always called the alder copse. The ground here is, as a matter of course, peat bog. The floods have worn great hollows and rifts in all directions; and narrow, shallow streams run through it to fall in the river again farther on. Here and there great tree trunks lie half buried in the bog. All about are grass tussocks, some of them dry and withered, others look green. Clumps of sedge, stiff, and with long sword-like blades, breast high, bright green in colour, meet you at every few steps. Some caution is necessary in passing through them, for they cut like a knife if the contact is made in a certain direction, as I have often proved to my cost.

Inside this little jungle of aquatic vegetation it is hot and stifling, with a disagreeable moist heat. Very quietly we thread our way through the tangle, treading when we can on the soft dead grass tussocks, and peering through the boughs on either side for some traces of the otter.

A moorhen flits up from a tuft in a little pool, with the usual crippled-leg flight of nesting time. The young are somewhere about. Close by, on a half-buried alder trunk, steps cautiously a water rail. Often have I watched the movements of this bird, both in summer and winter. He is the feathered image of caution as he glides in and out. Sometimes you may see him fairly for a full minute; then again you will only just be able to catch the jerk of his short tail, and to barely distinguish the form of the bird. As a rule it is the tail that you see most of, for he is off like a flash at the least movement on your part.

Proceeding with great caution, we come to a more open part of the copse. The water-runs from the river have formed a shallow pool here, over which a large alder has fallen, years ago, and gone to decay. It is hollowed out to a mere shell in some parts, and from the decayed portion tufts of sword-grass have sprung up in bunches, and droop heavily over, the tips of the blades touching the shallow water.

Here is a bit for a painter—a glimpse of blue sky, the play of light and shade on the alders round the pool, the dark trunk of the old tree gone to decay brightened up by the green tufts, and the reflections on the smooth surface of the water. And there, close to the edge of the pool, under the trunk, is the impression, the seal of the otter. He shows a refined taste in all his habits of living. When he takes his rambles, it is in pleasant places by the river and in it, and by woodland meadow and stream. Less refined creatures can dine on what he leaves on the banks. This copse is one of their roads and playgrounds. But for one drawback one could stay here for a long time ; at every step one takes swarms of midges rise up and give one notice to quit by stinging severely. It soon becomes torment unbearable, so without any more cautious stepping, I dash into the meadow and bathe hands and face to relieve my wounded feelings.

Gently jogging on after this through one or two meadows, and skirting the edge of the willow holts, I reach a portion of bog meadow. On the edge of this, close to the river, is a clump of bush cover mixed up with rough clumps of rushes. Through this runs a spout—in other words, a disused bog-land drain. Some old decayed posts and rails, covered with moss and lichen, are scattered about the entrance to the spout. The meadow is dotted about with yellow iris, and the golden flowers of the kingcup blaze out from their cool-looking rich green leaves. Other flowers there are, but the irises and the kingcups stand out from all. Some grand oaks stand close to the water's edge, and some which have been felled and barked in the spring lie close to them, making a good foreground. The midges fortunately are not present here.

Now for a pipe and some reflection on the ways and means of living—also on the so-called instinct of animals. How the closet naturalist, who pores over dried skins and preserved specimens, takes refuge in that term *instinct*! From my earliest childhood I have had some one creature or another for a companion ; they have taught me much, and will teach me yet more I trust. By carefully studying their needs and inclinations, one is well rewarded with their confidence and affection.

I am roused from my daydreams by a whining cry, something like the whining of a young pup. It comes from the old drain. I leave my seat on the tree trunk ; and my hat quickly off, I peer over the butt of the tree, my eyes fixed on the spot whence the sound comes. Again the cry is repeated; now it is louder, and

the cause of it is soon apparent; for from under the old rails comes a full-grown otter, not wet this time. Her coat shines in the sun. The cry sounds again. She bends her head down low for a moment. When she raises it she has a cub not quite half grown in her mouth. Holding it as a cat would a kitten, she places it on the grass, where it begins at once to skylark with its mother's tail. Once more the action is repeated with another cub. Then the mother and her young play in the sun like a cat with her kittens. It might be long before one came upon such a sight as that again.

Suddenly a shot is heard coming from some place of concealment near at hand. One cub falls over on his back, dead, with his feet drawn up as if still at play, shot through the heart. Mother otter knows that sound, she has heard it before, but to the little ones it is new; and the other one thinks the brother is only at his gambols, and plays about round him; the mother grips him by the nape of the neck, but it is in vain, for out from the cover runs a man. Only when he rushes at her and raises his gun to strike her with the butt end does she let go her hold and dash into the river. The poor little cubs had never seen a human being before, and the remaining one does not attempt to bite when his captor picks him up; he only cries most piteously for his mother. The whole proceeding is distasteful to me, but I must not say so, as I am only here on sufferance, the other by right.

'I'll have her! see if I don't, before many minutes are over.' Taking a piece of string from his pocket he ties it round the cub's neck, and tethers the poor little animal to a peg in the ground. 'You come this way into the bushes.'

Left to himself, the cub gives free vent to his sorrow. 'Look! see that plough-up of the water, just under; she's heard him and is coming fast,' whispers the man.

With a rush, she shoots from the river to the meadow, and is at once shot. Her love for her cubs has cost her her life.

'They will make a good case for the House when they are set up, won't they?'

'Set up,' indeed! No doubt they will. Any talk of setting up and stuffing of wild creatures generally gets my dander up. It takes a man that is familiar with the animal in its native haunts, and an artist to boot, to make the poor dead things look natural and lifelike.

'How do you account for the number of otters about here?' I ask the man presently.

'Why, this way. They have always been about the river, but not just in this part till late years. You see, before the old squire died there was a good lot of keepers and lookers-out, for he kept up a good head of game. So if an otter come down here, he had a hot time of it. Some of the gentry up the river that had ponds on their lawns, with gold-fish in them, knowed they was about, for though there was plenty for 'em in the river they would come out of it and get the gold-fish. The old squire's going off made a great difference; the family went abroad, or somewhere away, after his death, and things went on very quiet for years. The establishment was mostly closed. The game was killed off and no more reared, and the keepers found fresh places. The principal hands on the estate just give an eye to things to see that no mischief was done. Well, the otters found out they could come here without being harried about, and back they come with a vengeance. You see, for one thing, there's cover for 'em. All the sides of the banks are undermined and matted with the tree roots, and the water is very deep. If they had otter hounds they would be of no use here, for fifteen or twenty feet of water in places, and a long stretch of it, to say nothing of the network of big roots, would break the hearts of the best pack in England. It's wonderful the distance they'll run at times—their holes, I mean. Rabbits work the banks in all directions; then, when the otter finds a spot that suits him, he gives the rabbits notice to quit in his own fashion. It wants little altering to make his home ready for him.'

'Ay, he's pretty cute.'

'You know that gravelly bank yonder? Well, one flood time we was hunting the rats that the water had drove out. It had drove the rabbits too, but it was rats we was hunting. We had got the ferrets and the dogs. The ferrets worked well, and went into all the holes as free as rain, till we come to a couple on the top of that particular bank. We turned 'em down, but they wouldn't work them. All they did was to just poke their noses in and sniff, and then run round the holes, uneasy like. The dogs, too, sniffed and scratched about strange like for them, quieter than they was used. We jumped about and poked into the holes, wondering why the ferrets would not go in. The river was rushing almost bank-high to where we stood; when all at once something was heard whining like, and somebody said, 'Look at that!' It was a sight! for in the river was a fine otter. She

had her cub by the nape of the neck, and was swimming across with him. It was hard work, but she tore through that rush of water from the weir in fine style. There was nothing above water but the alder stems on the other side, and she made for them. She was not twenty yards away from us the whole time. Well, when she reached them, she got her cub on to a limb and left him. He did cry. And then we lost sight of her for a bit. The whine come again, almost close to our feet, and the dogs stood with ears pricked up and one fore-foot lifted, just quivering with excitement. She dashes out from the bank with a second cub. The dogs rush to the water's edge, but they dare not plunge in, plucky as they are; for they knowed they'd be washed down and dashed into the limbs of the fallen trees that lay in and across the river. She got him over all right, and then they three made for the alder copse. That's how I come to know the distance they'll lay up in a bank.'

'Had you a gun with you?'

'No; and if I had, it should never have gone to my shoulder to fire at her, when she'd been so plucky like. It 'd just have seemed like murder to me, for all I killed them two just now. But you see it's like this; the head uns walk round and see some of their leavings on the ground, and make a bit of a fuss about it; for some of 'em are fond of fishing. So just to keep matters quiet, you must know, I'm obliged to settle one or two when I have the chance. I don't want to brag about my shootin', but if I do get a fair sight at 'em they don't suffer much, for I always use a cartridge. As far as myself is concerned, I should never meddle with 'em; but, you see, where there's more 'an one master to please, you must mind your P's and Q's, as they say.'

'Just so, my friend; that is the philosophical way of looking at things.'

He smiles, and bids me good-day. We have had many a chat together, he and I, before this.

When the harvest-moon floods the river and trees with light, and his day's fishing is over, the otter plays about in the meadows bordering the river-side to his heart's content. Where the steep sides of the hill—called the Whites—shoot down to the river, he is at home. Gnarled roots and fallen trees find him a safe refuge. The hill-side is claimed by the fox and badger, but the river is the domain of the otter; he holds his own there, and is likely to do for many a day to come.

A LIFE'S MORNING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'DEMOS,' 'THYRZA,' ETC.

CHAPTER V.

THE SHADOW OF HOME.

THE house which was the end of Emily's journey was situated two miles outside the town of Dunfield, on the high road going southward, just before it enters upon a rising tract of common land known as the Heath. It was one of a row of two-storeyed dwellings, built of glazed brick, each with a wide projecting window on the right hand of the front door, and with a patch of garden railed in from the road, the row being part of a straggling colony which is called Banbrigg. Immediately opposite these houses stood an ecclesiastical edifice of depressing appearance, stone-built, wholly without ornament, presenting a corner to the highway, a chapel-of-ease for worshippers unable to go as far as Dunfield in the one direction or the village of Pendal in the other. Scattered about were dwelling-houses old and new; the former being cottages of the poorest and dirtiest kind, the latter brick structures of the most unsightly form, evidently aiming at constituting themselves into a thoroughfare, and, in point of fact, already rejoicing in the name of Regent Street. There was a public-house, or rather, as it frankly styled itself in large letters on the window, a dram-shop; and there were two or three places for the sale of very miscellaneous articles, exhibiting the same specimens of discouraging stock throughout the year. At no season, and under no advantage of sky, was Banbrigg a delectable abode. Though within easy reach of country which was not without rural aspects, it was marked too unmistakably with the squalor of a manufacturing district. Its existence impressed one as casual; it was a mere bit of Dunfield got away from the main mass, and having brought its dirt with it. The stretch of road between it and the bridge by which the river was crossed into Dunfield had in its long, hard ugliness something dispiriting. Though hedges bordered it here and there, they were stunted and grimed; though

fields were seen on this side and on that, the grass had absorbed too much mill-smoke to exhibit wholesome verdure; it was fed upon by sheep and cows, seemingly turned in to be out of the way till needed for slaughter, and by the sorriest of superannuated horses. The land was blighted by the curse of what we name, using a word as ugly as the thing it represents, industrialism.

As the cab brought her along this road from Dunfield station, Emily thought of the downs, the woodlands, the fair pastures of Surrey. There was sorrow at her heart, even a vague tormenting fear. It would be hard to find solace in Banbrigg.

Hither her parents had come to live when she was thirteen years old, her home having previously been in another and a larger manufacturing town. Her father was a man marked for ill-fortune: it pursued him from his entrance into the world, and would inevitably—you read it in his face—hunt him into a sad grave. He was the youngest of a large family; his very birth had been an added misery to a household struggling with want. His education was of the slightest; at twelve years of age he was already supporting himself, or, one would say, keeping himself above the point of starvation; and at three-and-twenty—the age when Wilfrid Athel is entering upon life in the joy of freedom—was ludicrously bankrupt, a petty business he had established being sold up for a debt something short of as many pounds as he had years. He drifted into indefinite mercantile clerkships, an existence possibly preferable to that of the fourth circle of Inferno, and then seemed at length to have fallen upon a piece of good luck, such as, according to a maxim of pathetic optimism wherewith he was wont to cheer himself, must come to every man sooner or later—provided he do not die of hunger whilst it is on the way. He married a schoolmistress, one Miss Martin, who was responsible for the teaching of some twelve or fifteen children of tender age, and who, what was more, owned the house in which she kept school. The result was that James Hood once more established himself in business, or rather in several businesses, vague, indescribable, save by those who are unhappy enough to understand such matters—a commission agency, a life-insurance agency and a fire-insurance ditto, I know not what. Yet the semblance of prosperity was fleeting. As if connection with him meant failure, his wife's school, which she had not abandoned (let us employ negative terms in speaking of this pair), began to fall off; ultimately no school was left. It did in truth appear that

Miss Martin had suffered something in becoming Mrs. Hood. At her marriage she was five-and-twenty, fairly good-looking, in temper a trifle exigent perhaps, sanguine, and capable of exertion; she could not claim more than superficial instruction, but taught reading and writing with the usual success which attends teachers of these elements. After the birth of her first child, Emily, her moral nature showed an unaccountable weakening; the origin was no doubt physical, but in story-telling we dwell very much on the surface of things; it is not permitted us to describe human nature too accurately. The exigence of her temper became something generally described by a harsher term; she lost her interest in the work which she had unwillingly entrusted for a time to an assistant; she found the conditions of her life hard. Alas, they grew harder. After Emily, two children were successively born; fate was kind to them, and neither survived infancy. Their mother fell into fretting, into hysteria; some change in her life seemed imperative, and at length she persuaded her husband to quit the town in which they lived, and begin life anew elsewhere. Begin life anew! James Hood was forty years old; he possessed, as the net result of his commercial enterprises, a capital of a hundred and thirty pounds. The house, of course, could be let, and would bring five-and-twenty pounds a year. This it was resolved to do. He had had certain dealings in Dunfield, and in Dunfield he would strike his tent. That is to say, in Banbrigg, whence he walked daily to a little office in the town. Rents were lower in Banbrigg, and it was beyond the range of certain municipal taxings.

Mrs. Hood possessed still her somewhat genteel furniture. One article was a piano, and upon this she taught Emily her notes. It had been a fairly good piano once, but the keys had become very loose. They were looser than ever, now that Emily tried to play on them, on her return from Surrey.

Business did not thrive in Dunfield, yet there was more than ever need that it should, for to neglect Emily's education would be to deal cruelly with the child; she would have nothing else to depend upon in her battle with the world. Poor Emily! A feeble, overgrown child, needing fresh air which she could not get, needing food of a better kind just as unattainable. Large-eyed, thin-cheeked Emily; she, too, already in the clutch of the great brute world, the helpless victim of a civilisation which makes its food of those the heart most pities. How well if her last sigh

had been drawn in infancy, if she had lain with the little brother and sister in that gaunt, grimy cemetery, under the shadow of mill chimneys! She was reserved for other griefs; for consolations, it is true, but——

Education she did get, by hook or by crook; there was dire pinching to pay for it, and, too well knowing this, the child strove her utmost to use the opportunities offered her. Each morning going into Dunfield, taking with her some sandwiches that were called dinner, walking home again by tea-time, tired, hungry—ah, hungry! No matter the weather, she must walk her couple of miles—it was at least so far to the school. In winter you saw her set forth with her waterproof and umbrella, the too-heavy bag of books on her arm; sometimes the wind and rain beating as if to delay her, they, too, cruel. In summer the hot days tried her perhaps still more; she reached home in the afternoon well-nigh fainting, the books were so heavy. Who would not have felt kindly to her? So gentle she was, so dreadfully shy and timid, her eyes so eager, so full of unconscious pathos. 'Hood's little girl,' said the people on the way who saw her pass daily, and, however completely strangers, they said it with a certain kindness of tone and meaning. A little thing that happened one day—take it as an anecdote. On her way to school she passed some boys who were pelting a most wretched dog, a poor, scraggy beast driven into a corner. Emily, so timid usually she could not raise her eyes before a stranger, stopped, quivering all over, *commanded* them to cease their brutality, divine compassion become a heroism. The boys somehow did her bidding, and walked on together. Emily stayed behind, opened her bag, threw something for the dog to eat. It was half her dinner.

Her mind braced itself. She had a passionate love of learning; all books were food to her. Fortunately there was the library of the Mechanics' Institute; but for that she would have come short of mental sustenance, for her father had never been able to buy more than a dozen volumes, and these all dealt with matters of physical science. The strange things she read, books which came down to her from the shelves with a thickness of dust upon them; histories of Greece and Rome (not much asked for, these,—said the librarian), translations of old classics, the Koran, Mosheim's 'Ecclesiastical History,' works of Swedenborg, all the poetry she could lay hands on, novels not a few. One day she asked for a book on 'Gymnoblastic Hydroids'; the amazing title in the cata-

logue had filled her with curiosity; she must know the meaning of everything. She was not idle, Emily.

But things in the home were going from bad to worse. When Emily was sixteen, her father scarcely knew where to look for each day's dinner. Something must be done. Activity took a twofold direction. First of all, Emily got work as a teacher in an infants' school. It was at her own motion; she could bear her mother's daily querulousness no longer; she must take some step. She earned a mere trifle; but it was earning, instead of being a source of expense. And in the meantime she worked on for certain examinations which it would benefit her to have passed. The second thing done was that her father abandoned his office, and obtained a place in the counting-house of a worsted-mill, under the firm of Dagworthy and Son. His salary was small, but the blessing of it was its certainty; the precariousness of his existence had all but driven poor Hood mad. There came a season of calm. Emily's sphere of work extended itself; the school only took her mornings, and for the afternoon there was proposed to her the teaching of the little Baxendales. The Baxendales were well-to-do people; the father was, just then, mayor of Dunfield, the mother was related to the member of Parliament for the town. We have had mention of them, as connections of Beatrice Redwing.

At nineteen she for the first time left home. Through the Baxendales she obtained the position of governess in a family residing in Liverpool, and remained with them till she went to London, to the Athels. These three years in Liverpool were momentous for her; they led her from girlhood to womanhood, and established her character. Her home was in the house of a prosperous ship-owner, a Lancashire man, outwardly a blustering good-tempered animal, yet with an inner light which showed itself in his love of books and pictures, in his easy walking under the burden of self-acquired riches, in a certain generous freedom which marked his life and thoughts. His forename was Laurence; Emily, in letters to her father, used to call him Lorenzo the Magnificent, a title which became him well enough. In the collection of works of art he was really great; he must have spent appalling sums annually on his picture gallery and the minor ornaments scattered about his house. He had a personal acquaintance, through his pecuniary dealings, with the foremost artists of the day; he liked to proclaim the fact and describe the men. To

Emily the constant proximity of these pictures was a priceless advantage; the years she spent among them were equivalent to a university course. Moreover, she enjoyed, as with the Athels later, a free command of books; here began her acquaintance with the most modern literature, which was needful to set her thoughts in order, to throw into right perspective her previous miscellaneous reading, and to mark out her way in the future. Her instinctive craving for intellectual beauty acquired a reflective consistency; she reformed her ideals, found the loveliness of much that in her immaturity had seemed barren, put aside, with gentle firmness, much that had appeared indispensable to her moral life. The meanings which she attached to that word 'moral' largely modified themselves, that they should do so was the note of her progress. Her prayer was for 'beauty in the inward soul,' which, if it grew to be her conviction, was greatly—perhaps wholly—dependent on the perception of external beauty. The development of beauty in the soul would mean a life of ideal purity; all her instincts pointed to such a life; her passionate motives converged on the one end of spiritual chastity.

One ever-present fear she had to strive with in her progress toward serene convictions. The misery of her parents' house haunted her, and by no effort could she expel the superstition that she had only escaped from that for a time, that its claws would surely overtake her and fix themselves again in her flesh. Analysing her own nature, she discerned, or thought she did, a lack of independent vigour; it seemed as if she were too reliant on external circumstances; she dreaded what might follow if their assistance were withdrawn. To be sure she had held her course through the countless discouragements of early years, but that, in looking back, seemed no assurance for the future; her courage, it appeared to her, had been of the unconscious kind, and might fail her when she consciously demanded it. As a child she had once walked in her sleep, had gone forth from the house, and had, before she was awakened, crossed the narrow footing of a canal-lock, a thing her nervousness would not allow her to do at other times. This became to her a figure. The feat she had performed when mere vital instinct guided her, she would have failed in when attempting it with the full understanding of its danger. Suppose something happened which put an end to her independence—failure of health, some supreme calamity at home—could she hold on in the way of salvation? Was she capable

of conscious heroism? Could her soul retain its ideal of beauty if environed by ugliness?

The vice of her age—nay, why call it a vice?—the necessary issue of that intellectual egoism which is the note of our time, found as good illustration in this humble life as in men and women who are the mouthpieces of a civilisation. Preoccupied with problems of her own relation to the world, she could not enjoy without thought in the rear, ever ready to trouble her with suggestions of unreality. Her distresses of conscience were all the more active for being purely human; in her soul dwelt an immense compassion, which, with adequate occasion, might secure to itself such predominance as to dwarf into inefficiency her religion of culture. It was exquisite misery to conceive, as, from inner observation, she so well could, some demand of life which would make her ideals appear the dreams of bygone halcyon days, useless and worse amid the threats of gathering tempest. An essentially human apprehension, be it understood. The vulgarities of hysterical pietism Emily had never known; she did not fear the invasion of such blight as that; the thought of it was noisome to her. Do you recall a kind of trouble that came upon her, during that talk in the hollow, when Wilfrid suggested the case of her being called upon to make some great sacrifice in her father's behalf? It was an instance of the weakness I speak of; the fact of Wilfrid's putting forward such a thought had in that moment linked her to him with precious bonds of sympathy, till she felt as if he had seen into the most secret places of her heart. She dreaded the force of her compassionateness. That dog by the roadside; how the anguish of its eyes had haunted her through the day! It was the revolt of her whole being against the cruelty inherent in life. That evening she could not read the book she had in hand; its phrases seemed to fall into triviality. Yet—she reasoned at a later time—it should not have been so; the haggard gaze of fate should not daunt one; pity is but an element in the soul's ideal of order, it should not usurp a barren sovereignty. It is the miserable contradiction in our lot that the efficiency of the instincts of beauty-worship waits upon a force of individuality attainable only by a sacrifice of sensibility. Emily divined this. So it was that she came to shun the thought of struggle, to seek an abode apart from turbid conditions of life. She was hard at work building for her soul its 'lordly pleasure-house,' its Palace of Art. Could she, poor as she was, dependent, bound by such

obvious chains to the gross earth, hope to abide in her courts and corridors for ever? . . .

Friday was the day of her arrival at Banbrigg. On the Saturday afternoon she hoped to enjoy a walk with her father; he would reach home from the mill shortly after two o'clock, and would then have his dinner. Mrs. Hood dined at one, and could not bring herself to alter the hour for Saturday; it was characteristic of her. That there might be no culinary cares on Sunday morning, she always cooked her joint of meat on the last day of the week; partaking of it herself at one o'clock, she cut slices for her husband and kept them warm, with vegetables, in the oven. This was not selfishness in theory, however much it may have been so in practice; it merely meant that she was unable to introduce variation into a mechanical order; and, as her husband never dreamed of complaining, Mrs. Hood could see in the arrangement no breach of the fitness of things, even though it meant that poor Hood never sat down to a freshly cooked meal from one end of the year to the other. To Emily it was simply a detestable instance of the worst miseries she had to endure at home. Coming on this first day, it disturbed her much. She knew the uselessness, the danger, of opposing any traditional habit, but her appetite at one o'clock was small.

Mrs. Hood did not keep a servant in the house; she engaged a charwoman once a week, and did all the work at other times herself. This was not strictly necessary; the expense of such a servant as would have answered purposes could just have been afforded; again and again Emily had entreated to be allowed to pay a girl out of her own earnings. Mrs. Hood steadily refused. No, she had *once* known what it was to have luxuries about her (that was naturally before her marriage), but those days were gone by. She thus entailed upon herself a great deal of labour, at once repugnant to her tastes and ill-suited to the uncertainty of her health, but all this was forgotten in the solace of possessing a standing grievance, one obvious at all moments, to be uttered in a sigh, to be emphasised by the affectation of cheerfulness. The love which was Emily's instinct grew chill in the presence of such things.

Saturday was from of old a day of ills. The charwoman was in the house, and Mrs. Hood went about in a fatigued way, coming now and then to the sitting-room, sinking into a chair, letting her head fall back with closed eyes. Emily had, of course,

begged to be allowed to give assistance, but her mother declared that there was nothing whatever she could do.

'Shut the door,' she said, 'and then you won't hear the scrubbing so plainly. I can understand that it annoys you; I used to have the same feeling, but I've accustomed myself. You might play something; it would keep away your thoughts.'

'But I don't want to keep away my thoughts,' exclaimed Emily, with a laugh. 'I want to help you so that you will have done the sooner.'

'No, no, my dear; you are not used to it. You'll tell me when you'd like something to eat if you get faint.'

'I am not likely to grow faint, mother, if I do nothing.'

'Well, well; I have a sinking feeling now and then, I thought you might be the same.'

Just when his dinner in the oven had had time to grow crusty, Mr. Hood arrived. He was a rather tall man, of sallow complexion, with greyish hair. The peculiarly melancholy expression of his face was due to the excessive drooping of his eyelids under rounded brows; beneath the eyes were heavy lines; he generally looked like one who has passed through a night of sleepless grief. He wore a suit of black, which had for several years been his reserve attire, till it grew too seamy for use on Sundays. The whole look of the man was saddening; to pass him in the street as a stranger was to experience a momentary heaviness of heart. He had very long slender fingers—Emily's matchless hand in a rudimentary form—and it seemed to be a particular solicitude to keep them scrupulously clean; he frequently examined them, and appeared to have a pleasure in handling things in a dainty way—the pages of a book, for instance. When he smiled it was obviously with effort—a painful smile, for all that an exceedingly gentle one. In his voice there was the same gentleness, a self-suppression, as it were; his way of speaking half explained his want of success in life.

Emily was standing at the window in expectation of his coming. As soon as he reached the iron gate in front of the house she ran to open the door for him. He did not quicken his step, even stopped to close the gate with deliberate care, but if his face could ever be said to light up, it did so as he bent to the girl's kiss. She took his hat from him, and went to see that his dinner was made ready.

'How fine it is!' he said in his subdued tone, when he came

downstairs and stood by the table stroking his newly washed hands. 'Shall we have a walk before tea-time? Mother is too busy, I'm afraid.'

Mrs. Hood came into the room shortly, and seated herself in the usual way.

'Did you bring the cake?' she asked, when her presence had caused silence for a few moments.

'The cake?' he repeated in surprise.

'Didn't I ask you to bring a cake? I suppose my memory is going; I meant to, and thought I mentioned it at breakfast. I shall have nothing for Emily's tea.'

Emily protested that it was needless to get unusual things on her account.

'We must do what we can to make you comfortable, my dear. I can't keep a table like that you are accustomed to, but that I know you don't expect. Which way are you going to walk this afternoon? If you pass a shop you might get a cake, or buns, whichever you like.'

'Well, I thought we might have a turn over the Heath,' said Mr. Hood. 'However, we'll see what we can do.'

A thought of some anxious kind appeared suddenly to strike Mrs. Hood; she leaned forward in her chair, seemed to listen, then started up and out of the room.

Emily sat where she could not see her father eating; it pained, exasperated her to be by him whilst he made such a meal. He ate slowly, with thought of other things; at times his eye wandered to the window, and he regarded the sky in a brooding manner. He satisfied his hunger without pleasure, apparently with indifference.

Shortly after three o'clock the two started for their walk. Not many yards beyond the house the road passed beneath a railway bridge, then over a canal, and at once entered upon the common. The Heath formed the long side of a slowly rising hill; at the foot the road divided itself into two branches, and the dusty tracks climbed at a wide angle with each other. The one which Emily and her father pursued led up to stone quarries, which had been for a long time in working, and, skirting these, to the level ground above them, which was the end of the region of furze and bracken. Here began a spacious tract of grassy common; around it were houses of pleasant appearance, one or two meriting the name of mansion. In one of them dwelt Mr.

Richard Dagworthy, the mill-owner, in whose counting-house James Hood earned his living. He alone represented the firm of Dagworthy & Son; his father had been dead two years, and more recently he had become a widower, his wife leaving him one child still an infant.

At the head of the quarries the two paused to look back upon Dunfield. The view from this point was extensive, and would have been interesting but for the existence of the town itself. It was seen to lie in a broad valley, along which a river flowed; the remoter districts were pleasantly wooded, and only the murkiness in the far sky told that a yet larger centre of industry lurked beyond the horizon. Dunfield offered no prominent features save the chimneys of its factories and its fine church, the spire of which rose high above surrounding buildings; over all hung a canopy of foul vapour, heavy, pestiferous. Take in your fingers a spray from one of the trees even here on the Heath, and its touch left a soil.

'How I wish you could see the views from the hills in Surrey!' Emily exclaimed when they had stood in silence. 'I can imagine nothing more delightful in English scenery. It realises my idea of perfect rural beauty, as I got it from engravings after the landscape painters. Oh, you shall go there with me some day.'

Her father smiled and shook his head a little.

'Perhaps,' he said, and added a favourite phrase of his; 'while there is life there is hope.'

'Of course there is,' rejoined Emily, with gaiety which was unusual in her. 'No smoke; the hills blue against a lovely sky! trees covered to the very roots with greenness; rich old English homes and cottages—oh, you know the kind; your ideal of a cottage; low tiled roofs, latticed windows, moss and lichen and climbing flowers. Farmyards sweet with hay, and gleaming dairies. That country is my home!'

With how rich a poetry it clothed itself in her remembrance, the land of milk and honey, indeed, her heart's home. It was all but impossible to keep the secret of her joy, yet she had resolved to do so, and her purpose held firm.

'I am very glad indeed that you are so happy there,' said her father, looking at her with that quiet absorption in another's mood of which he was so capable. 'But it will be London through the winter. You haven't told me much about London; but then you were there so short a time.'

'But I saw much. Mrs. Rossall could not have been kinder; for the first few days it was almost as if I had been a visitor; I was taken everywhere.'

'I should like to see London before I die,' mused her father. 'Somehow I have never managed to get so far.'

'Oh, we will see it together some day.'

'There's one thing,' said Mr. Hood, reflectively, 'that I wish especially to see, and that is Holborn Viaduct. It must be a wonderful piece of engineering; I remenber thinking it out at the time it was constructed. Of course you have seen it?'

'I am afraid not. We are very far away from the City. But I will go and see it on the first opportunity.'

'Do, and send me a full description.'

His thoughts reverted to the views before them.

'After all, this isn't so bad. There's a great advantage in living so near the Heath. I'm sure the air here is admirable; don't you smell how fresh it is? And then, one gets fond of the place one's lived in for years. I believe I should find it hard to leave Dunfield.'

Emily smiled gently.

'I wonder,' he pursued, 'whether you have the kind of feeling that came to me just then? It struck me that, suppose anything happened that would enable us to go and live in another place, there would be a sort of ingratitude, something like a shabby action, in turning one's back on the old spot. I don't like to feel unkind even to a town.'

The girl glanced at him with meaning eyes. Here was an instance of the sympathetic relations of which she had spoken to Wilfrid; in these words was disclosed the origin of the deepest sensibilities of her own nature.

They pursued their walk, across the common and into a tree-shaded lane. Emily tried to believe that this at length was really the country; there were no houses in view, meadows lay on either hand, the leafage was thick. But it was not mere prejudice which saw in every object a struggle with hard conditions, a degeneration into coarseness, a blight. The quality of the earth was probably poor to begin with; the herbage seemed of gross fibre; one would not risk dipping a finger in the stream which trickled by the roadside, it suggested an impure source. And behold, what creatures are these coming along the lane, where only earth-stained rustics should be met? Two colliers, besmutted

wretches, plodding homeward from the 'pit' which is half a mile away. Yes, their presence was in keeping with the essential character of the scene.

'One might have had a harder life,' mused Mr. Hood aloud, when the pitmen were gone by.

'I think there's a fallacy in that,' replied Emily. 'Their life is probably not hard at all. I used to feel that pity, but I have reasoned myself out of it. They are really happy, for they know nothing of their own degradation.'

'By the bye,' said her father presently, 'how is young Mr. Athel, the young fellow who had to come home from college?'

'He is quite well again, I think,' was Emily's reply.

'I suppose, poor fellow, he has a very weak constitution?'

'Oh no, I think not.'

'What is he studying for? Going into the Church?'

Emily laughed; it was a relief to do so.

'Isn't it strange,' she said, 'how we construct an idea of an unknown person from some circumstance or piece of description? I see exactly what your picture of Mr. Athel is: a feeble and amiable young man, most likely with the shocking voice with which curates sometimes read the lessons——'

She broke off and laughed again.

'Well,' said her father, 'I admit I thought of him a little in that way—I scarcely know why.'

'You could hardly have been further from the truth. Try to imagine the intellectual opposite of such a young man, and you —— That will be far more like Mr. Athel.'

'He isn't conceited? My want of experience has an unfortunate tendency to make me think of young fellows in his position as unbearably vain. It must be so hard to avoid it.'

'Perhaps it is, if they have the common misfortune to be born without brains.'

Other subjects engaged their attention.

'When do you take your holiday, father?' Emily asked.

'I think about the middle of this month. It won't be more than a week or ten days.'

'Don't you think you ought to go to Cleethorpes, if only for a day or two?'

To suggest any other place of summer retreat would have been too alarming. Mr. Hood's defect of imagination was illustrated in this matter; he had been somehow led, years ago, to pay

a visit to Cleethorpes, and since then that one place represented for him the seaside. Others might be just as accessible and considerably more delightful, but it did not even occur to him to vary. It would have cost him discomfort to do so, the apprehension of entering upon the unknown. The present was the third summer which had passed without his quitting home. Anxiety troubled his countenance as Emily made the proposal.

'Not this year, I think,' he said, as if desirous of passing the subject by.

'Father, what possible objection can there be to my bearing the expense of a week at Cleethorpes? You know how well I can afford it; indeed I should like to go; it is rather unkind of you to refuse.'

This was an old subject of discussion. Since Emily had lived away from home, not only her father, but her mother just as strenuously, had refused to take from her any of the money that she earned. It had been her habit at first indirectly to overcome this resistance by means of substantial presents in holiday time; but she found such serious discomfort occasioned by the practice that most reluctantly she had abandoned it. For the understanding of the Hoods' attitude in this matter, it must be realised how deeply their view of life was coloured by years of incessant preoccupation with pecuniary difficulties. The hideous conception of existence which regards each individual as fighting for his own hand, striving for dear life against every other individual, was ingrained in their minds by the inveterate bitterness of their own experience; when Emily had become a woman, and was gone forth to wrest from the adverse world her own subsistence, her right to what she earned was indefeasible, and affection itself protested against her being mulcted for their advantage. As for the slight additional expense of her presence at home during the holidays, she must not be above paying a visit to her parents; the little inconsistency was amiable enough. Father and mother both held forth to her in the same tone: 'You have the battle of life before you; it is a terrible one, and the world is relentless. Not only is it your right, but your very duty, to spare every penny you can; for, if anything happened to prevent your earning money, you would become a burden upon us—a burden we would gladly strive to bear, but the thought of which would be very hard for yourself. If, on the other hand, your mother were left a widow, think how dreadful it would be if you could give her no assistance. You are

wrong in spending one farthing more than your absolute needs require; to say you do it in kindness to us is a mere mistake of yours.' The logic was not to be encountered; it was as irresistible as the social conditions which gave it birth. Emily had abandoned discussion on these points; such reasoning cost her sickness of heart. In practice she obeyed her parents' injunctions, for she herself was hitherto only too well aware of the fate which might come upon her in consequence of the most trifling mishap; she knew that no soul in the world save her parents would think it a duty to help her, save in the way of bare charity. Naturally, her old point of view was now changed; it was this that led her to revive the discussion with her father, and to speak in a tone which Mr. Hood heard with some surprise.

'Next year, perhaps, Emily,' he said. 'After Surrey, I don't think you can really need another change. I am delighted to see how well you look. I, too, am remarkably well, and I can't help thinking your mother gets stronger. How do you find her looking?'

'Better than usual, I really think. All the same, it is clearly impossible for you and her to live on year after year without any kind of change.'

'Oh, my dear, we don't feel it. It's so different with older people; a change rather upsets us than otherwise. You know how nervous your mother gets when she is away from home.'

Their walk brought them round again to the top of the Heath. Mr. Hood looked at his watch, and found that it was time to be moving homewards. Tea was punctually at five. Mrs. Hood would take it ill if they were late, especially on Saturday.

As they walked across the smooth part of the upper common, looking at the houses around, they saw coming towards them a gentleman followed by three dogs. He was dressed in a light tweed suit, and brandished a walking-stick, as if animal spirits possessed him strongly.

'Why, here comes Mr. Dagworthy,' remarked Mr. Hood, in a low tone, though the other was still at a considerable distance. 'He generally goes off somewhere on Saturday afternoon. What a man he is for dogs! I believe he keeps twenty or thirty at the house there.'

Emily evinced just a little self-consciousness. It was possible that Mr. Dagworthy would stop to speak, for she had become, in a measure, acquainted with him in the preceding spring. She

was at home then for a few weeks before her departure for London, and the Baxendales, who had always shown her much kindness, invited her to an evening party, at which Dagworthy was present. He had chatted with her on that occasion.

Yes, he was going to speak. He was a man of five-and-thirty, robust, rather florid, with eyes which it was not disagreeable to meet, though they gazed with embarrassing persistency, and a mouth which he would have done well to leave under the natural shelter of a moustache; it was at once hard and sensual. The clean-shaving of his face gave his appearance a youthfulness to which his tone of speech did not correspond.

'How do you do, Miss Hood? Come once more into our part of the world, then? You have been in London, I hear.'

It was the tone of a man long accustomed to have his own way in life, and not overmuch troubled with delicacies of feeling. His address could not be called disrespectful, but the smile which accompanied it expressed a sort of good-natured patronage, perhaps inevitable in such a man when speaking to his clerk's daughter. The presence of the clerk himself very little concerned him. He kept his eyes steadily on the girl's face, examining her with complete frankness. His utterance was that of an educated man, but it had something of the Yorkshire accent, a broadness which would have distressed the ear in a drawing-room.

Emily replied that she had been in London; it did not seem necessary to enter into details.

'Pleasant afternoon, isn't it? Makes one want to get away to the moors. I suppose you will be off somewhere soon with your family, Mr. Hood.'

He would not have employed the formal prefix to his clerk's name but for Emily's presence; the father knew that, and felt grateful.

'Not this year, I think, sir,' he replied, with perfect cheerfulness.

Of the three dogs that accompanied Dagworthy, one was a handsome collie. This animal came snuffing at Emily's hand, and involuntarily, glad perhaps to have a pretence for averting her face, she caressed the silky ears.

'Fine head, isn't it, Miss Hood?' said Dagworthy at once, causing her to remove her hand quickly. 'Ay, but I've a finer collie than that. Just walk in with me, will you?' he added, after a scarcely perceptible pause. 'I always like to show off my

dogs. You're in no hurry, I suppose? Just come and have a look at the kennels.'

Emily was deeply annoyed, both because such a visit was in itself distasteful to her, and on account of the irritation which she knew the delay would cause her mother. She did not for a moment expect her father to refuse; his position would not allow him to do so. Mr. Hood, in fact, murmured thanks, after a mere half glance at his daughter, and the three walked together to Dagworthy's house, the entrance to which was not fifty yards from where they were standing.

The dwelling was neither large nor handsome, but it stood in a fine garden and had an air of solid well-being. As soon as they had passed the gates, they were met by a middle-aged woman carrying a child of two years old, an infant of wonderfully hearty appearance. At the sight of its father it chuckled and crowed. Dagworthy took it from the woman's arms, and began a game which looked not a little dangerous; with surprising strength and skill, he tossed it up some feet into the air, caught it as it descended, tossed it up again. The child shrieked with delight, for all that the swift descent positively stopped its breath, and made a hiatus in the screaming.

'Theer, that's abaht enough, Mr. Richard,' said the woman, in broad dialect, when the child had gone up half a dozen times; she was nervous, and kept holding out her arms involuntarily. 'Ah doan't ovver much fancy that kind o' laakin. What's more, he's allus reight dahn fratchy after a turn o' that. See nah, he'll nivver want you to stop. Do a' done nah, Mr. Richard.'

'Here you are then; take him in, and tell them I want some tea; say I have friends with me.'

The child was carried away, roaring obstreperously, and Dagworthy, laughing at the vocal power displayed, led the way round to the back of the house. Here had been constructed elaborate kennels; several dogs were pacing in freedom about the clean yard, and many more were chained up. Much information was imparted to the visitors concerning the more notable animals; some had taken prizes at shows, others were warranted to do so, one or two had been purchased at fancy prices. Mr. Hood now and then put a question, as in duty bound to do; Emily restricted her speech to the absolutely necessary replies.

Dagworthy conducted them into the house. It appeared to be furnished in a solid, old-fashioned way, and the ornaments,

though few, were such as might better have been dispensed with. Old Dagworthy had come to live here some five-and-twenty years previously, having before that occupied a small house in conjunction with his mill. He had been one of the 'worthies' of Dunfield, and in his time did a good deal of useful work for the town. Personally, he was anything but amiable, being devoid of education and refinement, and priding himself on his spirit of independence, which exhibited itself in mere boorishness. Though anything but miserly, he had, where his interests were concerned, an extraordinary cunning and pertinacity; he was universally regarded as one of the shrewdest men of business in that part of Yorkshire, and report credited him with any number of remarkable meannesses. It was popularly said that 'owd Dick Dagworthy' would shrink from no dirty trick to turn a sixpence, but was as likely as not to give it away as soon as he had got it. His son had doubtless advanced the character of the stock, and, putting aside the breeding of dogs, possessed many tastes of which the old man had no notion; none the less, he was credited with not a little of his father's spirit in business. In practical affairs he was shrewd and active; he never—as poor Hood might have testified—paid a man in his employ a penny more than there was need, and fell far short of the departed Dagworthy's generosity; to be at his mercy in a pecuniary transaction was to expect and to receive none. For all that, there was something in the man which hinted at qualities beneath the surface; a glance, a tone, now and then, which seemed on the point of revealing a hidden humanity.

When he chose, he could be courteous; he was so at present, as he requested Emily and her father to seat themselves in a large homely room which looked out upon the garden. The woman who had carried the child reappeared and poured out cups of tea. When she had left the room—

'I must ask you to excuse the roughness of my establishment, Miss Hood,' he said. 'I have to make shift for the present with Mrs. Jenkins. She isn't as refined as she might be, but she's been with us here for more than twelve years, and I should be sorry to replace her with any other servant.'

Pieces of bread and butter of somewhat undue solidity were offered. Emily declined anything but the cup of tea. She was very ill at ease, though she succeeded in suppressing any manifestation of it; Dagworthy kept his gaze on her constantly.

'Now I know you didn't care very much about the dogs,' he said to her presently. 'I think I've got something here that will be rather more in your line.'

He brought from a corner of the room a large portfolio, set it upon a chair in front of Emily, and exposed its contents. These were a number of fine photographs of continental cathedrals and churches.

'I bought these when I took my run through France and Germany last year,' he explained. 'I've something of a turn for architecture, I believe; at all events I know I like a fine building, and I like to find out all I can about it.'

He went through the collection, with remarks which proved that he had certainly attained a rudimentary knowledge of the subject, and that his appreciation was often keen when his technical understanding might be at fault.

'The worst of it is,' he said, at one point, with a modesty which was a new feature in his conversation, 'I can't pronounce the names properly. Now, how do you read that, Miss Hood? To be sure; I know it when I hear it. Have you ever been in France?'

The negative reply came.

'You'd like to see the old-fashioned streets in which some of these churches stand.'

As soon as it was possible to do so, Emily looked meaningly at her father, and he, just as anxious to be on his way homeward, rose for leave-taking. Dagworthy offered no opposition; he went with them to the gates, and shook hands with both, then stood gazing after them as they walked across the common.

'Well, I never knew young Dagworthy anything like that before,' said Mr. Hood, when they were at some distance from the gate. 'I couldn't believe it when he asked us to go into the house.'

'I'm afraid mother will be very uneasy,' was Emily's reply.

'Yes, my dear, I'm afraid she will; let's walk sharply. But he was really uncommonly pleasant; I shall think a good deal better of him than I have done.'

This was the only aspect of the afternoon's adventure which presented itself to Mr. Hood. Emily was divided between relief at having got away from that persistent gaze and apprehension of what might meet them on their arrival at home. The latter feeling was only too well justified. Mrs. Hood sat in the kitchen,

the window darkened. When speech was at length elicited from her, it appeared that a headache to which she was subject had come on in its severest form. Emily was at once active with remedies, not that any of those that she urged were likely to avail in themselves, but because she was well aware that the more solicitude she showed the sooner her mother would resume her ordinary state. Mrs. Hood begged to be left to herself; let them have their tea and leave her in the kitchen, she was best there, out of people's way; it would soon be bedtime, the evening was practically gone. In the course of half an hour she was at length prevailed upon to come into the sitting-room, and even to taste a cup of tea. At first she had paid no attention to the reasons alleged for the unpunctuality; little by little she began to ask questions on her own account, petulantly but with growing interest. Still, the headache was not laid aside, and all spent a very dolorous evening.

In the relation these things have their humorous side; Emily may be excused if she was slow to appreciate it. She knew very well that the crisis meant for her father several days of misery, and perhaps in her youthful energy she was disposed to make too little allowance for her mother, whose life had been so full of hardship, and who even now was suffering from cares and anxieties the worst of which her daughter was not allowed to perceive. After the girl's early departure to her bedroom the other two sat talking drearily; after one of her headaches Mrs. Hood always dwelt in conversation on the most wretched features of her life, with despairing forecast. Poor woman, there was little of a brighter kind to occupy her thoughts. Two occasions of grave anxiety were at present troubling her, and, though he spoke of them less, her husband in no less a degree. It had just been announced to them that at the ensuing Christmas their rent would be raised, and at the same time the tenant who had for years occupied the house which they owned in the town of Barnhill had given notice of departure. There was a certain grotesqueness in the fact of James Hood being a proprietor of real estate. Twice an attempt had been made to sell the house in question, but no purchaser could be found; the building was in poor repair, was constantly entailing expense to the landlord, and, in the event of its becoming unoccupied, would doubtless wait long for another tenant. This event had come about, or would in a couple of months, and the loss of that five-and-twenty pounds a

year would make the difficulty of existence yet more desperate. Once more an attempt at sale must be made, in itself involving outlays which, however petty, could ill be borne; and to sell, even if it could be done, meant a serious loss of income.

'What did it mean, do you think?' Mrs. Hood asked, recurring to the subject of Dagworthy and his astonishing behaviour. She put the question dispiritedly, not venturing to hope for a solution that would help her to a more cheerful frame of mind.

Hood scarcely dared to utter the words which came into his mind.

'You remember that they met at the Baxendales'——'

'How did Emily behave?' the mother next inquired.

'She was very quiet. I don't think she liked it. We must bear in mind the kind of society she is used to. Young Dagworthy won't seem of much account to her, I fancy.'

'But he has had a good education, hasn't he?'

'Pretty good, I suppose. He confessed to us, though, that he couldn't pronounce French words.'

'It's quite certain,' said Mrs. Hood, 'he wouldn't have invited you in if you had been alone.'

'Certain enough,' was the reply, in a tone wholly disinterested. 'But it must have been just a fancy, a whim. Things of that kind don't happen nowadays.'

'Not to us, at all events,' murmured the other, dejectedly.

'Well, there must come what will,' she added, leaning her head back once more, and losing interest in the subject. 'I hope nothing and expect nothing.'

Alas, these two sitting together in the dull little room, speaking in disjointed phrases of despondency, exchanging no look, no word of mutual kindness, had they not once loved each other, with the love of youth and hope? Had it not once been enough to sit through long evenings and catch with eagerness each other's lightest word? Time had robbed them of youth, and the injustice of the world's order had starved love to less than a shadow of itself, to a mere habit of common suffering. Tender memories were buried in the grave of children whom the resources of ever so modest a fortune would have kept alive; the present was a mere struggle to support existence, choking the impulses of affection. One would not murmur at the kindly order of life, whereby passion gives place to gentle habitudes, and the

fiery soul of youth tames itself to comely gravity; but that love and joy, the delights of eager sense and of hallowed aspiration, should be smothered in the foul dust of a brute combat for bread, that the stinted energies of early years should change themselves to the blasted hopes of failing manhood in a world made ill by human perverseness, this is not easily—it may be, not well—borne with patience. Put money in thy purse; and again, put money in thy purse; for, as the world is ordered, to lack current coin is to lack the privileges of humanity, and indigence is the death of the soul.

CHAPTER VI.

A VISITOR BY EXPRESS.

It had been arranged that Emily should receive news from Wilfrid by the first post on Monday morning. Her father left home at half-past eight, and Emily, a little ashamed at so deceiving him, went into the town at the same time on pretence of a desire to share his walk. Taking leave of him as soon as the mill was in sight, she walked towards the post office. At this early hour there was no one before the counter: she overcame her nervousness and asked for letters. That which she expected was given to her, and at the same time a telegram.

The sight of the telegram agitated her. Drawing aside, she opened it at once. Wilfrid had despatched it the previous night from London. 'I shall be in Dunfield at one o'clock to-morrow. Please leave a note for me at the post office, appointing any place of meeting at any time you like. I shall find the place from your description.'

The letter, as she could perceive by feeling it, was long; there was no necessity to open it until she reached home. But the note she must write at once. In agitation which would scarcely allow her to reflect, she left the office and sought a small shop where she could procure note-paper. On her way she devised a plan for meeting. In the shop where she made her purchase, she was permitted also to write the note. Having stamped the envelope, she returned to the post office, and, to make sure that no delay might disappoint Wilfrid, gave the letter into the hands of a clerk, who promised, with a smile, that it should at once be

put into the right place. Emily found the smile hard to bear, but fortunately she was unknown.

Then she set forth homewards. Such news as this, that she would see and speak with Wilfrid in a few hours, set self-command at defiance. Between joy at the thought that even now he was nearing her, and fear of the events which might have led him to such a step, she was swayed in a tumult of emotion. She longed to open the letter, yet felt she could not do so in the public roads. She tried to think whether any ill chance could possibly interpose to prevent her being at the place of meeting; none was to be anticipated, unless, what was very unlikely, her mother should propose to join her afternoon walk. But what could his coming mean? She feared that she understood too well.

Often she had to check the over-haste of her pace, and the way seemed terribly long, but at length she was at home and close shut in her bedroom. The letter did not aid her to account for his coming; it had been written late on Friday night, but made absolutely no reference to what had passed between Wilfrid and his relations. It was a long and passionate poem of his love, concerned not with outward facts, but with states of feeling. Only at the end he had added a postscript, saying that he should write again on Monday.

It was difficult to live through the morning. She felt that she must be busy with her hands, and her mother's objections notwithstanding, set herself resolutely to active house-work. Her anxious feelings in this way toned themselves to mere cheerfulness. She listened with unfailing patience to the lengthily described details of domestic annoyances of which Mrs. Hood's conversation chiefly consisted, and did her best to infuse into her replies a tone of hopefulness, which might animate without betraying too much. The hours passed over, and at length it was time to set forth. Mrs. Hood showed no desire to leave home. Emily, though foreseeing that she might again be late for tea, did not venture to hint at such a possibility, but started as if for a short walk.

Not much more than a mile from Banbrigg, in a direction away alike from the Heath and from Dunfield, is the village of Pendal, where stand the remains of an ancient castle. Very slight indeed are these relics, one window and some shapeless masses of defaced masonry being alone exposed; but a hill close beside them is supposed to cover more of the fabric, though history tells

not how or when the earth was so heaped up. The circle of the moat is still complete, and generally contains water. Pendal Castle Hill, as the locality is called, is approached by a rustic lane leading from the village; it is enclosed like an ordinary meadow, and shadowed here and there with trees. On Sundays and holidays it is a resort much favoured by Dunfieldians; at other times its solitude is but little interfered with. Knowing this, Emily had appointed the spot for the meeting. She had directed Wilfrid to take a train from Dunfield to Pendal, and had described the walk up to the castle hill.

He was not before her this time, and there were endless reasons for fear lest she should wait in vain. She remained standing on the inner side of the stile by which the field was entered, and kept her gaze on the point where the lane turned. A long quarter of an hour passed, then of a sudden the expected form appeared.

There had been no train to Pendal at the right time; he had taken a meal at Dunfield station, and then had found a cab to convey him to the village.

Wilfrid was very calm, only the gleam of his fine eyes showed his delight at holding her hands again. They walked to the side of the hill remote from the road. Wilfrid looked about him, and remarked that the place was interesting. He seemed in no hurry to speak of what had brought him here; they walked hand in hand, like children. 'Emily!'—and then his name in return, with interchange of looks; was it not enough for some minutes?

'There is a fallen trunk,' Wilfrid said, pointing to a remoter spot. 'Shall we sit there?'

'How well it has been managed,' he exclaimed, when they had seated themselves. 'You remember the fairy tales in which the old woman bids some one go to a certain place and do such and such a thing and something is sure to happen? "And it befell just as the old woman had said."'

'And I am the old woman. They call her a witch in the stories.'

'A witch, yes; but so young and so beautiful. What delight it was to find your letter, dearest! What careful directions! I laughed at your dreadful anxiety to make it quite, quite clear. Won't you take the glove off? How your hand trembles; no, I will unbutton it myself.'

He kissed the fingers lightly, and then held them pressed.

'But why have you come all this distance, Wilfrid?'

'Would it not be enough if I said I had come to see you? What distance would be too far for that?'

'But you were to have left England to-day?'

'So I was, but I shall not go—till you go with me, Emily.'

She looked at him with anxious eyes.

'Well, I will tell you all there is to tell. In the first place, my father and my aunt think that the plan of your returning to teach the little girls is not a very good one.'

He spoke with perfect cheerfulness, but firmly, as was his wont. Emily's eyes fell.

'I have felt it myself,' she said.

'And so have I; so that we are happily all agreed. We talked it all over after you had gone on Friday, and since then I have taken time to make up my mind. I can see that you would be uncomfortable in the house under such conditions; at the same time it is certainly out of the question that you should go elsewhere; and so—come to London and let us be married as soon as the arrangements can be made.'

'I don't quite understand, Wilfrid. Do you mean that your father approves this?'

'They all went off to-day. He knows, no doubt, what my intention is. In a matter like this I must judge for myself.'

She was silent, then asked with apprehension, 'Has it caused trouble?'

'Of the kind which passes as soon as it has been well talked about,' he answered with a smile; 'nothing more serious.'

She could not meet his look.

'And you wish not to return to Oxford?'

'I have done with that. I see now that to go back and play the schoolboy would have been impossible; all that is over and a new life beginning—you will be in readiness to come up as soon as I send for you?'

She looked in his face now with pleading.

'It is too hasty, Wilfrid. It was better, far better, that we should wait till next year. Can it be your father's wish that your marriage should take place in his absence? You know that I have no foolish desires; the more simply everything is done the better it will please me. But I would, I would have it done with your father's goodwill. I foresaw his objections only too well;

they are natural, it could not be otherwise; but I hoped that time would help. Let us wait!'

She closed both hands on his, and gazed at him steadily.

'I think you must be guided by me, Emily,' he replied, with his calm self-assertiveness. 'There is no reason why we should wait. My father is a man who very sensibly accepts the accomplished fact. His own marriage, I may tell you, was an affair of decision in the face of superficial objections, and he will only think the better of me for following his example. You say, and I am sure, that you care nothing for the show of a wedding; if you did, I should not be here at this moment. It is only for that that we need postpone the marriage. I will take rooms till I can find a house and have it made ready for us.'

Emily kept silence. She had released his hand. There were signs on her face of severe inward conflict.

'Will you let me go and see your parents?' he asked. 'Shall our marriage take place here? To me it is the same; I would only be ruled by your choice. May I go home with you now?'

'I would say yes if I could make up my mind to a marriage at once,' she answered. 'Dear, let me persuade you.'

'The sound of your words persuades too strongly against their sense, Emily,' he said tenderly. 'I will not put off our marriage a day longer than forms make necessary.'

'Wilfrid, let me say what——'

'I have scraps of superstition in my nature,' he broke in with a half laugh. 'Fate does not often deal so kindly as in giving you to me; I dare not *seem* even to hesitate before the gift. It is a test of the worth that is in us. We meet by chance, and we recognise each other; here is the end for which we might have sought a lifetime; we are not worthy of it if we hold back from paltry considerations. I dare not leave you, Emily; everything points to one result—the rejection of the scheme for your return, my father's free surrender of the decision to myself, the irresistible impulse which has brought me here to you. Did I tell you that I rose in the middle of the night and went to Charing Cross to telegraph? It would have done just as well the first thing in the morning, but I could not rest till the message was sent. I will have no appearances come between us; there shall be no pause till you bear my name and have entered my home; after that, let life do with us what it will.'

Emily drank in the vehement flow of words with delight and

fear. It was this virile eagerness, this force of personality, which had before charmed her thought into passiveness, and made her senses its subject; but a stronger motive of resistance actuated her now. In her humility she could not deem the instant gain of herself to be an equivalent to him for what he would certainly, and what he might perchance, lose. She feared that he had disguised his father's real displeasure, and she could not reconcile herself to the abrupt overthrow of all the purposes Wilfrid had entertained before he knew her. She strove with all the energy of her own strong character to withstand him for his good.

'Wilfrid, let it at least be postponed till your father's return. If his mind is what you say, he will by then have fully accepted your views. I respect your father, I owe him consideration; he is prejudiced against me now, and I would gain his goodwill. Just because we are perfectly independent let us have regard for others; better, a thousand times better, that he should be reconciled to our marriage before it takes place than perforce afterwards. Is it for my constancy, or your own, that you fear?'

'I do not doubt your love, and my own is unalterable. I fear circumstances; but what has fear to do with it; I wish to make you my own; the empire of my passion is all-subduing. I will not wait! If you refuse me, I have been mistaken; you do not love me.'

'Those are only words,' she answered, a proud smile lighting the trouble of her countenance. 'You have said that you do not doubt my love, and in your heart you cannot. Answer me one question, Wilfrid: have you made little of your father's opposition, in order to spare me pain? Is it more serious than you are willing to tell me?'

The temptation was strong to reply with an affirmative. If she believed his father to be utterly irreconcilable, there could be no excuse for lingering, yet his nobler self prevailed; to her no word of falseness.

'I have told you the truth. His opposition is temporary. When you are my wife he will be to you as to any wife I could have chosen, I am convinced of it.'

'Then more than ever I entreat you to wait, only till his return to England. If you fail then, I will resist no longer. Show him this much respect, dearest; join him abroad now; let him see that you desire his kindness. Is he not disappointed that you mean to break off your career at Oxford? Why should you

do that? You promised me—did you not promise me, Wilfrid, that you would go on to the end?'

'I cannot! I have no longer the calmness, no longer the old ambitions,—how trivial they were!'

'And yet there will come a day when you will regret that you left your course unfinished, just because you fell in love with a foolish girl.'

'Do not speak like that, Emily; I hate that way of regarding love! My passion for you is henceforth my life; if it is trifling, so is my whole being, my whole existence. There is no sacrifice possible for me that I should ever regret. Our love is what we choose to make it. Regard it as a foolish pastime, and we are no better than the vulgar crowd—we know how *they* speak of it. What detestable thoughts your words brought to my mind! Have you not heard men and women, those who have outlived such glimpses of high things as nature ever sent them, making a jest of love in young lives, treating it, from the height of their wisdom forsooth, as a silly dream of boys and girls? If *we* ever live to speak or think like that, it will indeed be time to have done with the world. Even as I love you now, my heart's darling, I shall love you when years of intimacy are like some happy journey behind us, and on into the very portal of death. Regret! How paltry all will seem that was not of the essence of our love! And who knows how short our time may be? When the end comes, will it be easy to bear, the thought that we lost one day, one moment of union, out of respect for idle prejudices which vanish as soon as they find themselves ineffectual? Will not the longest life be all too short for us?'

'Forgive me the words, dear. Love is no less sacred to me.'

Her senses were playing the traitor; or—which you will—were seconding love's triumph.

'I shall come home with you now,' he said. 'You will let me?'

Why was he not content to win her promise? This proposal, by reminding her most strongly of the inevitable difficulties her marriage would entail, forced her again into resistance.

'Not now, Wilfrid. I have not said a word of this; I must prepare them for it.'

'You have not spoken of me?'

'I would not do so, till I—till everything was more certain.'

'Certain!' he cried impatiently. 'Why do you torture me

so, Emily? What uncertainty is there? Everything is uncertain, if you like to make it so. Is there something in your mind that I do not understand?'

'You must remember, Wilfrid, that this is a strange, new thing in my life. It has come to me so suddenly, that even yet I cannot make it part of my familiar self. It has been impossible to speak of it to others.'

'Do you think I take it as a matter of course? Is your love less a magic gift to me? I wake in a terror lest I have only dreamed of it; but then the very truth comes back, and shall I make myself miserable with imagining uncertainties, when there need be none?'

Emily hesitated before speaking again.

'I have told you very little about my home,' she said. 'You know that we are very poor.'

She could not say it as simply as she wished; she was angry with herself to recognise how nearly her feeling was one of shame, what a long habit of reason it needed to expel the unintelligent prejudice which the world bestows at birth.

'I could almost say I am glad of it,' Wilfrid replied. 'We shall have it in our power, you and I, to help so much.'

'There are many reasons,' she continued, too much occupied with her thoughts to dwell on what he said, 'why I should have time to prepare my father and mother. You will let me write the things which it is not very easy to say.'

'Say what you will, and keep silence on what you will, Emily. I cannot give so much consequence to these external things. You and I are living souls, and as such we judge each other. Shall I fret about the circumstances in which chance has cased your life? As reasonable if I withdrew my love from you because one day the colour of your glove did not please me. Time you need. You shall have it; a week, ten days. Then I will come myself and fetch you,—or you shall come to London alone, as you please.'

'Let it be till your father returns.'

'But he will be two months away.'

'You will join him in Switzerland. Your health requires it.'

'My health! Oh, how tired I am of that word! Spare it me, you at least, Emily. I am well in body and mind; your love would have raised me if I had lain at the point of death. I cannot leave England alone; I have made up my mind that you shall

go with me. Have I then no power to persuade you? You will not indeed refuse?'

He looked at her almost in despair. He had not anticipated more than the natural hesitancy which he would at once overcome by force of passion. There was something terrible to him in the disclosure of a quiet force of will equal to his own. Frustration of desire joined with irritated instincts of ascendency to agitate him almost beyond endurance.

Emily gazed at him with pleading as passionate as his own need.

'Do you distrust me?' he asked suddenly, overcome with an intolerable suspicion. At the same moment he dropped her hand, and his gaze grew cold.

'Distrust you?' She could not think that she understood him.

'Do you fear to come to London with me?'

'Wilfrid?'

Her bosom heaved with passionate resentment of his thought.

'Is *that* how you understand my motives?' she asked, with tremulous, subdued earnestness, fixing upon him a gaze which he could not meet.

'Yes,' he answered, below his breath, 'in a moment when love of you has made me mad.'

He turned away, leaning with one hand upon the trunk. In the silence which followed he appeared to be examining the shapeless ruins, which, from this point of view, stood out boldly against the sky.

'When was this castle destroyed?' he asked presently, in a steady voice.

He received no answer, and turned his eyes to her again. Emily's face was strung into a hard intensity. He laid his hand once more upon hers, and spoke with self-control.

'You do not know the strength of a man's love. In that moment it touched the borders of hate. I know that your mind is incapable of such a suspicion; try to think what it meant to be possessed for an instant by such frenzy.'

'You felt able to hate me?' she said, with a shake in her voice which might have become either a laugh or a sob. 'Then there are things in love that I shall never know.'

'Because your soul is pure as that of the angels they dream of. I could not love you so terribly if you were not that perfec-

tion of womanhood to which all being is drawn. Send me to do your bidding; I will have no will but yours.'

How the light of rapture flashed athwart her face! It was hard for her to find words that would not seem too positive, too insubmissive.

'Only till you have lived with your father in the thought of this thing,' she murmured, 'and until I have taught myself to bear my happiness. Are we not one already, dear? Why should you needlessly make your life poorer by the loss—if only for a time—of all the old kindnesses? I think, I know, that in a few days your mind will be the same as my own. Do you remember how long it is since we first spoke to each other?'

'Not so many days as make a week,' he answered, smiling.

'Is not that hard to believe? And hard to realise that the new world is still within the old?'

'Sweet, still eyes—give to me some of your wisdom! But you have a terrible way of teaching calmness.'

'You will go straight to the Continent, Wilfrid?'

'Only with one promise.'

'And that?'

'You will bow to my judgment when I return.'

'My fate shall be in your hands.'

They talked still, while the shadows of the ruins moved ever towards them. All the afternoon no footsteps had come near; it was the sight of two strangers which at length bade Emily think of the time. It was after six o'clock.

'Wilfrid, I must go. My absence will seem so strange; what fables I shall have to invent on the way home. Do you know of any train that you can leave by?'

'No; it matters very little; I suppose there is a mail some time to-night? I will go back to Dunfield and take my chance.'

'How tired you will be! Two such journeys in one day.'

'And a draught of the water of life between them. But even now there is something more I ask for.'

'Something more?'

'One touch of the lips that speak so nobly.'

It was only then that her eyes gleamed for a moment through moisture. But she strengthened herself to face the parting, in spite of a heaviness at the heart like that which she had felt on leaving The Firs. She meant at first to go no further than the

stile into the lane, and there Wilfrid held out his hand. She used it to aid herself in stepping over.

'I must go as far as Pendal station,' she said. 'Then you can look at the time-table, and tell me what train you will take.'

They walked the length of the lane almost in silence, glancing at each other once or twice. At the village station, Wilfrid discovered that a good train left Dunfield shortly after nine o'clock. From Pendal to Dunfield there would be a train in a quarter of an hour.

They stood together under the station shed. No other passenger was waiting, and the official had not yet arrived to open the booking-office.

'When shall I hear from you?' Emily asked, putting off from instant to instant the good-bye, which grew ever harder to say.

'In less than a week. I shall leave London early to-morrow morning.'

'But it will give you no time for rest.'

'I am not able to rest. Go as often as you can to the castle, that I may think of you as sitting there.'

'I will go very often.'

She could not trust herself to utter more than a few words. As she spoke, the station-master appeared. They moved away to the head of the stairs by which Emily had to leave.

'I shall see your train to-night as it passes Pendal,' she said.

Then there was the clasp of hands, and—good-bye. To Emily the way was dark before her as she hurried onwards. . . . .

Mrs. Hood had subsided into the calm of bitter resignation. Emily found her in the kitchen, engaged in polishing certain metal articles, an occupation to which she always had recourse when the legitimate work of the day was pretty well over. Years ago, Mrs. Hood had not lacked interest in certain kinds of reading, but the miseries of her life had killed all that; the need of mechanical exertion was constantly upon her; an automatic conscience refused to allow her repose. When she heard Emily entering by the front door, a sickly smile fixed itself upon her lips, and with this she silently greeted the girl.

'It is too bad of me, mother,' Emily said, trying to assume playfulness, which contrasted strangely with an almost haggard weariness on her face. 'You will give me up as hopeless; I will promise, like the children, that it shall never happen again.'

'It is your holiday, my dear,' was the reply, as Mrs. Hood went to stir the fire. 'You must amuse yourself in your own way.'

'Of course you have had tea. I really want nothing till supper-time.'

'It was not worth while to make tea for one,' said her mother, with a sigh.

'And you have had none? Then I will make it this minute. When will father be home?'

'It is quite uncertain. He gets more and more irregular.'

'Why should he be kept so beyond the proper time? It is really too bad.'

'My dear, your father is never satisfied with doing his own work; he's always taking somebody else's as well. Of course, they find that out, and they put upon him. I've talked and talked, but it's no use; I suppose it'll go on in the same way to the end.'

Half an hour later Mr. Hood reached home, as usual, worn out. The last half-mile of the walk from Dunfield was always a struggle with exhaustion. He had to sit several minutes before he was able to go upstairs to refresh himself with cold water.

'I met Mrs. Cartwright,' he said, when an unexpected cup of tea from Emily's hands had put him into good spirits. 'Jessie got home on Saturday, and wants you to go and see her, Emily. I half promised you would call to-morrow morning.'

'Yes, I will,' said Emily.

'I don't think it's altogether right,' remarked Mrs. Hood, 'that Emily should have to work in her holidays; and I'm sure it's all no use; Jessie Cartwright will never do any good if she has lessons from now to Doomsday.'

'Well, it's very necessary she should,' replied Mr. Hood. 'How ever they live as they do passes my comprehension. There was Mrs. Cartwright taking home fruit and flowers which cost a pretty penny, I'll be bound. And her talk! I thought I should never get away. There's one thing, she never has any but good-natured gossip; I never leave her without feeling that she is one of the best-hearted women I know.'

'I can't say that her daughters take after her,' Mrs. Hood remarked, soothed, as always, by comment upon her acquaintances. 'Amy was here the other afternoon, and all the time she

never ceased making fun of those poor Wilkinses; it really was all I could do to keep from telling her she ought to be ashamed of herself. Mary Wilkins, at all events, makes no pretences; she may be plain, but she's a good girl, and stays at home to do what's required of her. As for the Cartwright girls—well, we shall see what'll happen some day. It can't go on, that's quite certain.'

'I don't think there's any real harm in them. They're thoughtless, but then they're very young. They oughtn't to have so much of their own way. What's your opinion of Jessie, Emily? Do you think she'll ever be fit to teach?'

'She might, if she could live apart from her mother and sisters for a time. I think she'll have to come here for her lessons; it's out of the question to do anything at that house.'

It was Mr. Hood's habit to spend his evenings in a little room at the top of the house, which he called his laboratory. It was furnished with a deal table, a couple of chairs, and some shelves. On the table was his apparatus for the study of electricity, mostly the product of his own ingenuity; also a number of retorts, crucibles, test-tubes, and the like, wherewith he experimented chemically. The shelves exhibited bottles and jars, and the dozen or so volumes which made his scientific library. These tastes he had kept up from boyhood; there was something pathetic in the persistency with which he clung to the pretence of serious study, though the physical fatigue which possessed him during his few hours of freedom would in any case have condemned him to mere trifling. Often he came upstairs, lit his lamp, and sat for a couple of hours doing nothing more than play with his instruments, much as a child might; at other times a sudden revival of zeal would declare itself, and he would read and experiment till late in the night, always in fear of the inevitable lecture on his reckless waste of lamp-oil. In the winter time the temperature of this garret was arctic, and fireplace there was none; still he could not intermit his custom of spending at least an hour in what he called scientific study, with the result that he went to bed numbed and shivering. It was but another illustration of possibilities rendered futile by circumstances. It was more than likely that the man might, with fair treatment, have really done something in one or other branch of physics. To Emily, who strove to interest herself in his subjects out of mere love and compassion, he appeared to have gained not a little

knowledge of facts and theories. She liked to encourage herself in the faith that his attainments were solid as far as they went, and that they might have been the foundation of good independent work; it helped her to respect her father.

'Will you come up to-night, Emily?' he asked, with the diffidence which he always put into this request.

She assented with apparent cheerfulness, and they climbed the stairs together. The last portion of them was uncarpeted, and their footsteps sounded with hollow echoes under the roof. It was all but dark by this time; Mr. Hood found matches on the table and lit the lamp, which illuminated the bare whitewashed walls and sloping ceiling with a dreary dimness. There was no carpet on the floor, which creaked as they moved here and there. When her father was on the point of drawing down the blind, Emily interposed.

'Do you mind leaving it up, father?'

'Of course I will,' he assented, with a smile. 'But why?'

'The last daylight in the sky is pleasant to look at.'

On the landing below stood an old eight-day clock. So much service had it seen that its voice was grown faint, and the strokes of each hour that it gave forth were wheezed with intervals of several seconds. It was now striking nine, and the succession of long-drawn ghostly notes seemed interminable.

The last daylight—how often our lightest words are omens! —faded out of the sky. Emily kept her eyes upon the windows none the less. She tried to understand what her father was saying sufficiently to put in a word now and then, but her sense of hearing was strained to its utmost for other sounds. There was no traffic in the road below, and the house itself was hushed; the ticking of the old clock, performed with such painful effort that it ever seemed on the point of failing, was the only sign of life outside the garret. At length Emily's ear caught a remote rushing sound; her father's low voice did not overcome it.

'These compounds of nitrogen and oxygen,' he was saying, 'are very interesting. Nitrous oxide, you know, is what they call Laughing Gas. You heat solid nitrate of ammonia, and that makes protoxide of nitrogen and water.'

The words conveyed no sense to her, though she heard them. The rushing sound had become a dull continuous thunder. Her eyes strained into the darkness. Of a sudden the horizon flamed. A train was passing a quarter of a mile away, and the furnace-door

of the engine had just been opened to feed the fire, whose strength sped the carriages to far-off London. A streaming cloud of smoke reflected the glare; it was as though some flying dragon vomited crimson fumes. Involuntarily the girl half rose from her seat and pointed.

'What is it?' asked her father, looking round. 'Ah! pretty sight that fire on the smoke. Well, this protoxide of nitrogen, you see—' . . .

(*To be continued.*)

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MR. SANDFORD.

I.

He was a man approaching sixty, but in perfect health, and with no painful physical reminders that he had already accomplished the greater part of life's journey. He was a successful man, who had attained at a comparatively early age the heights of his profession, and gained a name for himself. No painter in England was better or more favourably known. He had never been emphatically the fashion, or made one of those great 'hits' which are far from being invariably any test of genius; but his pictures had always been looked for with pleasure, and attracted a large and very even share of popular approbation. From year to year, for what was really a very long time, though in his good health and cheerful occupation the progress of time had never forced itself upon him unduly, he had gone on doing very well, getting both praise and pudding—good prices, constant commissions, and a great deal of agreeable applause. A course of gentle uninterrupted success of this description has a curiously tranquillising effect upon the mind. It did not seem to Mr. Sandford, or his wife, or any of his belongings, that it could ever fail. His income was more like an official income, coming in at slightly irregular intervals, and with variations of amount, but wonderfully equal at the year's end, than the precarious revenues of an artist. And this fact lulled him into security in respect to his pecuniary means. He had a very pleasant, ample, agreeable life—a pretty and comfortable house, full of desirable things; a pleasant, gay, not very profitable, but pleasant family; and the agreeable atmosphere of applause

and public interest which gave a touch of perfection to all the other good things. He had the consciousness of being pointed out in the largest assembly as somebody worth looking at; 'That's Sandford, you know, the painter.' He did not dislike it himself, and Mrs. Sandford liked it very much. Altogether it would have been difficult to find a more pleasant and delightful career.

His wife had been the truest companion and helpmeet of all his early life. She had made their small means do in the beginning when money was not plentiful. She had managed to do him credit in all the many appearances in society which a rising painter finds to his advantage, while still spending very little on herself or her dress. She had kept all going, and saved him from a thousand anxieties and cares. She had sat to him when models proved expensive so often that it was a common joke to say that some reflection of Mrs. Sandford's face was in all his pictures, from Joan of Arc to St. Cecilia. Now that the children were grown up, perhaps the parents were a little less together than of old. She had her daughters to look after, who were asked out a great deal, and very anxious to be fashionable and to keep up with their fine friends. The two grown-up girls were both pretty, animated, and pleasant creatures, full of the chatter of society, yet also full of better things. There were also two grown-up sons: one a young barrister, briefless, and fond of society too; the other one of those agreeable do-nothings who are more prevalent nowadays than ever before, a very clever fellow, who had just not succeeded as he ought at the University or elsewhere, but had plenty of brains for anything, and only wanted the opportunity to distinguish himself. They were all full of faculty, both boys and girls, but all took a good deal out of the family stores without bringing anything in. Ever since these children grew up the family life had been on a very easy, ample scale. There was never any appearance of want of money, nor was the question ever discussed with the young ones, who had really no way of knowing that there was anything precarious in that well-established family income which provided them with everything they could desire. Sometimes, indeed, Mrs. Sandford would shake her head and declare that she 'could not afford' some particular luxury. 'Oh, nonsense, mamma!' the girls would say, while Harry would add, 'That's mother's rôle, we all know. If she did not say so she would not be acting up to her part.' They took it in this

way, with the same, or perhaps even a greater composure than if Mr. Sandford's revenues had been drawn from the three per cents.

It was only after this position had been attained that any anxieties arose. At first it had seemed quite certain that Jack would speedily distinguish himself at the bar, and become Lord Chancellor in course of time; and that something would turn up for Harry—most likely a government appointment, which so well known a man as his father had a right to expect. And Mrs. Sandford, with a sigh, had looked forward with certainty to the early marriage of her girls. But some years had now passed since Ada, who was the youngest, had been introduced, and as yet nothing of that kind had happened. Harry was pleasantly about the world, a great help in accompanying his sisters when Mrs. Sandford did not want to go out, but no appointment had fallen in his way; and the briefs which Jack had procured were very few and very trifling. Things went on very pleasantly all the same. The young people enjoyed themselves very much—they were asked everywhere. Lizzie, who had a beautiful voice, was an acquisition wherever she went, and helped her sister and her brothers on, who could all make themselves agreeable. The life of the household flowed on in the pleasantest way imaginable; everything was bright, delightful, easy. Mrs. Sandford was so good a manager that all domestic arrangements went as on velvet. She was never put out if two or three people appeared unexpectedly to lunch. An impromptu dinner party even, though it might disturb cook, never disturbed mamma. There was no extravagance, but everything delightfully liberal and full. The first vague uneasiness that crept into the atmosphere was about the boys. It was Mrs. Sandford herself who began this. 'Did you speak to Lord Okeham about Harry?' she said to her husband one day, when she had been particularly elated by the appearance of that nobleman at her tea-table. He had come to look at a picture, and he was very willing afterwards, it appeared, to come into the drawing-room to tea.

'How could I? I scarcely know him. It is difficult enough to ask a friend—but a man I have only seen twice——'

'Your money or your life,' said Harry, with a laugh. He was himself quite tranquil about his appointment, never doubting that some day it would turn up.

'It is easier to ask a stranger than a friend,' said Mrs. Sand-

ford. 'It is like trading on friendship with a man you know; but this man's nothing but a patron, or an admirer. I should have asked him like—I mean at once.'

'Mother was going to say like a shot—she is getting dreadfully slangy, worse than any of us. Let's hope old Okeham will come back; there's not much time lost,' said the cheerful youth.

'When your father was your age he was making a good deal of money. We were beginning to see our way,' said Mrs. Sandford, shaking her head.

'What an awfully imprudent pair you must have been to marry so early!' cried Jack.

'I wonder what you would say to us if we suggested anything of the kind?' said Miss Ada, who had made herself very agreeable to Lord Okeham.

'A poor painter!' said Lizzie, with a tone in her voice which her mother understood—for, indeed, Mrs. Sandford did not at all encourage the attentions of poor painters, having still that early certainty of great matches in her mind.

The young people were quite fond of their parents, very proud of their father, dutiful as far as was consistent with the traditions of their generation, but naturally were of opinion that fathers and mothers were slightly antiquated, and did not possess the last lights.

'The young ones are too many for you, Mary,' said Mr. Sandford; but he added, 'It's true what your mother says; you oughtn't to be about so much as you are, doing nothing. You ought to grind as long as you're young——'

'At what, sir?' said Harry, with mock reverence. Mr. Sandford did not reply, for indeed he could not. Instead of giving an answer he went back to the studio, which indeed he had begun to find a pleasant refuge in the midst of all the flow of youthful talk and laughter, which was not of the kind he had been used to in his youth. Young artists, those poor painters whom Mrs. Sandford held at arms' length, are not perhaps much more sensible than other young men, but they have at least a subject on which any amount of talk is possible, and which their elders can understand. Mr. Sandford was proud of his children, and loved them dearly. Their education, he believed, was much better than his own, and they knew a great deal more on general subjects than he did. But their jargon was not his jargon, and though it seemed very clever and knowing, and even amusing for a while, it soon

palled upon him. He went back to his studio and to the picture he was painting, for the daylight was still good. It was the largest of his Academy pictures, and nearly finished. It occurred to him as he stood looking at it critically from a distance, with his head on one side and his hand shading now one part now another, that Lord Okeham, though very complimentary, had not said anything about a desire to possess in his small collection a specimen of such a well known master as—— He remembered, now, that it was with this desire that his lordship had been supposed to be coming. Daniells, the picture dealer, had said as much. 'He wants to come and see what you've got on the stocks. Tell you w'at, old man, 'e's as rich as Cressus. Lay it on thick, 'e won't mind—give you two thou' as easy as five 'undred.' This was what, with his usual elegant familiarity, Mr. Daniells had said. It occurred to Mr. Sandford, with a curious little pang of surprise, that Lord Okeham had not said a word on the subject. He had admired everything, he had lingered upon some of the smaller sketches, making little remarks in the way of criticism now and then which the painter recognised as very judicious, but he had not said a word about enriching his collection with a specimen, &c. The surprise with which Mr. Sandford noticed this had a sort of sting in it—a prick like the barb of a fish-hook, like the thorn upon a rose. He did not at the moment exactly perceive why he should have felt it so. After a little while, indeed, he began to smile at the idea that it was from Okeham that this sting came. What did one man's favour, even though that man was a cabinet minister, matter to him? It was not that, it was the discussion that followed which had left him with a prick of disquiet, a tingling spot in his mind. He must, he felt, speak to some one about Harry—not Lord Okeham, whom he did not know, who had evidently changed his mind about that specimen of so well known, &c. He would not dream of saying anything to him, a man not sympathetic, a stranger whom, though he might offer him a cup of tea, he did not really know; but it was very clear that Harry ought to have something to do.

So ought Jack. Jack had a profession, but did not make much by it. He had determined that his sons should not be artists like himself—that they should have no precarious career, dependent on the favour of picture dealers and patrons, notwithstanding that he himself had done very well in that way. He had always resolved from the beginning to give them every advantage.

Mr. Sandford recalled to mind that a few years ago he had been very strenuous on this point, talking of the duty of giving his children the very best education, which was the best thing any father could do for his children. He had been very confident indeed on that subject; now he paused and rubbed his chin meditatively with his mahlstick. Was it possible that he was not quite so sure now? He shook himself free from this troublesome coil of thought, and made up his mind that he must make an effort about Harry. Then he put down his pencils and went out for his afternoon walk.

In earlier days Mrs. Sandford would have come into the studio; she would have talked Lord Okeham over. She would have said, 'Oh, he did not like that forest bit, didn't he? Upon my word! I suppose my lord thinks he is a judge!'

'What he said was reasonable enough. He does know something about it. I told you myself I was not satisfied with the balance of colour. The shadow's too dark. The middle distance——'

'Oh, Edward, don't talk nonsense—that's just like you—you're so ridiculously modest. If the cook were to come in one morning and tell you she thought your composition bad, you would say she approached the picture without any bias, and probably what she said was quite true. Come out for a walk.'

This, be it clearly understood, was an imaginary conversation. It did not take place for the excellent reason that Mrs. Sandford was in the drawing-room, smiling at the witticisms of her young ones, and saying at intervals, 'Come, come, Lizzie!' and 'Don't be so satirical, Jack.' They were not nearly such good company as her husband, nor did they want her half so much, but she thought they did, and that it was her duty to be there. So Mr. Sandford, who did not think of it at all as a grievance, but only as a natural necessity, had nothing but an imaginary talk which did not relieve him much, and went out for his walk by himself.

It would be foolish to date absolutely from that day a slight change that began to work in him—but it did come on about this time; and that was an anxiety that the boys should get on and begin their life's work in earnest which had not affected him before. He had been too busy to think much except about his work so long as the young ones were well; and the period at which the young ones become men and women is not always easy for a father to discern so long as they are all under his roof as in their childish days. He, too, had let things flow along in the well-

being of the time without pausing to inquire how long it was to last, or what was to come of it. A man of sixty who is in perfectly good health does not feel himself to be old though he may be so, nor think it necessary to consider the approaching end of his career. Something, however, aroused him now about these boys. He got a little irritable when he saw Harry about, playing tennis with the girls, sometimes spending the whole day in flannels. 'Why can't he do something?' he said to his wife.

'Dear Edward,' said Mrs. Sandford, 'what can the poor boy do? He is only too anxious to do something. He is always talking to me about it. If only Lord Okeham or someone would get a post for him. Is there no one you can speak to about poor Harry?'

This was turning the tables upon Harry's father, who, to tell the truth, was very slow to ask favours and did not like it at all. He did speak, however—not to Lord Okeham, but to an inferior potentate, and was told that all the lists were full, although everybody would be delighted, of course, to serve him if possible; and nothing came of that. Then there was Jack. The young man came in to dinner one day in the highest spirits. He had got a brief—a real brief—a curiosity which he regarded with a jocular admiration. 'I shall be a rich man in no time,' he said.

'How much is your fee?' asked one of the girls. 'You must take us somewhere with it, Jack.'

'It is two guineas,' Jack said, and then there was a general burst of laughter—that laughter young and fresh which is sweet to the ears of fathers and mothers.

'That's majestic,' Harry said; 'lend us something, old fellow, for luck,' and they all laughed again. They thought it a capital joke that Jack should earn two guineas in six months. It did not hurt him or any of them; he had everything he wanted as if he had been earning hundreds. But Mr. Sandford did not laugh. This time it vexed and disturbed him to hear all the cheerful banter and talk about Jack's two guineas.

'It is all very well to laugh,' he said to his wife afterwards, 'but how is he ever to live upon that?'

'Dear Edward, it's not like you to take their fun in earnest,' said the mother. 'The poor boy has such spirits—and then it's always a beginning.'

'I am afraid his spirits are too good. If he would only take life a little more seriously——'

'Why should he?' said Mrs. Sandford, taking high ground; 'it is his happiest time. If he wanted to marry and set up for himself it might be different. But they have no cares—as yet. We ought to be thankful they are all so happy at home. Few young men love their home like our boys. We ought to be very thankful,' she repeated with a devout look upon her upturned face. It took the words out of his mouth. He could not say any more.

But he kept on thinking. The time was passing away with great rapidity—far more quickly than it had ever done. Sunday trod on the heels of Sunday, and the months jostled each other as they flew along. Presently it was Jack's birthday, and there was a dance and a great deal of affectionate pleasure; but when Mr. Sandford remembered how old the boy was, it gave him a start which none of the others felt. At that age he himself had been Jack's father, he had laid the foundation of his reputation and was a rising man. If they did not live at home and had not everything provided for them, what would become of these boys? It gave him a sort of panic to think of it. In the very midst of the dance, when he was himself standing in the midst of a little knot of respectable fathers watching the young ones enjoying themselves, this thought overtook him and made him shiver.

'Getting on, I hear, very well at the bar,' one of the gentlemen said.

'He is not making very much money as yet,' replied Mr. Sandford.

'Oh, nobody does that—at first, at least; but so long as he has you to fall back upon,' this good-natured friend said with a nod of his head.

Mr. Sandford could not make any reply. He kept saying to himself 'Two guineas—two guineas—he could not live very long on that.' And Harry had not even two guineas. It fretted him to have this thought come back at all manner of unlikely times. He did not seem able to shake it off. And Mrs. Sandford was always on the defensive, seeing this thought in his eyes, and making responses to it, speaking at it, always returning to the subject. She dwelt upon the goodness of the boys, and their love of their home, and how good it was for the girls to have them, and how nobody made their mark all at once, 'except people that have genius like you,' she said with that wifely admiration and faith which is so sweet to a man. What more could he say?

II.

About the same time, or a little later, another shadow rose up upon Mr. Sandford's life. It was like the cloud no bigger than a man's hand, like a mere film upon the blue sky at first. Perhaps the very first appearance of it—the faintest shadow of a shade upon the blue—arose on that day when Lord Okeham visited the studio and went away without giving any commission. Not that great personages had not come before with the same result; but that this time there had been supposed to be a distinct purpose in his visit beyond that of taking a cup of tea with the artist's wife and daughters—and this purpose had not been carried out. It was not the cloud, but it was a sort of *avant-coureur* of the cloud, like the chill little momentary breath which sometimes heralds a storm. No storm followed, but the shadow did grow. The next thing that made it really shape itself as a little more than a film was the fact of his Academy picture, the principal one of the year, coming back—without any explanation at all; not purchased, nor even with any application from the printsellers about an engraving; simply coming back as it had gone into the exhibition. No doubt in the course of a long career such a thing as this, too, had happened before. But there was generally something to account for it, and the picture thus returned seldom dwelt long in the painter's hands. This time, however, it subsided quite quietly into its place, lighting up the studio with a great deal of colour and interest, 'a pleasure to see,' Mrs. Sandford said, who had often declared that the worst thing of being a painter's wife was that she never liked to see the pictures go away. This might be very true, and it is quite possible that it was a pleasure to behold, standing on its easel against a wall which generally was enlivened only with the earliest of sketches, and against which a lay figure grinned and sprawled.

But the prospect was not quite agreeable to the painter. However cheerfully he went into his studio in the morning, he always grew grave when he came in front of that brilliant canvas. It was the 'Black Prince at Limoges,' a picture full of life and action, with all the aid of mediæval costume and picturesque groups—such a picture as commanded everybody's interest in Mr. Sandford's younger days. He would go and stand before it for an hour at a time, trying to find some fault in the composition, or in the flesh

tints, or the arrangements of the draperies. It took away his thoughts from the subject he was then engaged in working out. Sometimes he would put up his hand to separate one portion from another, sometimes divide it with a screen of paper, sometimes even alter an outline with chalk, or mellow a spot of colour with his brush. There was very little fault to be found with the picture. It carried out all the rules of composition. The group of women who formed the central light was full of beauty; the sick warrior to whom they appealed was a marvel of strength and ferocity, made all the keener by the pallor of his illness. There was nothing to be said against the picture; except, perhaps, that, had not this been Mr. Sandford's profession, there was no occasion for its existence at all.

When the mind has once been filled with a new idea it is astounding how many events occur to heighten it. Other distinguished visitors came to the studio, like Lord Okeham, and went away again, having left a great deal of praise and a little criticism, but nothing else, behind them. These were not, perhaps, of importance enough to have produced much effect at an ordinary moment, but they added to the general discouragement. Mr. Sandford smiled within himself at the mistakes the amateurs made, and the small amount of real knowledge which they showed; but when they were gone the smile became something like that which is generally and vulgarly described as being on the wrong side of the mouth. It was all very well to smile at the amateurs—but it was in the long run their taste and not that of the heaven-born artist, which carried the day; and when a man takes away in his pocket the sum which ought to supply your balance at your banker's, the sight of his back as he goes out at the door is not pleasant. Mr. Sandford had not come to that pitch yet; but he laughed no longer, and felt a certain ruefulness in his own look when one after another departed without a word of a commission. There were other things, too, not really of the slightest importance, which deepened the impression—the chatter of Jack's friends, for instance, some of whom were young journalists, and talked the familiar jargon of critics. He came into the drawing-room one day during one of his wife's teas, and found two or three young men, sprawling about with legs stretched out over the limited space, who were pulling to pieces a recent exhibition of the works of a Royal Academician. 'You would think you had got among half a dozen different sorts of people dressed for

private theatricals,' said one of the youths. 'Old models got up as Shakespearian kings, and that sort of thing. *You* know, Mrs. Sandford; conventional groups trying to look as if they were historical.'

'I remember Mr. White's pictures very well,' said Mrs. Sandford. 'I used to think them beautiful. We all rushed to see what he had in the exhibition, upon the private view day, when I did not know so much about it as I do now.'

'Ah, yes; before you knew so much about it,' said the art authority. 'You would think very differently to-day.'

'The whole school is like that,' said another. 'Historical painting is gone out like historical novel-writing. The public is tired of costume. Life is too short for that sort of thing. We want a far more profound knowledge of the human figure and beauty in the abstract——'

'Stuff!' said Harry; 'the British public doesn't want your nudities, whatever you may think.'

'The British public likes babies, and sick girls getting well, and beautiful young gentlemen saying eternal adieux to lovely young ladies,' said one of the girls.

'To be sure, that sort of thing always goes on; but everybody must feel that in cultured circles there is a far greater sense of the beauty of colour for itself and art for art than in those ridiculous old days when the subject was everything——'

'You confuse me with your new lights,' said Mrs. Sandford. 'I always did think there was a great deal in a good subject.'

'My dear Mrs. Sandford!' cried one of the young men, laughing; while another added, with the solemnity of his kind—

'People really did think so at one time. It was a genuine belief so long as it lasted. I am not one of those who laugh at faith so *naïf*. Whatever is true even for a time has a right to be respected,' said this profound young man.

Mr. Sandford came in at this point, having paused a little to enjoy the fun, as he said to himself. It was wonderful to hear how they chattered—these babes. 'I am glad to hear that you are all so tolerant of the old fogeys,' he said, with a laugh as he showed himself. And one at least of the young men had the good taste to jump up as if he were ashamed of himself, and to take his legs out of the way.

'I suppose that's the new creed that those fellows were giving forth,' he said to Jack, when the other young men were gone.

'Oh, I don't know, sir,' said Jack, with an embarrassed laugh. 'We all of us say our say.'

'But that is the say of most of you, I suppose,' said his father.

'Well, sir, I suppose every generation has its own standard. "The old order changeth," don't you know—in art as well as in other things.'

'I see; and you think we know precious little about it,' said Mr. Sandford, with a joyless smile which curled his lip without conveying any mirthful impulse. He felt angry and unreasonably annoyed at the silly boys who knew so little. 'But they know how to put that rubbish into words, and they get it published, and it affects the general opinion,' he said to himself, with perhaps a feeling, not unnatural in the circumstances, that he would like to drown those kittens with their miauling about things they knew nothing about. Angry moods, however, did not last long in Mr. Sandford's mind. He went back to his studio and looked at the 'Black Prince' in the light of these criticisms. And he found that some of the old courtiers in attendance on the sick warrior did look unfeignedly like old models, which indeed they were, and that there was more composition than life in the attitudes of the women. 'I always thought that arm should come like this,' he said to himself, taking up his chalk.

One day about this time he had a visit from Daniells, the picture dealer, leading a millionaire—a newly fledged one—who was making a gallery and buying right and left. Daniells, though he was very dubious about his h's, was a good fellow, and always ready to stand by a friend. He was taking his millionaire a round of the studios, and especially to those in which there was something which had not 'come off,' according to his phraseology. The millionaire was exceptionally ignorant and outspoken, expressing his own opinion freely. 'What sort of a thing have we got here?' he said, walking up to the 'Black Prince;' 'uncommon nice lot of girls, certainly; but what are they all doing round the fellow out of the hospital? I say, is it something catching?' he cried, giving Mr. Sandford a dig with his elbow. Daniells laughed at this long and loudly, but it was the utmost the painter could do to conjure up a simple smile. He explained as well as he could that they were begging for life, and that the town was being sacked, a terrible event of which his visitor might have heard.

'Sacked,' said the millionaire; 'you mean that they're factory

hands and have got the sack, or that they have been just told they've got to work short time. I understand that; and it shows how human nature's just the same in all ages. But I can tell you that in Lancashire it's a nice rowing he'd have got instead of all these sweet looks. They would not have let him off like that, don't you think it. Wherever you get your women from, ours ain't of that kind.'

Sandford tried to explain what kind of a sack it was, but he did not succeed, for the rich man was much pleased with his own view.

'It's a fine picture,' said Daniells; 'Mr. Sandford, he's one of the very best of our modern masters, sir. He has got a great name, and beautiful his pictures look in a gallery with the others to set 'em off. Hung on the line in the Academy, and collected crowds. I shouldn't 'a been surprised if they'd 'ad to put a rail round it like they did to Mr. Frith's.'

He gave a wink to Mr. Sandford as he spoke, which made our poor painter sick.

'I've got one of Frith's,' said the millionaire.

'You'll 'ave got one of every modern artist worth counting when you've got Mr. Sandford's,' said Daniells, with a pat upon the shoulder to his wealthy client. That gentleman turned round, putting his hands into his pocket.

'I've seen some pictures as I liked better,' he said.

'Yes, I know. You've seen that one o' Millais', a regular stunner; but, God bless you, that's but one figger, and twice the money. Look at the work in that,' cried the dealer, turning his man round again, who gave the picture another condescending inspection from one corner to the other.

'I don't deny there's a deal of work in it,' he said, 'if it's painted fair with everything from the life; and I don't mind taking it to complete my collection; but I'll expect to have that considered in the price,' he added, turning once more on the painter. 'You see, Mr.—— (What's the gentleman's name, Daniells?) I am not death on the picture for itself. It's a fine showy picture, and I don't doubt 't'll look well when it's hung; but big things like that, as don't tell their story plain, they're not exactly my taste. However, it's all right since Daniells says so. The only man I know that goes in for that sort of thing thinks all the world of Daniells. "Go to Daniells," he says, "and you'll be all right." So I'll take the picture, but I'll expect a hundred or two off for ready money. I suppose there's discount in all trades.'

'Say fifty off, and you'll do very well, and get a fine thing cheap,' said Daniells.

Mr. Sandford's countenance had darkened. He was very amiable, very courteous, much indisposed to bargaining, but he felt as if his customer had jumped upon him, and it was all he could do to contain himself. 'I never make—' he began, with a little haughtiness most unusual to him; but before he had said the final words he caught Daniells' eye, who was making anxious signs to him. The picture dealer twisted his face into a great many contortions. He raised his eyebrows, he moved his lips, he made all kinds of gestures; at last, under a pretence of looking at a sketch, he darted between Mr. Sandford and the other, and in a hoarse whisper said 'Take it,' imperatively, in the painter's ear.

Mr. Sandford came to an astonished pause. He looked at the uncouth patron of art, and at the dealer, and at the picture, in turn. It was on his lips to say that nothing would induce him to let the 'Black Prince' go; but something stopped and chilled him—something, he could not tell what. He paused a moment, then retired suddenly to the back of the studio. 'I am not good at making bargains—I will leave myself,' he said, 'in Mr. Daniells' hands.'

'Ah, a bad system—a bad system. Every man ought to make his own bargains,' said the rich man.

Mr. Sandford did not listen. He began to turn over a portfolio of old sketches as if that were the most important thing in the world. He heard the voices murmur on, sometimes louder, sometimes lower, broken by more than one sharp exclamation, but restrained himself and did not interfere. Many thoughts went through his mind while he stooped over the big portfolio, and turned over, without seeing them, sketch after sketch. Why should he be bidden to 'take it' in that imperative way? What did Daniells know which made him interfere with such a high hand? He was tempted again and again to turn round, to put a stop to the negotiation, to say, as he had the best right, 'I'll have none of this;' but he did not do it, though he could not even to himself explain why.

He found eventually that Daniells had sold the picture for him at a reduction of fifty guineas from the original price, which was a thing of no importance. He hated the bargain, but the little sacrifice of the money moved him not at all. He recovered

his temper or his composure when the arrangement was completed, and smiled with a reserved acceptance of the millionaire's invitation to 'come to my place and see it hung,' as he showed the pair away. They were a well-matched pair, and Daniells was no doubt far better adapted to deal with such a man than a sensitive, proud artist, who did not like to have his toes trodden upon. After a while, indeed, Mr. Sandford felt himself quite able to smile at the incident, and shook off all his annoyance. He went in to luncheon with the cheque in his hand.

'I have sold the "Black Prince,"' he said, with a certain pleasure, even triumph, in his voice, remembering how Jack's friends had scoffed, if not at the picture, at least at the school to which it belonged.

'Ah!' cried Mrs. Sandford, half pleased, half regretful. 'I knew we should not have to give it house-room long.' She gave a glance round her as if she had heard something derogatory to the picture too.

'Who have you taken in and done for this time, father?' said Harry, who was given to banter.

'Was it that horrid man who came with Mr. Daniells?' cried Lizzie. 'Oh, papa, I should not have thought you would have sold a nice picture to such a man.'

'Art-patrons are like gift-horses, we must not look them in the mouth,' said the painter. 'There are quantities of h's, no doubt, to be found about the studio; but if we stood upon that——'

'So long as he doesn't leave out anything, either h's or 0's, in his cheque.'

Mr. Sandford felt slightly, unreasonably offended by any reference to the cheque. He gave it to his wife to send it to the bank, with an annoyed apprehension that she would make some remark upon the fifty guineas which were left out. But Mrs. Sandford had not been his wife for thirty years without being able to read the annoyance in his face. And though she did not know what was its cause she respected it, and said not a word about the difference which her quick eye saw at once. Could it be that which had vexed Edward? she asked herself—he was not usually a man who counted his pounds in that way.

The sending off of the 'Black Prince,' its packing and directing, and all the details of its departure, occupied him for some time. It was August, the beginning of holiday time, when, though never without a protest at the loss of the light days, even

a painter idles a little. And the youngest boy had come from school, and they were all going to the seaside. Mr. Sandford did not like the bustle of the moment. He proposed to stay in town for a few days after the family, and join them when they had settled down in their new quarters. Before they went, however, he had an interview with one of those friends of Jack's who were always about the house, and whose opinions on art were so different from Mr. Sandford's, which gave another touch of excitement to the household. The young fellow wanted to marry Lizzie, as had been a long time apparent to everybody but her father. There was nothing to be said against him except that he had not much money; but Mr. Sandford thought that young Moulton looked startled when he had to inform him that Lizzie would have no fortune. 'Of course that was not of the least consequence,' he said, but he gave his future father-in-law a curious and startled look.

'I think he was disappointed that there was no money,' the painter said afterwards to his wife.

'Oh, Edward! there is nothing mercenary about him!' said Mrs. Sandford; but she sighed and added, 'If there only had been a little for her—just enough for her clothes. It makes such a difference to a young married woman. It is hard to have to ask your husband for everything.'

'Did you think so, Mary?' he asked, with a smile but a sense of pain.

'I—but we were not like ordinary people, we were just two fools,' said the wife, with a smile which brightened all her face; 'but,' she added, shaking her head, 'we don't marry our daughters like that.'

'If she is half as good to him as you have been to me——'

'Oh, don't speak,' she said, putting up her hand to stop his mouth. 'Lance Moulton can never be the hundredth part so good as *my* husband.' But she stopped after this little outburst, and laughed, and again shaking her head repeated, 'But we don't marry our daughters like that.'

He felt inclined to ask, but did not, why?

When they all went away Mr. Sandford felt a little lonely, left by himself in the house, and perhaps it was that as much as anything else that set him thinking again. His wife had pressed the question of what Lizzie would want if she married young Moulton, who was only a journalist, on several occasions, until at

last they had both decided that a small allowance might be made to her in place of a fortune.

'Fifty pounds is the interest of a thousand, and that is what she will have when we die,' Mrs. Sandford said, who was not learned in per cents. 'I think we might give her fifty pounds a year, Edward.'

'Fifty pounds will not do much good,' he said.

'Not in their housekeeping, perhaps; but to have even fifty pounds will be a great thing for *her*. It will make her so much more comfortable.' Thus they concluded the matter between them, though not without a certain hesitation on Mr. Sandford's part. It was strange that he should hesitate. He had always been so liberal, ready to give. There was no reason why he should take fright now. There was the millionaire's cheque for the 'Black Prince,' which had just been paid into the bank, leaving a comfortable balance to their credit. There was no pressure of any kind for the moment. To those who had known what it was to await their next payment very anxiously in order to pay very pressing debts, and had seen the little stream of money flowing, flowing away, till it almost seemed to be on the point of disappearing altogether, the ease of having a considerable sum to their credit was indescribable; but Mrs. Sandford was more and more wrapped up in the children, and though never indifferent, yet a little detached in everyday thought and action from her husband. She did not ask him as usual about his commissions and his future work. She seemed altogether at ease in her mind about everything that was not the boys and the girls.

III.

The house was very quiet when they were all away. Merely to look into the drawing-room was enough to give anyone a chill. The sense of emptiness where generally every corner was full, and silence where there were always so many voices, was very depressing. Mr. Sandford consoled himself by a very hard day's work the first day of the absence of his family, getting on very well indeed and making a great advance in the picture he was painting —a small picture intended for one of his oldest friends. In the evening, as he had nothing else to occupy him, he moved about the studio, not going into the other parts of the house at all, and amused himself by making a little study of the moonlight as it

came in upon the plants in the conservatory. His house was in a quarter not fashionable, somewhere between St. John's Wood and Regent's Park, and consequently there was more room than is usual in London, a pretty garden and plenty of air. The effect of the moonlight and the black exaggerated shadows amused him. The thought passed through his mind that if perhaps he were one of the new-fangled school whom Jack's friends believed in, he would turn that unreal scene which was so indubitable a fact into a picture and probably make a great success as an impressionist—an idea at which he smiled with a milder but not less genuine contempt than the young impressionist might have felt for Mr. Sandford's school. He had half a mind to do it—to conceal his name and send it to one of the lesser exhibitions, so as afterwards to have a laugh at the young men, and prove to them how easy the trick was, and that any old fogey who took the trouble could beat them in their own way. Next morning, however, he threw the sketch into a portfolio, with a horror of the black and white extravagance which in the daylight offended his artist-eye, and which he had a suspicion was not so good after all, or so easy a proof of the facility of doing that sort of thing as he had supposed. And that day his work did not advance so quickly or so satisfactorily. He listened for the swing of the door at the other end of the passage which connected the studio with the house, though he knew well enough there was no one who could come to disturb him. There are days when it is so agreeable to be disturbed! And it was when he was painting in this languid way, and, as was natural, not at all pleasing himself with his work, that there suddenly and most distinctly came before him, as if someone had come in and said it, a thing—a fact, which strangely enough he had not even thought of before. When it first occurred to him his hand suddenly stopped work with an action of its own before the mind had time to influence it, and there was a sudden rush of heat to his head. He felt drops of moisture come out on his forehead; his heart for a second paused too. His whole being received a shock—a start. For the first moment he could scarcely make out what this extraordinary sudden commotion, for which his mind seemed only partially responsible, could be.

This was what had in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, occurred to the painter. He had, of course, been aware of it before without giving any particular importance to the fact. The

fact, indeed, in a precarious uncertain profession like his, in which a piece of good fortune might occur at any moment, was really not of the first importance; but it flashed upon him now in a significance and with a force which no such thing had ever held before. It was this—that when he had completed the little picture upon which he was working he had no other commission of any kind on hand. It sounds very prosaic to be a thing capable of giving such a tragic shock—but it was not prosaic. One can even conceive circumstances in which despair and death might be in such words; and to no one in Mr. Sandford's position could they be pleasant. Even if the fact represented no material loss, it would represent loss—which at his age could never be made up—loss of acceptance, loss of position, that kind of failure which is popularly represented as being 'shelved,' put aside as a thing that is done with; always a keen and grievous pang. But to our painter the words meant more than that. They meant a cutting off of the ground from under his feet, a sudden arrest of everything, a full stop, which in his fully flowing liberal life was a tragic horror and impossibility, a something far more terrible than death. It had upon him something of the character of a paralytic stroke. His hand, as we have said, stopped work sharply, suddenly; it trembled, and the brush with which he was painting fell from it; his limbs tottered under him, his under lip dropped, his heart gave a leap and then a dead pause. He stumbled backwards for a few steps and sank into a chair.

Well! it was only for a few moments that he remained under the influence of this shock. He picked himself up again and then picked up his brush and dried the perspiration from his forehead, and his heart with a louder beat went on again as if also crying out 'Well!' When he had recovered the power of thought—which was not for a moment or two—he smiled to himself and said 'What then?' Such a thing had happened before. In an artist's life there are often hair-breadth 'scapes, and now and then the most prosperous comes, as it were, to a dead wall—which is always battered through by a little perseverance or else opens by itself, melting asunder at the touch of some heaven-sent patron or happy accident, and so all goes on more prosperously than before. Mr. Sandford had passed through many such crises at the beginning of his career, and even when fully established had never been entirely certain from whence his next year's income was to come. But it had always come; there had never been any

real break in it—no failure of the continuity. He had seemed to himself to be as thoroughly justified in reckoning upon this continuity as any man in an office with so much a year. It might be a little more or a little less, and there was always that not unpleasant character of vagueness about it. It might even by a lucky chance for one fortunate year be almost doubled, and this had happened on rare occasions; but very seldom had there been any marked diminution in the yearly incomings. He said, 'Pooh, pooh,' to himself as he went up to his picture again smiling, with his brush in his hand; not for such a matter as that was he going to be discouraged. It was a thing that had happened before, and would no doubt happen again. He began to work at his picture, and went on with great spirit for perhaps a quarter of an hour, painting in (for he had no model that morning) a piece of drapery from a lay figure, and catching just the tone he wanted on the beautiful bit of brocade which figured in the picture as part of a Venetian lady's majestic dress. He was unusually successful, and quite succeeded for ten perhaps of these fifteen minutes in amusing himself and distracting his thoughts from that discovery. A bit of success is very exhilarating; it made him more confident than anything else could have done. But when he had got his effect his smile began to fade away, and his face grew grave again and his hand trembled once more. After a while he was obliged to give up and take a rest, putting down his palette and brush with a sort of impatience and relief in getting rid of them. Could he have gone straight to his wife and made her take a turn with him in the garden, or even talked it over with her in the studio, no doubt the impression would have died off: but she was absent, and he could not do that; most likely, indeed, if she had been at home she would have been absorbed in some calculation about Lizzie's affairs and would not have noticed his preoccupation at all.

He sat down again in that chair, and said once more to himself, 'What then?' and thought over the times in which this accident had happened before. But there now suddenly occurred to him another thought which was like the chill of an icy hand touching his heart. The same thing had happened before—but he had never been sixty before. He felt himself struck by this as if someone had given him a blow. It was quite true; he had called himself laughingly an old fogey, and when he and his old friends were together they talked a great deal about their age,

and about the young fellows pushing them from their seats. How much the old fellows mean when they say this, heaven knows. So long as they are strong and well they mean very little. It is an amusing kind of adoption of the folly of the young which seems to show what folly it is—a sort of brag in its way of their own superiority to all such decrepitudes, and easy power of laughing at what does not really touch them. But alone in their own private retirements, when a thought like this suddenly comes, a sharp and sudden realisation of age and what it means, no doubt the effect is different. For the moment Mr. Sandford was appalled by the discovery he had made, which had never entered his mind before. Ah! a pause in one's means of making one's living, a sudden stop in the wheels of one's life, is a little alarming, a little exciting, perhaps a discouragement, perhaps a sharp and keen stimulant at other times. At forty, even at fifty, it may be the latter; but at sixty!—this gives at once a new character to the experience—a character never apprehended before. His heart, which had begun to spring up with an elasticity natural to him, stopped again—nay, did not stop, but fell into a sudden dulness of beating, a subdued silence as if ice-bound. Sensation was too much for thought; his mind could not go into it; he only felt it, with a dumb pang which was deeper than either words or thought.

He could not do any more work that day. He tried again two or three times, but ended by putting down his palette with a sense of incapacity such as he thought he had never felt before. As a matter of fact he might have felt it a hundred times and attached no importance to it; he would have gone into the house, leaving his studio, and talked or read, or gone out for a walk, or to his club, or to see a friend, saying he did not feel up to work to-day, and there would have been an end of it. But he was alone and none of these distractions were possible to him. Luncheon came, however, which he could not eat, but sat over drearily, not able to get away from the impression of that thought. Afterwards it occurred to him that he would go and see Daniells and ask him—he was not quite clear what. He could not go to one of his friends and ask, 'Am I falling off—do you see it? Has my hand lost its cunning—am I getting old and is my mind going?' He could not ask anyone such questions as these. He smiled at it dolefully, feeling all the ridicule of the suggestion. He knew his mind was not going—but—— At last he made up his mind

what he would do. It was a long walk to Bond Street, but it was now afternoon and getting cooler, and the walk did him good. He reached Daniells' just before the picture dealer left off business for the day. He was showing someone out very obsequiously through the outer room all hung with pictures when he saw Sandford coming in. The stranger looked much interested and pleased when he heard Sandford's name.

'Introduce me, please,' he said, 'if this is the great Mr. Sandford, Daniells.'

'It is, Sir William,' said Daniells; and Sir William offered his hand with the greatest effusion. 'This is a pleasure that I have long desired,' he said.

Mr. Sandford was surprised—he was taken unawares, and the greeting touched his heart. 'After all, perhaps it isn't *that*,' he said to himself.

'What a piece of luck that you should have come in just then! Why, that's Sir William Bloomfield—just the very man for you to know.'

'Why for me more than another? I know his name, of course,' said Mr. Sandford, 'and he seems pleasant; but I'm too old for new friends.'

'Too old; stuff and nonsense! You're always a-harping on that string. He's just the man for you, just the man,' said Daniells, rubbing his hands.

Mr. Sandford was amused—perhaps a little pleased by this encounter; and the pressure of his heavy thoughts was stilled. He began to look at the new pictures which had come into the gallery, to admire some and criticise others. Daniells had the good sense always to listen to Mr. Sandford's criticisms with attention. They had furnished him with a great many telling phrases, and given to his own rough and practical knowledge of art a little occasional polish which surprised and overawed many of his customers. He listened admiringly now as usual.

'What a deal you do know, to be sure!' he said after a while. 'I don't know one of them that can make a thing clear like you, old man. It's a shame——' and here he coughed and broke off as if endeavouring to swallow his last words.

'What is a shame?' The broken sentence changed Mr. Sandford's mood again—the momentary cheer died away. 'Daniells,' he said, 'I want you to tell me what you meant the other day by

forcing me to accept that man's offer. Yes, you did. I should not have let him have the picture but for you.'

'Forcing him! Oh, that's a nice thing to say—the most obstinate fellow in all London!'

'Never mind that; I can see you are fencing. Come, why did you do it?'

Daniells paused for some time. He said a great many things to stave off his confusion, many half-things which involved others, and made his answer perhaps more clear than if he had put it directly into words.

'I see,' Mr. Sandford said at last, 'you thought it very unlikely that I should sell it at all to anyone who knew better.'

'It ain't that. They don't know half enough, hang 'em! or they wouldn't run after a booby like Blank and neglect you.'

Mr. Sandford smiled what he felt to be a very sickly smile. 'We must let Blank have his day,' he said, 'I don't grudge it him; but I'd like to know why my chances are so bad. I have always sold my pictures.'

Daniells gave him a sudden look, as if he would have spoken; then thought better of it, and said nothing.

'I have had no reason to complain,' Mr. Sandford continued; 'I have done very well on the whole. I have never had extravagant prices like Em or En.'

'No,' said Daniells; 'you see, you've never made an 'it. You've gone on doing good work, and you've always done good work. I'd say that if I were to die for it; but you've never made an 'it.'

'I suppose that's true; but you need not put it so very frankly,' said the painter, with a laugh.

'Frankly! I've got occasion to put it frankly; and I say it's a d——d shame—that's what it is,' cried Daniells, raising his voice.

'You've had occasion? Now that we're on this subject, I should like to get to the bottom of it. You've had occasion?'

'Well, of course,' said the picture dealer, 'if you drive me into a corner. I'm in the middle of everything, and I hear what people say——'

'What do they say? That I've lost my sense of colour like old Millrain, or fallen into my dotage like——'

'Nonsense, Sandford! You know it's nothing of the kind. Don't talk such confounded nonsense. You are painting quite as

well as ever, you know you are. They—people don't care for that sort of thing. It's too good for them, or you're too good for them, or I don't know what.'

Mr. Sandford kept smiling—not for pleasure; he was conscious of that sort of fixed smile that might be thought a sneer, at those people for whom he was too good. 'And you've had occasion,' he said, 'to prove this?'

'Don't smile at me like that—don't look like that. If you knew how I've argued and put it all before 'em—— I've said a hundred times if I've said once, "Sandford! why, Sandford's one of the best. There isn't a better educated painter, not in England. You can't pick a hole in his pictures, try as you like."'

'Am I indeed so much discussed?' said the victim. 'I did not know I was of such importance. And on what ground have you held this discussion, Daniells? There must have been some occasion for it. I don't see anything here of mine.'

'Look here,' cried the picture dealer, roused, 'if you won't believe me.' He opened the door of an inner room, into which Mr. Sandford followed him. And there, with their faces turned to the wall, were three pictures in a row. The shape of them gave him a faint, uneasy feeling. By this time Daniells had been wound up to self-defence, and thought of the painter's feelings no more.

'Look 'ere,' he said, 'I shouldn't have said a word if you had let well alone—but look 'ere.' Before one of the pictures was visible Mr. Sandford knew what he was going to see. Three pictures of his own, of a kind for which he had been famous—cabinet pictures, for which there had always been the readiest market. He recognised them all with a faintness that made his brain swim and the light go from his eyes. They seemed so familiar, like children. At the first glance, without looking at them, he knew what they were and all about them, and had a sick longing that the earth would open and swallow them, and hide his shame, for so it seemed.

'If that don't show how I've trusted you, nothing can,' said the dealer. 'I thought they were as safe as the bank. I bought them all on spec, thinking I'd get a customer as soon as they were in the shop—and, if you 'll believe me, nobody 'll have them. I can't tell what people are thinking of, but that's the truth.'

Mr. Sandford stood with the light going out of his eyes, gazing

straight before him. 'In that case—in that case,' he began, 'you should—I must——'

'I say, don't take it like that, old man. It's the fortune of war. One up and another down. It can't be helped, don't you know. Sandford, I say! why, it 'll come all right again in half a dozen years or so. It 'll come all right after a time.'

'What did you say?' said Mr. Sandford, dazed. Then he answered vaguely, 'Oh yes; all right—all right.'

'What's the matter? I've been a wretched fool. Sandford, here, I say, have a glass of wine.'

'There's nothing the matter. It seems to me a little—cold. I know—I know it's not a cold day; but there's a chill wind about, penetrating—thanks, Daniells, you've cleared up my problem very well. Now, I think—I think I understand.'

'Don't go now, Sandford; don't go like this.'

'I want,' he said, smiling again, 'to think it over. Much obliged to you, Daniells, for helping me to understand.'

'Sandford, don't go like this. You make me awfully anxious —I'm sure you're ill. I can't let you go out of my place, looking so dreadfully ill, without someone with you.'

'Someone with me! I hope you don't mean to insult me, Daniells. I am perfectly well—a little startled, but that's all. I shall go and take a walk, and blow away the cobwebs, and—think it over. That's the best thing. I'm much obliged to you, Daniells. Good-bye.'

'Have a hansom, at least,' Daniells said.

'No hansom,' Mr. Sandford answered, turning upon the dealer with a curious smile. He even laughed a little—low, but quite distinct. 'No, I'll have no hansom. Good-bye, Daniells, good-bye.'

And in a minute he was gone. The picture dealer went out to the door after him, and followed him with his eyes until his figure was lost in the crowd. Daniells was alarmed. He blamed himself for his frankness. 'I never thought he'd have taken it to heart like that,' he said to himself. 'Yes, I did; or I might have done—he's awful proud. But I'm 'asty. I can't help it; I'm always doing things I'm sorry for. Anyhow, he must have found it out some time, sooner or later,' the dealer said to himself; and this philosophy silenced his fears.

(*To be continued.*)

IN THE DARK CONTINENT.

When we made up our minds to carry the war into Africa (for we were engaged in a bitter and internecine conflict with that vile foe winter), we selected Algiers as our port of entry, and fixed the headquarters of our projected campaign at Mustapha Supérieur. A fleet ship bore us o'er the bounding main; to be more precisely definite, the steamer 'Abd-el-Kader,' an eminently respectable, though I venture to think somewhat antiquated packet-boat, belonging to the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique. I call her fleet on the authority of the notice-board conspicuously displayed in the windows of the company's office at Marseilles, where she was described in distinct terms as *rapide*; but the usual breakdown overtaking her engine in the Golfe du Lion (which the English people insist upon absurdly describing as the Gulf of Lyons, a very different matter), we were several hours late in our arrival at Algiers, where we found ourselves in the smallest small hours of the second morning out. Considerable researches into the question of the hours or days occupied by the passage in the printed time tables of ocean liners, indeed, as subsequently corrected by a comparative study of the interval actually occupied by the voyage itself, incline me to believe that steamship companies must be entirely composed of the most sanguine of mankind, so lenient is their calculation of the adverse chances. Add to this delay the deplorable fact that the bounding main bounded that night with more than its accustomed freedom and buoyancy, and I think I may leave the fertile imagination of the candid reader himself to suggest unaided the correct conclusion that we all enjoyed thirty-six hours of almost speechless misery on the heaving bosom of the blue Mediterranean. Even the epithet blue I apply to it, as the grammarians say, proleptically; for at the exact moment when our fleet bark steered between Majorca and Minorca I felt absolutely careless in my own mind whether its precise colour might be brown, green, yellow, or even brilliant orange. Our one interest in the hydrography of the Mediterranean was confined for the moment to the precise position of its southern shore. We lay awake all night (by kind permission of the very courteous and

obliging officers), in the main saloon, and prayed for the lights of the Dark Continent.

About two o'clock in the morning of a starlight night, we were well abreast of the town of Algiers, with its gas-lamps defining for us the position of the clambering city on the steep hillside; and half an hour later we steered into the harbour, secure henceforth from further tossing, and anxious for the grey dawn to lift the shroud of darkness and discover to our view what Arab writers poetically describe, with true oriental love of jewellery and tinsel, even in figures of speech, as the 'pearl set in emeralds.' By half-past five all the world was on deck to see the sun rise over the shores of Africa. The sun, however, appeared to be but imperfectly informed of our polite desire for his immediate presence; for he delayed his rising till nearly seven, which was in fact the hour already announced for his probable appearance in the Algerian almanacs.

When the dawn *did* come, and display to our eyes at last that wished-for Algiers in all its glory, the sight was indeed one never to be forgotten. I'm aware, of course, that by a polite fiction of modern society we are all supposed to have been everywhere and seen everything already; that only a summer trip to the sources of the Congo, or a playful picnic party in the untraversed wilds and steppes of Central Asia is nowadays considered worthy of serious description by the special correspondent. Everybody, we say, has been to Algiers. And yet, when one really comes to think of it, how many people we all of us know, not wholly unworthy of polite consideration, who have hitherto confined their entire attention to Europe, Asia, Australia, and America; who have never set foot, like Stanley and ourselves, on the advanced outposts of the African continent! I refuse to believe, for my part, that everybody intuitively knows all about Algiers. I have seen and heard a great many things since I came here myself concerning all of which I was previously ignorant; and I incline to suspect that many other persons, say in the remoter parts of Connemara, or the distant recesses of the Isle of Skye, know as little of Algeria, its ways and its manners, as I myself did before I got here.

Picture to yourself, then, a low range of pretty green hills, some thousand feet at best above sea level—mere outliers of the broken main chain of the Atlas, which rises beyond them in tall blue peaks to close in the view to landward—descending steeply

to the water's edge, and clad from head to foot, under a brilliant sky, in one luxuriant mantle of African verdure. On this side, a sweeping semicircular bay, supposed by its admirers, like every other curve of shore known to civilised humanity, closely to resemble the Bay of Naples; on the other side, beyond the low mole and old Turkish lighthouse, the sharp and clear-cut horizon of the purple Mediterranean—its colour, this time, guaranteed after nature. In the foreground, a great white Oriental city, gleaming like a quarry of purest Carrara marble in the full eye of the sun; a city packed close with square Arab houses, like figs in a box; a dense staircase, apparently, of superimposed steps, each rising in terraces one above another, with no room, one would think, to stick a pin in anywhere between one row and another. There must, no doubt, be streets, or at least alleys somewhere in that tangled mass, we shrewdly suspect; but from the deck of the 'Abd-el-Kader,' at any rate, the eye of faith can alone discern them. You would say, a town hewn from the solid rock, or moulded entire, in tier after tier, from plaster of Paris, so compact and densely fitted together are its component portions.

For the first few minutes after dawn discovers it, we are conscious of nothing but a generally pervading sense of whiteness and density; we see but a single massive block of whitewashed architecture, set wedge-shaped in the midst of its tall green frame of hills and foliage. But as we look and look, delighted and surprised at the strange sight, the light grows clearer, and the picture begins slowly to break itself up, bit after bit, into its component elements. We make out to the left the wonderfully vivid and picturesque panorama of the Mustapha suburbs, beyond the wall —a series of steep hill-sides all dotted about among the bowery greenery of palm and pomegranate, with white Moorish villas, tall grey French châteaux, big-domed religious buildings, and old Turkish palaces, a garden of pleasure-houses in a pleasant land. We look to the left towards the ancient Algerian pirate harbour, a calm cove formed by a small rocky islet on whose summit still stands the octagonal lighthouse that guided the corsairs safely home from their cruel cruises. In front of us rises Algiers itself, that marvellous mixture of European civilisation and Arab squalor, dividing itself up now before our eyes into its two main component portions, the modern mercantile city raised upon a magnificent row of arches by the quays and the port, and the close and narrow-built native quarter, which climbs by endless lanes and steps

and staircases up the steep short front of the beautiful green Sahel.

We have just time to take it all in vaguely in the full flush of its virgin novelty, that first glimpse of the Orient, before the small boat comes alongside, manned by three grinning Arabs, in cloak and hood, to row us ashore to the inevitable custom-house. We have been able to note already the quaint admixture of things Oriental and things Western, of things Mohammedan and things Christian, of things commercial and things antique, in the long rows of stately banks and warehouses on the Boulevard de la République, the white dome and graceful tiled minaret of the Mosquée de la Pêcherie, hard by the port, the semi-Moorish, semi-Byzantine turrets of the French cathedral that towers in the background; the palms and bamboos and formal alleys of the broad Place Bresson, the tram-cars and omnibuses, and mingled crowd of the Place du Gouvernement. And then our Arabs bundle us unceremoniously without further warning into their big flat boat, and we land at last, three amateur Columbuses, to explore for ourselves the soil of Africa.

At the quay, the regulation swarm of dirty, unwashed Moors quarrels for the possession of ourselves and our luggage, for the descendants of the Algerine corsairs still live on the exploitation of the Christian stranger, though in a more peaceable fashion than their seafaring ancestors. 'Olim Marte, nunc arte,' says the proud motto of the Highland Society, which a brilliant Lowlander, smarting from the hotels at Killiecrankie, once wittily translated 'formerly robbers, now thieves.' I should say from a cursory examination of the Algerine Arab at the present day, that the two staple industries in which all his capital is invested appear to be begging and bag-snatching. Yet what a picturesque and delightful object he is after all; and how long he will beg and how far he will carry your bag or parcel on the off-chance of earning twopence halfpenny at the end of the journey! Once did he hold the glorious West in fee, and Christian powers, from Vienna to Washington, were glad to buy him off with a disgraceful tribute; nowadays, his fee for any distance is twenty-five centimes, and you can buy him off, if anxious to be rid of him, for a couple of sous, French bronze currency.

We were safe from his extortions, however, ourselves, for Joseph had taken charge of us—Joseph the Maltese, an institution of Algiers much to be commended to the expectant visitor.

Joseph is the commissionaire or valet-de-place who meets the boats on their arrival; an eminently respectable man, in a tweed suit, which commands success, and with a jovial, good-humoured manner which at least deserves it. He speaks English like a native, and Arabic like an Arab, besides French, Spanish, Italian, and his aboriginal Maltese dialect. Joseph took us in hand the moment we landed—he has no surname in particular that anybody can hear of—and piloted us safe through the swarms of Arabs, through the dangers of the custom-house, and through the wiles and deceits of the Algerian cabmen. So in ten minutes from the time of our landing, thanks to our Maltese friend and protector, we were safely under way for Mustapha Supérieur, along the zigzag road that leads up the hillside.

And what a road it is, that wonderful highway, with its first fresh glimpse of oriental life, from the quays of Algiers to the hilltop at Mustapha! Through the Rue Bab-Azzoun, a broad French boulevard, arcaded on either side like the Rue de Rivoli, and crammed with Arabs and Moors, mules, horses, and donkeys, in picturesque confusion of east and west, and north and south, and everywhere. Past the Place Bresson, with its well-kept garden of sub-tropical plants, and its imposing brand-new statue-topped theatre of the true meretricious Parisian type—a fragment of the Haussmannesque style of architecture, planted bodily down among the mosques and minarets. Past handsome shops where the latest Paris bonnets and Palais Royal jewellery court the favourable attention of silent Moorish women, who creep stealthily by in noiseless slippered feet, and with faces covered up to the eyes by a thin white yashmak. Past tiny dark holes, where Jew and Arab sit cross-legged on their divans, discussing the weather and the crops, and the price of coffee, or where Moorish tradesmen, in quaint dirty clothes, ply their tasks openly before the eyes of all comers, as though 'the secrets of the trade' had for them no meaning. Past the crowded little market-place, where grave-faced men, in turbans innocent of the cleansing wash-tub, wrangle with negroes in long dingy white robes, more or less distinctly grimed and travel-stained, over the state of the orange market, or the current quotation for fresh bananas. And so ever onward to the town walls at the Porte d'Isly, through a teeming world of ever fresh amusement, each group of which recalls at once all the quaint old pictures of eastern life one has seen a thousand times from childhood upward—yet all here true,

and all now realised. It is the 'Street Scene in Cairo' we have gazed at for years at each successive Academy, galvanised, as it were, into actual reality; it is the 'Arab Women by the Wayside' we have admired at the Institute for so many seasons, rolling their black eyes at us *in propriâ personâ* with unabashed freedom, and twitching their veils coquettishly over their hidden faces, as who should say with an arch side-glance, 'Ah, poor dog of a Christian, you don't know what a treat you're really losing.'

And yet it is the Orient of art with a difference—which difference can be summed up in one word—*dirt*. Wearers and dress are more squalid by far than the Easterns of our fancy; we imagined them dirty, perhaps, but not nearly so ragged, sordid, and miserable. Few of those solemn, grave, white-cloaked Orientals are here who figure in the familiar and brilliantly coloured pictures of our childhood; in their place we find plenty of Arabs of the baser sort, in unwashen burnous and well-begrimed turban, unconscious of the tub, looking as though they descended straight from the unsophisticated ages before the invention of soap, and had forgotten to inquire for that new commodity since its first appearance in their belated community. In order to imitate the general get-up of the Arab at large whom one meets in the street, the following would prove, I flatter myself, a fairly accurate recipe:—First, omit for a fortnight or two beforehand your customary ablutions, and knock your legs about freely with a stick on the shins in order to acquire the necessary roughness. Next, endue yourself from head to foot in a very dirty and ancient nightdress, which you might prepare to perfection by mangling it, to begin with, on the roadway with the garden roller. Then cover yourself above with an old and musty cornsack, cutting a hole on top to stick your head through, and a couple more at the sides for your arms to get out by. Throw over all a sheet of dirty sacking, the cover of a cotton-bale, or any other coarse woven cloak that happens to come handy. Leave your legs bare, but thrust your feet into a pair of very ancient and grubby slippers, hopelessly down at heel, selected with a unique eye to their antiquity and dinginess. Finally, wrap a soiled towel, that has seen long service in foreign parts, round your head turbanwise, and let your uncombed locks hang down behind picturesquely but shaggily on your stooping shoulders. The get-up of the character is then complete. The costume will not, perhaps, succeed at a fancy dress ball as genuine Arab, but in the

streets of Algiers I can guarantee with confidence that it would escape detection by the most experienced native.

Yet how picturesque they are, these dirty and ill-dressed but stately orientals, sitting unmoved on their sturdy small donkeys, and puffing their cigarettes, or lying about unconcernedly on the dusty roadside, to the still further begriming of their much-begrimed habiliments! We never tire of watching them as we drive along the road—Arabs and Moors, Kabyles and negroes, one endless raree-show of African costûmes, customs, and population.

Outside the gate, where the Arab children sit and beg under cover of selling oranges and prickly pears, the road mounts slowly by endless zigzags, through a region of villas, gardens, and mansions, to the delightful suburb of Mustapha Supérieur. This is the chosen home of the winter visitor, the happy hunting-ground of the pulmonary Briton, the land of pensions, hotels, and furnished houses, the Mentone or San Remo to which Algiers itself is little more now than the Marseilles or the Genoa. Here white and shining villas of rococo design stand dotted about in picturesque confusion along the green hill-side, each surrounded by its own pretty garden of lemon trees, bananas, date-palms, and pomegranates, with exquisite views over sea and land, backed up in the distance, during the winter months, by the snow-clad peaks of the Djurjura mountains. Mustapha, indeed, has now become a second Cannes; but the African sky, the richer vegetation, the Arab wayfarers, the oriental costumes, and, above all, the prevailing Saracenic architecture of all the most conspicuous and handsome houses, give it a peculiar and pleasing note of its own, which marks it off at once as something quite separate from the delightful but all too cockneyfied winter resorts of the beautiful Riviera.

In the matter of a dwelling-place, we fell upon our feet. Pure chance led us at the very first throw to what I don't hesitate to say is, all things put together, the most delightful and best situated place of entertainment in all Algiers. The Villa du Palmier, at whose open window I write these lines, stands at the very summit of the Mustapha hills, in a high, breezy, and airy situation, fronting the sun and the summer, with its pretty Moorish façade and its flat terrace, and overlooking a dear little steep ravine, whose sides are clothed with orange-trees and loquats, while the stream in the centre is half hidden from the view by a tangled brake of great Mediterranean cane-reed. The

villa itself is an old Arab country-house, of quaint Mauresque architecture, and whitewashed walls, remodelled and in part rebuilt to suit English tastes; and nothing could be more picturesque or pretty than its graceful salon, or more comfortable and quaint than its cosy bedrooms, each furnished more or less as a living-room for guests. The tall white front, the sweet little Saracenic arcaded windows, the horseshoe arches, the oriental tiles, the Indian matting, the bowls of roses, iris, and geranium, and last, not least, the afternoon tea in the dainty little drawing-room, all unite to fulfil one's ideal of comfort in a foreign land and in a warm climate. The house and its arrangements are well presided over by an English lady, and the impalpable tokens of a cultivated taste and a refined nature pervade every detail of its management and its decoration. If any dyspeptic or cantankerous creature fails to find himself comfortable at the Villa du Palmier I venture to say the state of that person's digestive system calls for the immediate and most earnest attention of his medical adviser.

Life in Algiers, I need hardly say, does not palpitate with actuality. The daily papers disturb our dreams but little. 'What day of the week is it?' is a frequent inquiry, decided, as a rule, by somebody recalling to mind the fact that the first was Monday, or that on Friday we had green peas and new potatoes the first time for dinner. Yet it is a delightful winter resort for all that, and who in these days would not readily stop away from Trafalgar Square, with its fogs and its fighting? Yet there is plenty to do in Algiers in its way, if you choose to do it. The town, to which an omnibus, miscalled a tram, descends half-hourly with a fearsome precipitancy, is a perpetual fountain of Oriental joys to the attentive eyes of the northern observer. Halfway down the slope one passes the little French village of Mustapha, with the snow-white arcade of its summer palace, and the quaint front of its small Roman Catholic church, each perfect types in their own way of this curious Gallicised Mohammedan Algeria. The palace stands in its own pretty gardens of palm tree and banana, a mass of domes and turrets and pointed Moorish arches, a dream of the Bosphorus, solidified into fact and carven stone on the north shore of Africa. The church has grafted itself on an Arab house, whose central courtyard, once open to the sky, has been covered in with a roof and a few dim skylights so as to produce a curious square hall or nave, still bearing traces everywhere of its

Moorish origin. Nothing could be prettier, quainter, or more incongruous than this queer little basilica, with its lower tier of blind Saracenic arches, and its upper gallery of open arcade-work, Moslem in conception, design, and ornament, but overlaid in part with graceful symbols of Christian art and funny little figures of saint or angel. A chancel has been obtained by building out two stained glass windows through a room on one side; and so the old courtyard, with its rich tiles in string-courses and masses for its main decoration, has been turned against its will into one of the prettiest and most original places of worship I have ever beheld in the course of my wanderings. But how little one can trust the average guide-book! Even the usually intelligent and discriminative *Guide-Joanne* merely remarks of this unique and interesting little bit of ecclesiastical architecture, that the church is 'humbly installed in a Moorish cottage.'

As for the town itself, I have never known any town anywhere so fascinating and absorbing. As a rule, I don't care for our human anthills—mere towns, as such, are disappointing; but Algiers is something much more than a mere town, it is a civilisation apart, or rather two distinct types of civilisation, living side by side in seeming outward harmony, yet each unchanged in its essential features. You may go down to the quays, and there see the railway station, which forms the focus and central meeting-point of that marvellous railway system, thousands of miles long, that penetrates all the mountain ranges of North Africa, from the Mediterranean to the desert and from the frontier of Morocco to the Goletta of Tunis; and then you may mount to the Rue de Constantine, and see a caravan of laden camels setting out, as camels have set out for five thousand years, on their toilsome journey towards the sand-wastes of Sahara. You may buy the 'Life of Darwin,' or the new 'Flora of Algeria,' at the modern French bookshop in the Place du Gouvernement, or you may turn aside into the tortuous lanes and alleys of the old Arab town, with their overhanging houses and open court-yards, and chaffer for goods with the embroiderer who works in gold and silver thread at his own doorway, or the dealer in quaintly-shaped Kabyle pottery, too common and cheap, picturesque as it is, to have found its way as yet to that devourer and destroyer of all native art, the London market. And in the squares and boulevards of the new French town you may behold all the different elements of the complex population mingled

together in marvellous and endlessly interesting confusion, from the sea to the desert, and from the mountains to the valleys.

On Sundays, when the band plays in the great square by the Mosquée de la Pêcherie, what infinite variety of feature and manners one sees in the crowd! The town seems half Toulon, half Timbuctoo. Here is a group of Arabs, with their faces evidently washed for the occasion, strolling up and down in their long white burnouses, and gazing on listlessly at the mongrel mass as though the whole world, and the rest of the solar system too, for that matter, had been specially created for their private amusement. Here, next them, stand a noisy lot of bare-legged Mohammedan street boys, in rough-and-ready costume, and with dark bronzed faces, but handsome and aristocratic-looking for all their rags, and puffing their cigarettes, like the sons of the faithful, with extreme dignity. On the chairs close by Parisian ladies, in the hat of the season, mingle with Jewesses from the narrow alleys of the old town, clad in the ugly dress of their race—a small black skull-cap, a handkerchief tied most unbecomingly under the jaws and chin, and a long straight robe that reaches to the feet, like a compromise between a tea-gown and an ordinary night-dress. French officers in every variety of uniform strut and pose before the admiring public; Zouaves twist their pointed moustaches with experienced fingers; Spanish nursemaids smile benignly from their lace mantillas on the British sailor; great stout-limbed negroes from beyond the desert, in Arab costume, bandy words good-humouredly with neatly-dressed Moors, or cheapen fares against Provençal busmen; while in and out among the ever-moving crowd, the women of Islam, close-veiled to the painted eyes, glide noiselessly past with their slippered feet, or lead in their hands some dark-eyed and olive-cheeked Arab baby girl, too small as yet to conceal her face from the prying gaze of the inquisitive infidel.

On one such Sunday we were much amused at watching a couple of eminently respectable old Moorish gentlemen, who stood in picturesque attitudes, as if waiting for some painter to commit them to canvas, at a busy corner near the Archbishop's palace. As they chatted and attitudinised, a Mohammedan lady of the better class went tripping saucily by, clad at first sight to all outward seeming as the followers of the Prophet ought ever to clothe themselves. But the good old Moors, sniffing innovation in the very sweep of her walk, gazed down with mingled amuse-

ment and contempt at the hussy's feet. My eyes followed their glance instinctively, and in a moment I saw what had attracted their attention. That wretched innovator's nether extremities were positively encased in neat Parisian high-heeled *bottines*, above whose bronzed top, between the shoe itself and the baggy Turkish trousers that encased her limbs, one could just catch a glimpse of an exceedingly Frankish-looking crimson silk stocking! I don't understand colloquial Arabic, at least when rapidly and hotly delivered, but I know exactly what those two good conservative old Moors were saying that moment. One of them looked up at the other and remarked, 'Well, I declare, did you ever see anything like that in your life now?' And his neighbour answered him, in very choice Arabic, 'You may say so, indeed! with their heels and their hairpins! I wonder what on earth the women are coming to!'

It is in the mosques alone, however, that one can quite escape the European element, and feel oneself really in the very thick and core of Islam. There are three or four large ones, and several smaller shrines of Mohammedan saints, scattered up and down through the gleaming white city. The Great Mosque, that fronts the harbour and the islet, is the oldest in Africa, dating back at least to the eleventh century; a stately building, without and within, instinct with the very inmost spirit of orientalism. Its long façade towards the Rue de la Marine presents to the eye a covered gallery of fourteen huge dentelated Moorish arches, supported by solid white marble columns, and fronted by a fountain of antique workmanship. Within, the mosque derives a wonderful charm of solemnity and grandeur from its unique arrangement into long series of aisles, each separated from the next by huge square pillars, but opening into it by pointed and exquisitely toothed Saracenic arches. A dim light, admitted from the courtyard alone, pervades the place, most favourable to prayer and to the slumber of the faithful. A more impressive interior it would be difficult to find; the long perspective of aisle behind aisle, seen through the interlacing archways and colonnades, makes the vast hall seem even vaster and more spacious than its real size, and throws up in solemn and picturesque relief the stately figures of the white-robbed worshippers.

In spite of the dirt, the many strange perfumes, the narrow lanes, the insanitary alleys, it is impossible not to spend much of one's time in poking about these quaint old nooks and corners of

Algiers, with their strange little shrines, their antique carved doorways, their exquisite tile-work, their square courts, and their delightful mixture of all human varieties. On one side it is a Moorish house that attracts your attention, with its dim porch and its seat for strangers niched in the recess of a horseshoe arch, where the master of the house discusses with his friends the state of Africa and the affairs of Islam. Through the gallery beyond you may just catch a peep of the central court, with its two arcaded stories, one above the other, richly carved, and its priceless tiles of quaint ancient patterns. On the other side it is a tiny native shop, ensconced in a dark hole in the thickness of the wall, where some Moorish tradesman presses upon your notice, in lisping French, the rough but graceful hand-made pottery which the Kabyle women of the mountains turn out in quantities, unaided by the wheel, on the pretty traditional gourd-like models. Meanwhile, little Arab boys press round you eagerly, and endeavour almost to snatch your purchases from your hands that they may earn two sous by carrying them home for you; while Moorish ladies of uncertain propriety, Fatma or Halima, Mouni or Meriem, ogle you coquettishly from under their dark-stained eyebrows, or flirt most unmistakably at the Christian stranger with the loose flying edges of their white outer garment. So this strange world wags on from day to day, with the sea in front and the desert behind, crowded with the folk from the mountains, the oases, the plateaux, the villages, the towns and seaports of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. To judge by the stir, and movement, and bustle in the streets, you would say a city of a million souls, the metropolis and mart of some great empire, not a mere petty provincial French-African capital, numbering at best, in its tight-packed lanes, a hundred thousand inhabitants, European and indigenous.

For the scenery I cannot honestly speak quite so enthusiastically. It is pretty, of course—with hills and sea, and bay and mountains, it could hardly be otherwise—but it isn't much more than just what one usually means by pretty. In the matter of pure natural beauty, indeed, Algiers cannot be named in the same day, I do not say, with Naples or Monte Carlo, with Torquay or Edinburgh, but with the average scenery of the Riviera watering-places. There is nothing here to compare with the glorious views from Californie at Cannes, from the Château at Nice, from the Corniche at Turbia, from the ruins that crown the conical

summit of the old castle hill at my beloved Hyères. Nor can the coast be put into competition for a moment with the environs of Marseilles or the exquisite neighbourhood of Toulon and Cap Sicier. I would liken it rather to the neighbourhood of Genoa, or the Bay of Llandudno from the Great Orme's Head. It is the vividness and picturesque orientalism of the town that makes up for the want of higher romantic beauty in the country and surroundings. And when once one has reconciled oneself to the quiet style of scenery in the green ravines and lanes of the Sahel, one finds the country walks everywhere charming by their flowers, and creepers, and foliage, their frequent vistas of the blue sea, or the densely-packed town on the distant hill-side, their views into the grounds of white Moorish châteaux, and their occasional glimpses of Arab life in hut or village, in field or vineyard. You might go for miles in Devonshire or Provence before ever you came upon a tiny domed mosquelet in a close-set hedge of prickly pear, or lighted on a diligence fresh in from the villages of Grand Kabylia, its canopied second storey packed tight as it can hold with a living freight of sober and dignified Arab passengers. If these delights thy soul may move, come live in Africa and be an Algerian Howadji.

SPRING AND SUMMER BIRDS.

THE time of the coming of birds extends with us from the middle of March to the close of May. Their coming is like their going —silently, and in the night. For it is one of the mysteries of migration that it is performed in the darkness, and generally against a head wind. When the first celandine lights up the meadow, we know that in a few days the swallows will be skimming over it. The turning up of the brown land brings the wheatear, and the first flowering elm the chiff-chaff. The pink-scaled buds of the beech tell us when to look for the willow-warbler, and now the greenfinch begins to troll to the sun. Each flower has its bird, and so surely as the starry gems march up the way, so the bird procession silently comes. On some March morning we see the vanishing white form of the fallow-chat. The snow streaks have not yet gone from the fences, and only the black ash-buds are showing. Catkins hang on the hazel, and the first green plume-tufts on the larch. The wheatear is the pioneer of the birds. It returns infallibly to its old haunts—to limestone wall, to boulder-strewn escarpment, to sand-dunes by the sea. By the side of the ploughed field the bird is essentially of the wall; soon in one of its niches it will have its pale-blue eggs. A 'chat' in its every movement; now it is perched on the highest stone of the fence; as we approach it shakes out its white tail, dives, and reappears a dozen yards further on. The other day we saw some of the earliest arrivals of this species among the arenaria, and flitting, flycatcher-like, from off the rocks after insects in the sun. This is Tennyson's 'sea-blue bird of March,' and everywhere among the sea-pinks it causes a new light and a new interest in every stranded boulder.

On some April morning we walk out in the fields, and are told by the willow-wrens, very plaintively, and very prettily, that if we please spring has really come. From the top of a beech or elm comes the soft, mellow song, which tells of the returning sun. It is essentially one of the sounds of the time of the coming of birds, and almost every tree in the woods has its willow-wren. An incessantly active little bird, it loses no time in tuning its song after his arrival. Where the early orchis, the violet, and

the cowslip bloom, the yellow wrens have their nest. This is domed, and snugly lined with feathers, upon which six or seven white eggs are laid covered with pale red spots. When this is approached the little birds become violently agitated, giving out at intervals a melancholy cry. Almost earlier than the willow-wren in its coming is the chiff-chaff. It sees the first primrose peep through the dead leaves, and just as it is almost the first to come so it is the last to go. Upon the steep banks of the Greenwash is a copse thickly sheltering, running ivy covering its floor. Tangled thicket and brushwood are there, and in this locality we hear the first notes of the bird. These can never amount to a song, but are emitted with a vivacious cheerfulness that is always welcome. With the returning days of April the swallows come again and utter their pleasing twitter in the warm air. First the martin, then the little bank swallow, the true swallows, and the high-flying, loud-screeching swift. How the swallows and the warm April showers remind us of each other, and how each brings abundance of insects! The purple back, the long forked tail, the skimming flight—how familiar are these in the sweet birds of return, and the bronzed underparts touched with the glow of the African sun! When the meadows are alive with May-flower the cry of the cuckoo comes up from the woods. Our cuckoo is a solitary, unsocial bird, and is mobbed by a screeching throng immediately it makes its appearance. Even to most country people the cuckoo is but a wandering voice, and is rarely seen. It seldom arrives before April 15, and then takes about ten days to travel up the country. Upon its first arrival it has a call quite distinct from the well-known 'cuckoo' which it gives out later in the season. This is frequently heard very early in the morning, and when the birds are pairing. The number of males seems greatly to preponderate over that of females, and we have frequently seen one of the latter chased by six or seven of the former, these flying and calling together. This pairing cry may be represented by a succession of the initial syllables cuck-cuck-cuck, dying away in a prolonged oo-o-o-o. In districts sparsely covered with trees, the nest of the meadow-pipit is the one oftenest chosen by the bird in which to deposit its egg. Of these it lays a series, though never more than one in the same nest, or, at least, at the same time. This we suspected and afterwards confirmed by dissecting a bird, the ovarium of which contained five eggs, though in widely different stages of maturity. It is now well known that the cuckoo

does not actually lay its eggs in the nests of other birds, but conveys them thither in its bill. Last year a cuckoo deposited an egg in the nest of a meadow-lark on a heather brae. Besides this the nest contained four eggs of its rightful owner, all hatched simultaneously. Upon the third day after this the four young pipits were literally shouldered out of the nest, but by a quite unconscious movement on the part of the yellow-billed usurper. Like the nightingale, the cuckoo rarely sings after the breeding season is fairly inaugurated.

The delicate leaves of the beech tell us that now we may expect the redstart, and soon his rich colours enliven various spots on the lap of cultivation. The 'fire-tail' is quite one of our most beautiful summer migrants, and comes to us from the south about mid-April. But the bird is rather a creature of circumstance than of time. It rarely leaves its southern haunts, be the date what it may, if the foliage and insect food have not preceded it. The bird has a peculiar habit of jerking its tail about as if to attract one to the most brightly coloured part of its plumage; and this has given rise to many expressive provincial names, one of which is given above. In form and traits it has much in common with the redbreast and hedge-accentor, and whilst watching it we have discovered a habit—almost peculiar to the true flycatchers—of darting out at intervals upon passing insects and then quickly returning to the perch. The song of this species is sweet and full of vivacity, although rarely long continued. Its six round eggs are of such a beautiful blue as to be comparable only to themselves.

A visitant that follows closely in the wake of the redstart is the ring-ouzel. We first see its white-crescented form amid the wild moors and scenes where it breeds. It follows the spring, and spends with us its summer among the mountains. Coming in flocks with the warblers, the birds disperse in pairs to their lone haunts, and live among the bright green moss and dripping waterfalls. A week or so after their arrival the male birds begin to sing, and often do so far into the night. Its song, though sometimes harsh, is often low, sweet, and trilling. Then there is its grating call-note, apprising us first of its arrival, but soon mellowed and toned as the pairing season advances. Among the shepherds and fell folk, the ring-ouzel has many provincial names; white-breasted blackbird, ring-thrush, rock-ouzel, and moor-blackbird being among these.

To-day, sitting by the ditch side with a handful of pink apple blossom, a crake ran out into the fresh green grass, and gave out its characteristic spring call. Although May-flower and marsh-marigold were blooming all about it, the season is so backward that there was not tallness of grass to hide it, and it soon made back to the shelter of the ditch. . . . .

With our face deep buried in summer grass, we are lying on the margin of the wood. All the grass by fast falling blossom is littered, and the air is instinct with the very breath of life. The starlings, picking among the sheep, are half-buried in the fresh green grass, their metallic plumage flashing in the sun. The sweet breath of kine comes from the cattle that are lazily lying dotted over the meadows. What a gentle, soft-eyed creature is the cow! What a picture of quiet contentment does the huge ruminant suggest as it stands belly-deep in golden buttercups! How dewy its nose, delicately fringed its ears, and white gleaming its horns! Insects swarm about the cows, and the wagtails flit everywhere about them. That beautifully slim yellow bird which has just alighted is Ray's wagtail, and one of our most brightly coloured summer visitors. From the habit just indicated the farmers call it the cow-bird. There it runs among the fresh grass, picking innumerable insects from the teeming blades, and now and then performing kind offices for its friend the cow by flitting up under its belly and ridding it of some troublesome insect. Were we to watch the little yellow bird to its nest we should find it under some overhanging tuft, and probably placed near the cool stream in which the cows love to stand.

Bird songs and sounds flood all the land, and half-a-dozen larks are singing up there against the blue. They almost make the sunshine vocal. The grass grows tall by the hedgeside, and the ditch is done in a setting of green and gold. All life seems to love the stream—it is the chief artery of the land. From the wild service-tree in the hedge goes towering up a little brown bird, singing and fluttering the while, and then slowly descending to the twig from which he started. The song is pleasant in itself, and is that of the tree pipit. No time is lost after its April arrival in treating us to its lark-like song, and this continues through breeding time on into summer. After indulging in its aërial evolutions for a time, the 'grasshopper-lark' drops down to the red campions, among which is its moss-fibred nest. A bird loved of the country folk, for they have many provincial names

of their own, of which pipit-lark, field-titling, and tree-lark are a few.

Day by day and for hours together we have watched the pretty incidents of a bird-drama. A pair of blue tits have been searching out some hole among the old elms, and it has been 'house-hunting' indeed. They have examined every hole and crevice in wall and bole of tree, and have rejected each in turn for reasons only known to themselves. For some days they have eaten little, and have worked their little selves into a terrible state of excitement. And it is only after some time, when they are quite tired out, that the chase ends and they select some hole which seems much less likely for their purpose than many they have visited. It was not hard to tell that they had fixed upon a domicile, for they lingered lovingly about the spot for some days ere commencing to build. But one morning we saw the blue bird enter the hole, and by many soft endearments try to induce his yet coy bride to follow. He indulged in many soft twitterings unknown to himself or his species at other times, and used a thousand blandishments, yet she refused to respond. Then he flew off a little way and brought back a fluffy feather, entered the hole, emerged again, and turned himself like a many-coloured acrobat performing the most marvellous feats; but all will not do. Then he loses his temper and tries to drive her into the interior, but this she will have none of. And so, beaten and crushed, he sits on a bough beside her and deplores her waywardness aloud. But in a few mornings, passing the spot, we find that a crisis has occurred in the little drama, and that the couple are flying busily to and fro with materials for the nest. Soon the hen bird presses to her breast six priceless pearls—white, specked with brown and red, and in such a setting! But this is the spring-time of love, and soon six little mouths have to be fed incessantly for sixteen hours a day, and even this is continued over two or three weeks. At the end of that time six balls of fluffy blue feathers pass down the hedgerow, and out into the wide world of birddom.

By the ditch bank, water-avens, wild parsley, and campions crowd each other; yellow and purple iris tower over all. Reed sparrows are deep down in the flags, and a water-ouzel runs at the bottom of the brook. The larvæ of caddis-flies cover the bed of the streams, and a kingfisher darts over its surface. Cuckoos fly from tree to tree, calling as they fly, and a waterhen wades out

among the reeds, though soon the parting grasses hide it. The sunshine dances on the ripples, and the hardly-moving foliage throws frescoes on the water. At the bend of the stream is a lime. You may almost see its glutinous leaves unfolding to the light. Its winged flowers are infested with bees. Upon the trunk is a dead bough, almost at the bottom of the bole; upon it there sits a grey-brown bird, that ever and anon darts for a moment, hovers over the stream, and returns to its perch. A hundred times it flutters, secures its insect prey, and takes up its old position. Bronze fly, filmy ephemeræ, and droning bee are secured alike. All serve as food to the lovable spotted flycatcher —a little summer migrant that returns to our gardens and orchards about the second week in May. As we lazily lie watching the bird, shaded by the giant 'gicks,' a white-winged butterfly hovers over the lower branches of the lime. The bird gives chase. Miniature falconry, aërial fluttering, and pretty evolutions succeed. On the stump the butterfly is devoured, and beneath are a number of small pellets. These consist of hard, indigestible insect cases, and are ejected by the flychaser. By the side of the stream is a disused shed, its rafters cobweb-covered and decayed; sparrows have their nests under the eaves, and starlings in the loopholes; mice rustle in the straw. Frequently has our grey-brown bird flown into the doorless shed, and entering we find its nest just within the angle of the beam. The site of the present nest and one of its constituents gives two provincial names to the flycatcher—beam-bird and cobweb-bird. In addition to these it is called bee-bird, post-bird, rafter, cherry-chopper, and others. Bee-bird and cherry-chopper are expressive enough, though the inference implied by the latter is absolutely false. Where brightly running streams constantly cross the path, the spotted flycatcher is generally common. Often, whilst flogging the trout streams, have we lazily allowed our flies to drift down stream, our notice having been attracted by a flycatcher plying its silent trade from the overhanging boughs opposite.

The flute-like mellowness and wild sweetness of the blackcap's song give it a high place among summer warblers—next only to the nightingale. The blackcap has neither the fulness nor the force, but it has all and more than the former's purity. It comes to us in April and stays until September. As with all its congeners, the males arrive before the females, and having sought out their old retreats, soon begin to sing. The singing now is the means to

an end, for strange emotions are stirring within them, and their consorts will soon arrive. If these are attracted by the powers of song, there is little wonder at the crest-erecting and throat-bursting of the males. This little hideling, with its timid obtrusiveness, never stays long on the exposed coasts where it arrives, but seeks out its old haunts. Following these little immigrants inland, we should trace them to cultivation—or at least to abundant vegetation, to woods and plantations, to sheltered copse and hedgerow, to orchard, garden, and shrubbery. One provision they require, that is, seclusion. Their shy and retiring habits teach them to search out dense retreats, and here they are rarely seen, and for the same reason perhaps it is that the nest is so difficult to find. If seen on the confines of its corral of boughs, the bird immediately begins to perform a series of evolutions, until it has managed to place a dense screen of brushwood between itself and the observer. When procuring its food it is extremely active. If watched with the aid of a glass, it may be seen restlessly flitting from branch to branch in search of insects. But it by no means confines itself to these. Of the smaller fruits it is extremely fond, and it devours numbers of small green caterpillars. If the blackcap warbler is partial to the berries of the elder, ivy, and currant, it has an immense set-off in the larvæ of injurious insects which it destroys. To secure some of the berries and wild fruit of which it is so fond, it obtains them by supporting itself in the air, its wings quickly vibrating the while. The song, to which we have already alluded, is full, rich, deep, and mellow, and the bird sings by night as well as by day.

The most generally known and characteristic of the whole of our summer visitors are the swallows. Of these we have four—the temple-haunting martlet, the true swallow, the sand-martin, and the swift; while in close relation stand the purple martin (a casual visitor to our shores) and the Alpine swift (a species even still more rare).

The swallows are essentially birds of return, and it may easily be proved that the birds which this year nest beneath our eaves are those which occupied the selfsame spot twelve months ago. About the beginning of April the hirundines begin to arrive in this country. First comes the delicate sand-martin. This is the smallest member of the family, and for a time after its arrival it seldom strays far from the stiller pools and sheltered reaches of the river where

insects are abundant. The sand-martin is closely followed by the true swallow, which, with the sun glinting from its steel-blue back, may usually be seen about the second week in April skimming low over the meadows. Some days later follows the familiar house-martin; and towards the end of the month, or in the beginning of May, the large black swift makes its appearance.

Our knowledge concerning these birds has much advanced of late years. We know now more accurately the lines and the times of migration, and as to the manner in which this is performed. When in autumn the migratory instinct comes strong upon the hirundines, they do not, as was once supposed, tower straight up and then start in direct flight for their winter quarters, so that the birds which in the morning might be seen hawking for insects over Hyde Park, and the same evening catching flies over the mosques of Jerusalem, are now looked upon by ornithologists as myths. Swallows, like all migratory birds, stick close to land, never leaving it for any distance unless compelled. It is noticeable that they do not cross straits always at the narrowest parts, but probably by a route which dimly indicates some long-lost land-line; that is, they cross now where their ancestors crossed centuries ago. Swallows have alighted upon vessels four hundred miles from nearest land, but from their exhausted state would seem to have been blown out of their course, and to have suffered great fatigue. The food of swallows is taken exclusively from the air, and they drink whilst flying. This, so far as is known, cannot be said of any other bird. Various species of gnats and ephemeræ constitute their food upon their arrival in this country, but, as summer advances, winged beetles are also greedily taken. So rapidly does the bird capture its insect prey, that after it has been on the wing but a few moments it has accumulated sufficient food to form a pellet as large as an ordinary rifle bullet; and in summer, when the young birds are on the wing, this pellet is often transferred from old to young in mid air. In some respects the swallow has several traits distinct from most migratory birds. In the case of almost all the wood warblers, which are summer migrants, the males arrive and attain to their full song from a week to a fortnight ere the arrival of the females, but the swallows almost invariably come in pairs. Their coming has been marked at various stations along the Mediterranean, and on through Northern into Central and Southern Africa. It is

here, among the myrtle and orange groves, that our little visitants take their annual rest, moult, and return to us in perfect plumage.

After returning, the birds have not been long with us before they commence their nests. When the site is chosen, small mud pellets are worked round centres of bits of straw or stick, and so the nest is built up lump by lump, though each layer is allowed to dry before a second is added. It is not yet known whether water or saliva is used as a cement in the construction of the nest. When completed it is thickly lined with feathers, upon which usually five eggs are laid ; these are white, spotted with red and dark brown. The site which the swallow proper chooses for its nest is usually upon beam or rafter of barn or shed, and rarely in chimneys, as one of its provincial names would seem to imply. Many and curious are the sites chosen from time to time by the birds, and not least so that where a pair of swallows affixed their nest to the body of a dead owl, which next year being replaced by a conch shell they occupied that too. As well as there being several distinguishing points between the swallows and the martins, there is also one point of great difference in their nests. Those of the former species are left completely open above, so that there is quite a sensible space above the edge of the nest and the structure to which it is affixed, whilst the nest of the martin is built up to and closed in by the overhanging ledge or eave, a hole being left for exit and entrance.

As with swallows, martins have been found through every month of the year in this country. The birds which so remain are probably those latest hatched, and which at the time of migration find themselves too weak to follow the main body retreating south ; for it is a fact well known to ornithologists that martins have two, occasionally three, and sometimes even four broods during a season, and that the young birds, according to their strength and power of wing, return at different periods. Like the sparrow and the starling, the martin is a social bird, and loves to dwell near the haunts of men. Not unfrequently we have seen at old farmhouses whole colonies breeding side by side, the nests sometimes touching each other. Like swallows, martins drink whilst flying, and both birds have been seen to rest on the water and then rise again on the wing. The suddenness with which both species leave us in autumn may be accounted for by the equally sudden disappearance of some insect which for a time had

constituted their staple food supply. Last spring, through a short spell of intensely cold weather, accompanied by snow-storms, the hirundines died by hundreds, dropping benumbed and helpless from the houses, towers, and country churches. This was probably owing to two causes: the total disappearance of all insect life, and the sudden change from genial May to the bleak weather of winter.

The sand-martin is the first to come to us, and is the least of the swallows. In the majority of cases it is this bird which is the subject of the 'Early Swallow' paragraphs of provincial news-papers. Sand-martins associate in colonies, and build in holes which they drill in sand-pit, quarry, or river bank. The birds, in every conceivable attitude, use their bills as drills, and throw out the soil with their feet. The hole ramifies into the sand from about eighteen inches to as much as six feet. The construction of the tunnels is commenced soon after the arrival of the birds, and when completed the nest is placed in a chamber at the end of the hole. The nest, usually little more than a platform, is lined with the soft feathers and down of waterfowl; and upon these are laid from four to six white eggs beautifully suffused with a pinky whiteness. This suffusion is owing to the extreme deli-cacy of the shell and its semi-transparency. The same rose colour occurs in the eggs of the kingfisher. When the young are hatched they are in the habit, after leaving the nest, of sitting side by side upon a rail fence, where they are fed by the parent birds. The food at this time consists principally of gnats and the ephemeræ, whilst numbers of dragon-flies are also taken. Seldom more than two broods are produced, and by September the delicate bank-swallows are off to a warmer clime. We see them at even-ing covering the buildings, the church, the willows by the river—everywhere; when morning comes not one is to be seen.

The swift is the last to come of all the swallows, rarely arriv-ing before the beginning of May, and then only in limited num-bers. It is by far the largest of the family, haunts old castles and ruins, and lays but two white eggs. Its bullet-shaped body, weak legs, and wide stretch of wing all testify to its great flying powers. There is something eerie in the way in which, at dusk, the swifts fly and screech round the dark buildings which they haunt. The birds stay only a short time, and rear but one brood. They leave this country by the end of August or the beginning of September, returning to Africa, whence they return to us. The birds both

feed and collect their building material on the wing, being unable to rise from a flat surface ; this we have had the opportunity of proving time and again, although the fact is denied by some ornithologists.

The swallows are the pioneers of the great host of insect-eating birds which annually visit this country, and they themselves cleanse the air of myriads of pests which, if allowed to live, might do incalculable harm.

If the cuckoo tells her name to all the hills, so does the sedge-warbler to the fluted reeds. And, like the 'wandering voice,' our little bird seems dispossessed of a corporal existence, and on through summer is 'still longed for, never seen;' and this though common enough, for you may wander long among the willow-banks, with a bird in every bush, without one showing outside the corral of boughs. The sedge-reedling comes to us during the second and third weeks of May, and by ditch, or pond, or river, wherever vegetation grows tall and luxuriant, there the 'reed-wren' may be found. At its spring arrival on our coasts, its journey to its favourite reed-haunts none ever sees. It travels in the night; you go out some May morning, and the rollicking intoxication of the garrulous little bird comes from out the self-same bushes from which you missed it in autumn. From the time it first arrives it begins to sing louder and louder as the warm weather advances, and especially in the evenings. Then it is that it listens to the loud-swelling bird-choir of the woods, selecting a note from this and another from that. For the sedge-warbler is an imitator, a mocking-bird, and reproduces in fragments the songs of many species. The little mimic runs up and down the gamut in the most riotous fashion, parodying not only the loud clear whistle of the blackbird, but the wholly differing soft sweet notes of the willow-wren. This is kept up all through the night, and the puzzle is when the little musician ever sleeps. We have said that our angler friends call this bird the 'fisherman's nightingale.' If the sedge-warbler ceases its song through any hour of the day or night, a clod thrown into the bushes will immediately set it going again. Yet what can be said of a song that a clod of mud will produce? Sometimes for a moment it is sweet, but never long sustained. In the north, where there are few ditches, the species frequents river banks and the sides of meres; in the south it abounds everywhere in marshy places. Here the rank grass swarms with them; the thicker the reed

patch or willow, the more birds seem to be there. With perfect silence, a distant view is sometimes obtained of the bird as it comes out at the top of the bushes and flits after an insect. As it rises up and clings to the tall green stalks it is pleasing both in form and colour. Among the grasses and water-plants it has its game preserves. Water-beetles, ephemeræ, and the teeming minute aquatic insects constitute its food. To watch with a glass the obtaining of these is most interesting. At the base of a tuft of the coarsest water herbage the sedge-warbler has its nest. It is rarely elevated from the ground, and never supported by reeds. Of moss, coarse grass, and hairs the nest is composed, and usually six green-brown eggs are laid, mottled, and with an occasional streak of black or brown. Reed-sparrow, sedge-reedling, reed-wren, are pretty provincial names, each expressive enough.

The rare and locally distributed pied flycatcher is just as interesting a bird as its spotted brown cousin. Like the latter, it haunts the timbered banks of trout streams, and from the overhanging boughs secures its insect food. Its white-barred black head is plainly seen in its aërial flutterings, and it is certainly a beautiful species. It is probably more common in the Lake district than elsewhere in England, though, on account of its extremely local distribution, it frequently happens that a single wood is haunted by the whole species of the district. It builds in holes in old elms and pollarded willows, commencing to breed soon after its arrival in May. It has but one brood, and leaves us again in September.

A broad expanse of dead, yellow grasses. The marsh is dry, and only water is retained in the cool ditches. A patch of green reeds marks an oasis in this desert of decay; and the more slender of these are interwoven with and support a nest of the reed-warblers containing five eggs. There is much in common, in habit, habitat, and food between the reed and sedge warblers. The first is much more rare as a species than the latter, coming in April, and again seeking the south in September. Wherever osier and willow beds abound, at least in the southern counties, the reed-warbler is sure to be found. Like the reed-wren, it sings all day, and is as persistent a songster during the hours of twilight and dark as is the sedge-warbler. The song is soft and sweet, but is emitted in a characteristic jerky manner. All the water-haunting insects are taken by the reed-warbler, and after the quick-flying ones it often darts from reed to reed. It

also devours the mud creatures of the slime and ooze of fenland, being in no wise particular as to what constitutes its food, so long as that food is insect and capable of being swallowed. For outward beauty and natural grace the nest of the reed-warbler is unsurpassed by all our bird architects. Finely interlaced and swaying with its intertwined reeds, the nest is always elevated, in this differing from its haunt companion, whose nest never rises out of the tangled herbage at the base of undergrowth. The aërial nest is about nine inches long, and from the basal point ascends to about 3¼ inches across. The silky down of cotton grass is frequently used as a nest lining. The peculiarly coloured five eggs are bright whitish-grey with pale brown spots. After the young are fledged, they soon begin to climb from the nest to its supports, the reed stems. Then they wander from plant to plant, keeping together, and sticking fast by their long sharp claws, and are fed by the parent birds. Not until the time of migration arrives, and the old birds feel the migratory instinct strong upon them, do they entice the young from the reed beds to slightly higher ground, and here they spend the days prior to moving south. Long confounded with the sedge-warbler, this bird has many of its rival's country names, night-warbler and sedge-reedling being among them.

The grasshopper-warbler is another of our summer migrants, reaching our shores about the middle of April. It is nowhere common, always locally distributed. Shy and retiring in its habits, it is never found far distant from aquatic vegetation. These moist situations are congenial to the bird, as among the plants that affect them it finds its winged food. In addition to insects it consumes snails, slugs, worms, and the myriad life of dank weeds and grasses. Although the bird generally affects such spots as we have indicated, it sometimes seeks considerable elevations. These are covered with coarse grass, bents, furze, and heather; and here, at morning and evening, it reels out its continuous cricket-like song. It returns to the same spot year after year, and although from these the particular notes may often be heard, yet the bird itself is rarely seen. At the least noise it drops from the support from which it may be depending into the grass beneath, and then is silent. The song is long continued, but the sounds are constantly shifting, marking the restless track of the little singer. It needs no stretch of imagination to detect in the notes of this species the similarity to the grasshopper, and the 'monotonous

whir, like the spinning of a fishing-reel,' is fairly expressive of the bird's song. A perfect master of intricate maze and covert, it is never far distant from these. Even though the bird has ventured beyond its accustomed limits, its vigilance sends it back at the least noise, though this retreat is rarely observed; for, instead of flying, it creeps closely, never rising when alarmed. Among the tangled herbage of underwood is the nest of perhaps the most difficult and rarely found of all our birds. Composed of such materials as the spot in which it is built affords, it is cup-shaped and deep, the constituent grasses being wonderfully intertwined. The actual nest is always surmounted by a mass of decayed vegetation, rather loosely arranged. Five, six, or seven eggs are laid, large for the size of the bird, and covered with brownish-red spots at the larger end. These differ in colour, many specimens nearly approaching to whiteness.

The birds of which we have spoken—the sedge, reed, and grasshopper warblers—are essentially aquatic, haunting the marsh lands where grow the bog plants. Clinging to the sedges, the reeds, and the willows, it may be that nature has some subtle economy in rounding off their tails as she does, and that in this way she fits them more closely to their environment than if she had left them with square tails, like the rest of the Sylviadæ. For it is a remarkable fact that each of the birds mentioned has the rounded form of tail possessed by none other of the warblers, and that each has the insects of bosky situations for its food. The tails of our sedge-birds are not rounded in vain; some wise purpose lies beyond. Strange are the means of nature to her various ends. The science of evolution is not yet old enough to solve our present problem. Assuredly it will do so. The peculiarities we have pointed out are not so prominent in the grasshopper-warbler as in the sedge and reed warblers, but the possession of similar characteristics has induced a distinct generic name for the three species.

HOW WE MARRIED THE MAJOR.

CHAPTER I.

'I'LL tell you what it is, Meares, I can't stand this any longer!'

The speaker, Lieut. Henderson, X Battery, R Brigade, Royal Artillery, was sitting in an easy-chair, with his feet reposing on the back of another. Dinner was over, and the sound of the Major's retreating footsteps could still be heard on the creaking boards of the passage that led to his quarters. We had no Captain belonging to the Battery, as was the usual fate of the garrison artillery at that time; and so the Major, Henderson, and myself were the only officers in the mess.

We were quartered in Fort Tourgis, Alderney, having been transported thither from Guernsey a month before in Her Majesty's gunboat 'Dasher'—an old paddle steamer which was bought some fifty years ago by Government from a Southampton company, and which was still considered sound enough for her duties, which latter consisted in transporting troops from one of the Channel Islands to another, and capturing French fishing-boats when they were unhappy enough to be found within the charmed limit of British waters. Sorely had the Battery as a whole objected to the transfer from the society and civilisation of Guernsey to the barren rocks of the sister island, where we got our mails and newspapers twice a week if the weather were calm, and not at all if there were a gale. If the move had occurred in the ordinary course of events, no one would have grumbled, but there were certain rumours in currency to the effect that it had been privately arranged by the Major himself, partly because he had personal reasons of his own for avoiding Guernsey for the present, and partly because he knew that in Alderney he would be free from the active supervision of the officer commanding the Artillery in the district, and able consequently to carry out, without let or hindrance, his own peculiar views as to the management of a Battery. As a consequence, every annoyance, discomfort, or other evil arising from the change of station was with admirable unanimity ascribed alike by officers and men to their one common bugbear—the Major.

I doubt if there were ever a man more cordially disliked than he; and yet strangers invariably took a fancy to him, and with some reason, for he was a clever man and in many ways a kindly one. He was good-looking, wore an eyeglass, more for ornament than use, as his eyes were sharp enough (we all knew that to our cost), and was the right side of forty years of age. Little wonder then that the susceptible female population of Guernsey had made a dead set at him during his stay there, and had at last fairly frightened him out of the island. For an unmarried Major of the R.A. is not to be seen every day. One fault he had, and that, in the eyes of those whose evil fortune brought them under his immediate orders, was sufficient to outweigh a whole bushel of virtues. He was possessed with a demon—the demon of red tape!

I verily believe that, had he been in the agonies of drowning, and had a gunner of his Battery pulled him out of the water (which I am quite convinced no man of the Battery would have done), his first spoken utterance would have been to make his preserver a prisoner for wearing his forage cap an inch and a half over his right eyebrow in place of the regulation inch! From morning till night his whole time was spent in enforcing absolute correctness and uniformity upon both officers and men. On one celebrated occasion he had gone round the barrack rooms with a lantern at midnight to see that, according to his orders, every man slept on his right side, and hung one sock over each of the uprights at the head of his bed. No doubt he would have continued his nightly rounds, but, fortunately, the matter came to the Colonel's ears and he issued a peremptory order prohibiting any interference in future with the natural rest of the men. As to the drills, the pipeclaying, the measurements of the stripes of trousers and the bands of forage caps that went on daily, our lives were full of nothing else. When that terrible eyeglass went up, the soul of the boldest quaked within him, and the very dogs slunk away, lest their tails should be trimmed to regulation length. Since the Battery had moved to Alderney, things had grown worse than ever, for now we had no Colonel at hand to whom to appeal, and no redress for our wrongs. It was no wonder that Henderson's patience had come to an end, and that he had made the announcement with which this tale begins, 'that he could stand it no longer.'

'Has anything new happened?' asked I, resignedly.

'Yes, Quartermaster-Sergeant Hicks, the only good non-com-

missioned officer we had left in the Battery, has just applied for his discharge. The Major ordered him out of bed last night to "dress" the tubs in the passage outside the barrack-rooms. He said two of them were out of line with the rest, and it was a disgrace to the service. I suppose that was the last straw to poor Hicks; anyhow he gave in his application for discharge this morning.'

'Lucky man!' said I. 'I only wish I could do likewise, but I have no pension in prospect, as he has. What *are* we to do, Henderson? We have a year of Alderney before us, and by that time we shall all be in our graves if this goes on. We can't well mutiny, and it is against my conscience to poison the Major, though I am sure I could do it without being found out. If only he had married Mrs. Willcox when he was at Guernsey. I believe she would soon have cured him of his monomania, for I am sure it is nothing else.'

'By Jove,' cried Henderson, jumping up, 'I believe you have hit it, Meares! Suppose we marry him to Mrs. Willcox!'

'I wish we could,' said I, laughing; 'but I should like to know how you propose to set about it.'

'I have an idea,' said Henderson, 'but it will require thinking out. Are not the Fox's here relations of Mrs. Willcox?'

'Mrs. Fox is her sister, I believe,' said I. 'She would be glad enough to get the Major into the family. But I don't see how she can help you.'

'I do, however, plainly enough. Meares, would you be willing to sacrifice the 'Memo' for the sake of getting the Major married?'

'Rather!' said I. 'She won't be of much use to us here, where the tides run seven knots an hour.'

The 'Memo,' I may here observe, was a little cutter yacht of some four tons, which Henderson and I had purchased when at Guernsey. We had got her a great bargain, as the builder had made her on a principle of his own for racing purposes, and she had turned out a failure so far as speed was concerned, so that he was soon tired of her, and sold her to us for 25*l.* Guernsey currency (24*l.* English). We named her the 'Memo' as a delicate hint to the Brigade Major, who was in the habit of writing constant memoranda to the officers in the district; and to emphasise our meaning we designed a racing flag which might be heraldically described as *Or, on a shield sable a scroll argent. Motto,* 'BY ORDER.' Under this flag we raced the yacht in the local regatta,

and by dint of carrying more sail than any other crew dared to show, succeeded in winning a third prize. We left the yacht at Guernsey when we moved to Alderney, intending to have her brought up should our new station prove propitious.

'Well,' said Henderson, 'I think I see my way to some fun at all events. But we cannot do anything till the Captain joins. I suppose you heard that we were to have a captain told off to us as a temporary measure. I believe he arrives by the 'Courier' next Saturday, and then I will see what can be done.'

'But what do you intend doing?' asked I.

'Oh, never mind for the present. I will tell you all about it next week, but you may as well be innocent of the conspiracy as long as you can.'

And not another word on the subject could I get out of Henderson that week. On Saturday in due course the new Captain arrived, a meek little man with light brown moustache and incipient whiskers, whose one idea in life appeared to be a dread of getting into official or private warfare with anyone. On Sunday afternoon Henderson paid a long visit to Mrs. Fox, and came back looking well pleased with himself. I noticed that he sent a letter to Guernsey on Monday morning by the 'Courier' on her return trip, addressed to the Acting Adjutant R.A., who was a fellow subaltern and a particular friend of his. Evidently the plot was developing.

On Monday morning after drill we went for a stroll down to the harbour to lift a trammel net which we had laid the night before. We had a good haul of fish, as usual—Alderney is a wonderful place for fish; but instead of returning with them to the shore, Henderson rowed to the Breakwater and fastened the boat's painter to one of the old mooring chains, after which he sat down and announced his intention of telling me all about his grand idea.

'The first thing we have to do, Meares,' said he, 'is to apply for leave to go down to Guernsey by the 'Courier' on Wednesday for the purpose of sailing the 'Memo' up to Alderney. The Major won't refuse us; he is good enough about leave. I have written to De Salis to ask him to invent some excuse for requiring the Major's presence at Guernsey, and to order him to go down by the same boat. That is why I had to wait for the Captain's arrival—the Major would never have allowed the Battery to be left without an officer. Now he will have no excuse, and we shall all go down to Guernsey together.

'Thank you for nothing,' remarked I. 'I should infinitely prefer dispensing with the Major's company on the occasion.'

'Now just listen a little longer,' said Henderson; 'you have not heard the plan yet. The Major will be in a great hurry to get back to his beloved Battery, and he likes sailing, though fortunately he does not know one rope from another. He is sure to volunteer to go back with us rather than wait for the "Courier" on Saturday. Now I had a talk with Mrs. Fox on Sunday, and I managed to make her believe that she was dying to see her sister, Mrs. Willcox, again. She ended by saying she would write on Wednesday to ask her up for a visit, as she could not well have her before then, not having a vacant room. Now my plan is this. I will meet Mrs. Willcox in Guernsey, by accident, of course, and hint that we shall be very glad to give her a passage up in the "Memo," to save her waiting till Saturday. If I know her character right she will be delighted with the adventure, more especially if I let her hear casually that the Major will be of the party. We won't tell him a word about it lest he should back out of it. Once he is on board, he can't refuse to sail because Mrs. Willcox is coming too.'

'That is all very ingenious,' said I, 'but you don't expect that he will propose to her in our presence on the way up.'

'Not at all. Did I not tell you it would be necessary to sacrifice the "Memo"? We will shipwreck ourselves on Burhon Island in a plausible way; that, of course, will depend on the wind, but it ought not to be hard to humbug our passengers. The odds are that we shall be able to manage to remain there a day or two before any boat comes to take us off, and in that time Mrs. Willcox will be no woman if she do not succeed in drawing a proposal from the Major. We will give her every chance, at all events. Now, what do you say?'

I burst into a fit of laughter.

'It is about the neatest scheme I ever heard! But do you think it is quite fair to the poor Major?'

Henderson looked grave.

'I believe Mrs. Willcox will make him a really good wife,' he said. 'She is certainly in love with him. And after all we shall only be giving them both a fair field, and shall not be interfering with them personally at all. Anyhow the Major deserves no mercy from us. He has all but ruined the Battery, and driven us

to the point of desperation. Will you join me or not? If you do not, I must only try it by myself.'

'Of course I will join you,' said I; 'you need not have doubted that. But are there not many defective links in your chain of events? Suppose De Salis cannot manage his part, or that Mrs. Willcox does not care to come.'

'Then of course it all falls through, and we will have to devise something else. But I don't think we shall fail. Did you ever hear the proverb—

> Straw bands
> Can tie fool's hands.

Not that the Major is exactly a fool, but I suppose all men are, more or less, where women are concerned.'

'So they say,' said I. 'Well, let us go back to the Fort, and write out our applications for leave of absence. But, by the way, one thing more. Have you allowed for our food during our stay on Burhon? I don't think Mrs. Willcox would care to live on stewed ormers without salt.'[1]

'That is all right,' said Henderson. 'I have hired old Felix, the fisherman, to take some provisions over there and hide them in the House of Refuge. They will be a providential discovery to us shipwrecked wretches.'

We fastened the boat to her moorings and went back to the Fort.

CHAPTER II.

PLOTS which contain too many threads generally fail; but in this instance everything worked wonderfully for us. We got our leave; the Major was ordered to Guernsey and actually asked us to give him a passage back—thereby, poor man, sealing his own fate. Henderson interviewed Mrs. Willcox and found her charmed with the idea of the adventure of sailing up to Alderney in a small yacht. He did not tell the Major of the happiness in store for him till he was safely on board the 'Memo' and saw the fair widow approaching us in a harbour boat. Then Henderson, with admirable aplomb, mentioned casually that we had offered a

[1] Burhon Island is a great place for ormers, a shellfish peculiar to the Channel Islands and the Persian Gulf. They are larger than oysters, have one shell, called from its shape 'Venus' Ear,' and have the flavour of veal cutlets when properly cooked.

passage to Mrs. Willcox, as she was anxious to get to Alderney without delay. The Major let his eyeglass fall helplessly and swore a little under his breath, with the effect of making us feel that we already tasted the fruits of revenge. Of course the poor man was quite incapable of resisting the invasion; he could not without evident rudeness go ashore again, nor could he object to our taking whom we would in our own yacht. But I think he mentally registered a vow of vengeance against both of us as Mrs. Willcox's portmanteau tumbled on board (we had directed her to send her heavy luggage by the 'Courier,' the yacht being so small), followed by the lady herself, who promptly took her seat beside the Major and began plying him with small-talk. She was a trim, pleasant little woman, and could have charmed the ill-humour out of a bear. Indeed, I doubt that I should have consented at all to Henderson's plan had it not been that I was pretty sure in my own mind that the Major was really afraid of falling in love with her, having a rooted antipathy to the bonds of matrimony, and fearing the widow's powers.

It was two o'clock on a June afternoon when we started for Alderney. There was a brisk south-west wind blowing, quite in our favour, and we hoped to catch the tide through the Swinge Channel when we neared Alderney. I had not yet arranged with Henderson how our shipwreck was to be managed; we agreed that it would be best to leave that to circumstances to arrange. However, to provide against contingencies, we had purchased a strong life-buoy for the benefit of Mrs. Willcox. All of us officers could swim well. Under pretence of lashing the portmanteau so that it should not slide about in the boat, we tied it to a wooden grating which was pretty sure to float it if required. No doubt some of Mrs. Willcox's raiment would be spoiled, but that could not be helped under the circumstances.

We left St. Peter's harbour with our topmast housed, carrying our whole mainsail and largest jib—canvas under which the yacht made very good way, though, had it not been a dead run before the wind up to Alderney, it would scarcely have been safe to carry so much in the breeze that was blowing. Once fairly clear of the island, Henderson took the tiller and I sat beside him on the edge of the well, with our feet dangling over the same. The Major and Mrs. Willcox, perhaps at the suggestion of the latter, preferred to sit near the bow of the boat, where they were out of our hearing, though plainly to be seen. We had nothing to do

but to keep the boat before the wind, so had every opportunity of studying their behaviour.

'They are keeping up a pretty brisk conversation,' said I after a while. 'I wish they would settle it all before we get to Alderney; we might save the "Memo" then.'

'Thomas Meares,' said Henderson solemnly, 'if you regret your offering the fates will not accept it. Think of the results we hope for, and say good-bye to the old "Memo."'

'"Non inutile est desiderium in oblatione," as Aramis said,' quoted I, laughing. 'But I assure you I should not regret fifty "Memos" if I had them, for the sake of accomplishing our purpose. Only we shall feel such idiots if we lose the yacht for nothing.'

'Never you fear,' said Henderson confidently. 'Everything has helped us so far, and there is the greatest help of all coming—a good thick Channel fog. No one can blame us now if we run the "Memo" on Burhon Island!'

I looked over the stern, and indeed saw that the fates to the last had been propitious to our enterprise. A thick mist had already shut out Guernsey, and hid from our view all but a high headland or two that still towered above it. Channel Island fogs are peculiar in this respect, that they are almost always accompanied by a stiff breeze, and we made haste to shift our jib and take in a reef in the mainsail. In so doing we were obliged to disturb our victims, and Mrs. Willcox eagerly asked if there were any danger.

'Not a bit,' said I, winking at Henderson. 'Only a fog coming up. If you feel at all nervous, Mrs. Willcox, you had better put this life-buoy round you, and then you will feel quite independent of accident.'

'I really think you had better,' said the Major pompously. 'We shall soon be nearing Alderney, and the Swinge is a nasty channel to go up in a fog. Listen to the fog-horn at the Casquets now!'

Three long and melancholy moans, at measured intervals, came across the water. Mrs. Willcox shivered a little and put the life-buoy over her head.

'Not that I do not feel perfectly safe with *you* here, Major Quayle,' she said tenderly. 'But you know in case of accident I should be a great trouble to you, for I cannot swim a stroke.'

'*You* could never be a trouble,' began the Major gallantly, and then looked anxiously round to see if either of his subalterns

were listening. We were both busy—Henderson steering and I taking in another reef in the mainsail, as, shipwreck or no shipwreck, I had no fancy for running on to Burhon Island at the rate of ten miles an hour. If only the two forward had known the purpose of my innocent occupation! I found time and opportunity to whisper the Major's last remark to Henderson, who had not heard it and was greatly delighted with it. By this time the fog had caught us up and wrapped us round so thickly that we could not see more than twenty yards ahead at the outside. I began to get a little nervous myself about this period, as it would have been no joke to have been shipwrecked on one of the half-tide rocks that fringe the coast of Alderney instead of on Burhon Island. However, Henderson was quite confident of his powers of navigation.

'Ought we not to be getting near Alderney?' asked I, in a low voice after awhile.

Henderson looked at his watch.

'Half-past four! I should say at the rate we have come up, that we will finish our journey, one way or another, in the next quarter of an hour. You had better go up to the bows and look out for Burhon. Don't alarm Mrs. Willcox. When you see the island, look for a pretty good place to land, and just make a motion of your hand to guide me. Once you see we are so close that nothing can save the boat, make as much noise as you like.'

I went forward. The sea was very calm and the breeze had rather fallen, still I did not altogether relish the prospect before us. Burhon Island is not the most eligible place in the world for a shipwreck. It lies about a mile and a half west of Alderney, and is an almost naked rock some mile and a quarter in length, in most places presenting a rocky wall, six or eight feet high, to the sea. But, here and there, there are shelves of rock sloping gradually downwards, and could we hit on one of these, there would be little trouble in the calm sea.

Ten minutes or so passed, and I saw something that looked like a rock looming through the fog. Fortunately the Major and the widow were too deeply engaged in conversation to look out ahead. In a few moments more I caught a glimpse of the familiar contour of Burhon, and saw a beautiful shelf of rock about a hundred yards to the left. I waved my left hand slightly, and Henderson put the helm over. Another instant, and the rocks

were almost under the bows. I caught hold of the mast to steady myself against the shock.

'Breakers ahead!' I shouted. 'Hard a starboard, Henderson!'

The Major jumped up and immediately fell on poor Mrs. Willcox as the bows of the 'Memo' shot up on the shelf of rock with an ominous crashing of timber. Henderson, who had managed the shipwreck beautifully, let go the tiller and ran forward, just as a low green swell came in over the stern and filled the boat, floating Mrs. Willcox and her life-buoy high up the incline till she found a projecting piece of rock to which she clung with the energy of despair.

It spoke well for the success of our undertaking that the Major immediately jumped overboard and followed her, half climbing and half swimming. By the time Henderson and myself had got the portmanteau and its grating overboard and swam ashore with them, he had rescued the widow from her perilous position and was carrying her towards the House of Refuge, a low one-storeyed building erected on the island as a shelter for shipwrecked mariners. Poor Mrs. Willcox appeared to have fainted, and my conscience began to prick me for my share in the matter. But Henderson only laughed.

'She will be very glad of her troubles six months hence, I can tell you,' he said. 'Let us carry up the portmanteau. It floated so high that I really believe little water has got in.'

By the time we reached the House of Refuge the widow had recovered from her fainting fit and was lying on the floor with the Major supporting her head. He was naturally inclined to be rather savage with us, but Mrs. Willcox forgave us all at the sight of the portmanteau.

'Those dear boys,' she said. 'How kind of you to think of saving my clothes. Why, it might have cost you your lives! and oh! what a happy thought of yours that life buoy was, Mr. Meares! Where should I be now if you had not brought it?'

'Where you are, madam,' said the Major gruffly. 'I can swim.'

'And would you, in that moment of danger, have thought of me?' asked the widow gently, looking up in his face with her dangerous dark brown eyes.

'Can you ask?' said the Major; but he did not respond to the look as I should have liked him to do. Evidently he was not yet quite brought to the point of surrendering his liberty.

'Would you not like some tea, Mrs. Willcox?' asked Henderson.

'Ah yes, indeed I should; but where will you find tea on this desert island?'

'Well!' said the young man unblushingly, 'I was intending to come here on a shooting expedition some day, and I got old Felix the boatman to take over a basket of provisions in tins that would not hurt by keeping, and hide them in a place I know of on Little Burhon. Meares and I will go for them, for the tide is out. Meanwhile I should advise you, Mrs. Willcox, to change your wet clothes, and the Major perhaps would not mind lighting a fire in the kitchen (there is always wood kept in the cupboard). Then everything will be ready by the time we return with the provisions.'

The prospect of dry clothes, and tea, not to mention the hope of a solitary half-hour with the Major, cheered the poor widow so much that she tried to rise, and succeeded better than she expected. The Major went towards the cupboard in a helpless sort of manner, and Henderson and I sallied forth on our excursion.

'I thought you ordered Felix to leave the provisions in the house?' said I to him when we were out of earshot.

'That was my first idea,' said he calmly, 'but I had a better one afterwards. Don't you see, we can get across to Little Burhon now, but an hour later the tide will be running through the passage like a millrace, and we shall not be able to return. That will mean six hours at least for the Major and the widow to arrange matters, which ought to be sufficient.'

'I see,' said I, laughing. 'But really I can't consent to depriving poor Mrs. Willcox of her tea.'

'I have thought of that too,' said Henderson; 'but hurry up, or we shan't get across.'

We were indeed only just in time to cross the narrow channel in water up to our knees. Henderson led the way to a cairn of stones which he soon demolished, exposing a goodly basket, whence he drew several canisters and a ball of string. He then proceeded to extract a handful of tea, a kettle, a spirit lamp, a tin of biscuits, and some potted shrimps. These he laid on a stone, and put the ball of string in his pocket. 'Now we will go back to the channel,' said he, 'and make ourselves comfortable till the Major comes to look for us.'

It was a good half-hour before we saw the Major approaching on the opposite bank. Doubtless Mrs. Willcox had known how to detain him. By this time the channel had become a boiling cauldron of water that no swimmer could cross. The tides in the vicinity of Alderney run with marvellous velocity, as no doubt everyone knows.

The Major stood on the bank, and realised the situation at once.

'You fellows have done it this time,' said he; 'you will have to stay there all night. And how are we on this side to get anything to eat, I should like to know?'

'I have a ball of string here, Major,' replied Henderson. 'I can just tie a stone to it and fling it across to you, and you can draw over the basket. I have made a little raft to float it with.'

'All right,' said the Major. 'But I say, you fellows, do get across yourselves as soon as you can. I don't know how Mrs. Willcox will like being left alone with me. It seems scarcely proper.'

'Oh, if you keep her amused she will be quite happy,' said I, laughing. 'We will not be able to cross for the next five hours, I am afraid. Look out for the stone!'

When the Major had disappeared with the basket, Henderson and I indulged ourselves in a fit of laughter, and then went back to the place where we had left our own provisions.

'Selfish old beast!' said Henderson; 'he never even asked us if we had kept anything for ourselves. We might have starved for all he cared.'

'A man in love must be excused,' said I, lighting the spirit lamp, and preparing to make tea. 'I hope, by the way, that there is a kettle in the hut?'

'Oh, yes, I know there is always one kept there. Let us spread out our tobacco to dry, or we shall not be able to get a smoke after tea.'

Our meal over and our tobacco dry, we lighted our pipes and strolled down to a point on the shore from whence we could see the scene of our shipwreck. The poor 'Memo' was being rapidly broken up by the ground swell, which pounded her against the sharp rocks, and sent her timbers floating away at every shock. Both of us felt rather melancholy as we gazed at the destruction.

'If this plan of ours does not succeed, we may as well leave the service, Henderson,' said I. 'The Major will never forget

the predicament into which we have led him, though he doesn't suspect how much hand we had in it.'

'I tell you it *must* succeed,' said Henderson. 'Why, even if the Major were most averse to the match (which he is not), he would marry the woman to avoid the scandal that will be talked in Guernsey over this adventure. I would give ten pounds this minute to be able to enter the hut invisibly, and hear what is going on.'

That, however, neither of us could do; but we heard something afterwards of what transpired. Mrs. Willcox made the best use of her time, and at last brought the poor Major to such a point that he knew flight was his only hope, and consequently proposed that she should retire to rest, and he should sleep outside the hut and watch over it. But the widow stormed this last parallel by insisting that she could not sleep in so strange a place, and that he must sit up with her and keep her company. An hour later the Major surrendered at discretion, and laid his hand and heart at her feet. I verily believe that, when it was done, he felt it a great relief to his mind. Henderson and I crossed over the channel about midnight, when the tide was out, and slept pretty comfortably on a couch made of bracken in lee of a rock. The morning dawned with a clear horizon, the fog having blown away, and we had not much difficulty in attracting the attention of some of the men at early drill in Fort Tourgis. Both of us understood 'flag-wagging,' as the Morse system of signalling is called in the army, and we soon made known, by the help of a pocket handkerchief, our need of a boat. As our rescuers pulled us round the ruined end of the great Alderney Breakwater, I noticed that the Major held one of the widow's hands under her cloak, and knew that our plan had succeeded.

I have little more to relate. The Major got a month's leave of absence and married Mrs. Willcox. I believe he never regretted it, and that she made him a thoroughly good wife, but I had no personal opportunities of judging, as he never returned to the Battery, but exchanged to a depôt at Sunderland. I fancy he did not care to face us again, and doubtless it was best for all parties. The last I heard of him was from a sergeant in his new Battery, whom I met accidentally in London, whither he had come on escort duty. When I asked what sort of man his Major was, he winked at me, and replied, 'Well, sir, it's all according! While his wife is with him, he is as nice a gentleman as you could wish

to serve under, but when she is away on a visit he worrits us awful!' Which was a naïve and valuable testimony to the power of female influence, and finally removed all lurking doubts from my mind as to our justification in marrying the Major.

His successor in Alderney was a married man, and we found him all that could be desired. I told him the whole story one day, under a solemn vow of secrecy, which I fear he did not keep, as some years later I heard a very exaggerated version of it told in a mess room after dinner. On the whole, Henderson and I are resolved not to encounter either the Major or his wife again if we can help it. We are magnanimous, and do not care to be thanked in person for our good deeds!

BRADSHAW.

In the process of making a fortune, nothing is so striking as the contrast between the humble store in which the ambitious trader began his operations, and the enormous palace—covering acres, it may be—which is now the scene of his vast enterprises. Here are two productions of human skill and energy now lying before us; one the first, and the other the last, of a series which has spread over a span of nearly fifty years, and illustrate, in a most astonishing way, the contrast between small beginnings and their triumphant development. Of these records, the first is, as it were, the seed, the last the full-grown tree. Between both are over a thousand others, of progressive size, each exhibiting a slight increase over its predecessor. Without further figure, these records are the infant 'Bradshaw's Railway Time Tables' of 1839, and the matured, flourishing, corpulent 'Bradshaw's Guide' of 1888, which no practised railway traveller is, or indeed can be, without. 'Look in Bradshaw!' 'Fetch a Bradshaw!' is the usual preliminary to the hurried journey; and the invaluable Guide, Philosopher, and Friend is consulted alike by the escaping malefactor and the officer who pursues. It speeds the parting guest, heralds his arrival, and regulates the wedding and the funeral alike.

In the year 1838, there was living in Manchester one George Bradshaw, a Quaker, who in a rather humble way followed the calling of an engraver of maps and plans of cities. This brought him into connection with the railways, then beginning to stir the community, and an idea naturally suggested itself of combining his maps and plans in a little manual which should contain the hours of departure, arrival, and stoppages of the few trains then working, and which, being offered at the low price of threepence, might be a convenience to the traveller. It is easy to see that it was the opportunity of displaying his skill in map drawing which led to this venture, for all the early numbers were garnished with not inelegant specimens of his craft. When the scheme began to prosper, one John Gadsby, of Manchester, claimed to have been the original pioneer, protesting that in the same year he had sent out 'Gadsby's Monthly Railway Guide,'

that being drawn aside from it by other occupations, he had left the field to Bradshaw. A condoling friend long after remarked to him, with some lack of delicacy, that 'it was a pity he didn't stick to Gadsby's Monthly Guide.' But the success was really owing to the energy and enterprise of the projector, and it is to be suspected that poor Gadsby was scarcely equal in this respect to Bradshaw.

On October 19, 1839, then, there appeared, in a shy fashion enough, a little book, just 4¼ inches by 2½, bound in violet cloth, and entitled—

> BRADSHAW'S RAILWAY TIME TABLES AND ASSISTANT TO RAILWAY TRAVELLING,
>
> WITH ILLUSTRATED MAPS AND PLANS,
>
> PRICE SIXPENCE.
>
> London: Shepherd and Sutton and Wyld.
> 10th mo. 19th, 1839.

The maps or plans were 'The Railways in Lancashire, with plans of Liverpool, Manchester, and Leeds.' 'Assistant to Railway Travelling' is good, if a little ambiguous. Nothing, indeed, could be more modest than the appeal in the introduction: 'This book is published by the assistance of the several railway companies, on which account the information it contains may be depended upon as being correct and authentic. The necessity of such a work is so obvious as to need no apology, and the merits of it can be best ascertained by a reference to the circulation, both as regards the style and correctness of the maps and plans with which it is illustrated.' Notice was further given that 'This work will be published on the 1st of 1st mo. 1840, and succeeding editions will appear every three months, with such alterations as have been made in the interim.'

Of this rare little volume there is no copy in the British Museum, nor, indeed, does that institution possess any guide of a date earlier than that of 1841. The Bodleian Library, however, is rich in these memorials, having the 'Time Tables' of 1839, 10th mo. 25, 1839; also the 'Railway Companion' of 1840, and the 'Guide' of 1841. Trifling and ephemeral as these productions are, they have become treasures from their scarcity and

associations, and we look at them with feelings akin to those with which we visit the original 'Comet' engine in the Kensington Museum. It will be noted that in all these early issues, the forms '25th of 10th mo.,' then a novelty in favour with the Society of Friends, was adhered to. The materials for his work Bradshaw obtained, as they are now obtained, from the companies. Mr. E. L. Blanchard, who in his time has played many parts, and was early concerned in the venture, tells us that the companies were, at first, vehemently opposed to the scheme, and, in their niggard way, refused to supply their tables on the odd ground that this would make punctuality a sort of obligation, and that failure would bring penalties. G. Bradshaw, however, was not to be repulsed, and by various devices, notably by taking many shares, brought over the hostile companies. He was fortunate, too, in finding a London agent who was almost as persevering as he was. This was Mr. Adams, of Fleet Street, a name familiar for half a century to all in want of passport or guide book—an energetic man, who saw another capability in the enterprise, the development of the advertisement. For the traveller could be appealed o through the agency of his guide, and could be approached in o other way. On this sagacious principle he set to work, and aboured for years with complete success, and the sixty odd pages f 'bold' and crowded advertisement that now swell the guide, estify to his sagacity.

The success of his little manual encouraged our Quaker to xperiment with another shape of his venture. In the following ear he brought out what he called 'Bradshaw's Railway Companion,' a tiny book, neatly bound in violet cloth, with a gold evice in the centre, and in size about four inches by three. The natter contained is virtually the same as that in the 'Time Tables.' Barely a dozen railways are described. It was intended s an occasional issue, and the price was sixpence.

This seems now a rather piquant and varied little collection, ontaining nearly a dozen of carefully executed miniature maps nd plans of towns, together with a curious representation f the levels of each line, drawn parallel to each other, with all heir stations marked. What strikes one, however, in these early ttempts at a guide-book is the complete mastery of the idea as o arrangement and clearness of division; and this has scarcely ltered to the present hour. But it was often remarked as one f the miracles of English Railway enterprise, that it found the

community properly equipped, ready to supply everything that was required; engineers, merchants, surveyors, &c. started up, ready-made and ready to supplement their lack of experience by a fertility of resource and an ingenious adaptation of their old-fashioned knowledge. We find in the primitive guide the same clearness of purpose and arrangement, even with those references to qualifying notes which are an important feature in the guide of our time. Thus early they had adopted in their table 'the thick black lines' which, it was explained, denoted that the trains did not proceed further. 'The Companion' languished on till 1848, coming out occasionally—there are about twenty numbers—and a supplement used to be added consisting of a sheet containing all the time tables, and sold at three-pence. It was Adams, the London agent, who urged the necessity of regular, instead of fitful appearance, which alone could give value and certainty to the information. His suggestions were adopted, and this led the enterprising G. Bradshaw to mature yet a third scheme. He had, moreover, not yet satisfied himself as to the title. 'Time Tables' was too narrow, 'Companion' was trivial and unbusiness-like, 'Guide' was more the thing. Accordingly, in December 1841 we find him issuing 'Bradshaw's Monthly General Railway and Steam Navigation Guide,' which continued to be sent out with due regularity every month during the following years.

In 1843 matters were so far prospering that our projector ventured on a further important change. The duodecimo size was discarded, and the present size, with also the present title, was boldly assumed. It became 'Bradshaw's Monthly General Railway and Steam Navigation Guide, containing a correct account of the hours of departure of the trains in every railway in Great Britain and Ireland, with a map of the railways in Essex, Oxford, &c., and a list of shares, exhibiting at one view the cost, traffic, length, dividend, and market value of the same: the departure of Her Majesty's mails, with a list of the places to which travellers and voyagers resort, with every useful information.' It was to be had at Adams's in Fleet Street, it contained thirty-six pages and dealt with forty-eight railways, but had not yet reached to the logical consistency which could alone bring perfect success. Plans and maps &c. were outside the purpose of the work, so was the 'list of shares,' 'market values,' 'dividends,' &c., with which the traveller had after all but little concern. These all presently went by the board, the 'valuable space' being needed for more essential

matter. In the following year an odd and mysterious change in the numbering took place for which it is difficult to offer a reason. The September issue of 1844 was made to bear the number 146, and thus a leap was made from about number 40.

Quite as characteristic as the growth of the 'Guide' are the changes which have taken place in railway habits and customs. Thus at this time we find trains described as 'first class,' 'second class,' 'mixed,' 'fast,' and 'mail,' the term 'express' not having come into use. Stations too were classified as 'first class or otherwise,' certain trains calling only at 'first class stations.' On the London and Birmingham Railway there was a curious method in practice of classifying the fares, which seemed to be regulated by the number of persons in a compartment, and varied according as it was day or night. Thus the charge from London to Birmingham by first class was 32*s.* 6*d.*, but if four travelled inside by day, or six by night, it was reduced to 30*s.*; if six travelled inside by day, the second class carriage was charged 25*s.*, 'closed by night,' but 20*s.* 'open by day.'

It was announced with an almost axiomatic gravity that 'first class trains stop at first class stations,' as though there were a fixed relation between them. Little or no account indeed was taken of the 'waggon' or 'open carriages' as the phrase went, companies in these times seeming to hold the third class passenger in horror. We find also allusions to what were called 'glass coaches.' The tickets were described as 'check tickets' or 'passes,' and this important caution is laid down, that 'the check ticket given to the passenger on payment of his fare will be demanded from him at the station next before his arrival at London or Birmingham, and if not then produced he will be *liable* to have the fare again demanded. Further, 'No smoking is allowed at the stations or in the company's carriages.' An annual subscription ticket to Brighton and back was fixed at the startling prohibitive figure of 100*l.*!

There were some railway phrases then introduced which were inexpressive enough, and which have given place to much more telling forms. Places were 'booked' as in the way-bill of a coach, and you were asked the place to which you were 'destined,' the place itself being your 'destination.' The carriages were always described as the 'coaches,' while 'voyagers' 'rode' in their 'coaches.' As to the luggage, 'passengers are especially recommended to have their names and address or destination legibly

written on each part of their luggage,' when it will be placed on the top of the 'coach' in which they 'ride.' If the passenger be 'destined for Manchester or Liverpool and has booked his place through, his luggage will be placed on the Liverpool or Manchester coach, and will not be disturbed until it reaches its destination.'

There was an odd significance in these directions as to infants: 'Children in arms, *unable to walk*, are free of charge,' a regulation which showed disinclination to accept the 'being in arms' as evidence of being 'unable to walk.' The seats appear to have been numbered, as it was ruled that 'a passenger may claim the seat corresponding to the number on his ticket, and when not numbered he may take any seat not previously occupied.' As to 'tips' the companies were particularly severe. 'No gratuity, under any circumstances, is allowed to be taken by any servant of the company.' 'Soldiers *en route*' were charged under a special agreement. It is well known that in these early days a railway journey was thought a serious and uncertain enterprise, and the companies seemed to have tried to allay apprehensions by directions of a minute and soothing, not to say infantine character, such as 'Preserve your ticket until called for by the company's servant.' Nowadays, by a sort of instinct, nothing is so precious or so carefully 'preserved' as one's ticket. So with the kindly injunction, 'Do not lean upon the door of the carriage.' In the 'Companion' for 1844 we find the companies consulting the pious sentiment of their customers, for it is laid down that, 'On Sundays the trains cease running from ten three quarters until one, being the hours of divine service.' This it will be seen is a matter of respect, not as now when the amount of Sunday trains is regulated by the demands of the traffic, which on the Sabbath is but slender.

Dogs were to be 'conveyed in a proper vehicle,' while 'gentlemen riding in their own carriages' were charged second class fares. The word used for 'correspondence' was 'conjunction' and 'joining.' Thus, 'The train from —— "joins" the train from ——;' or we are told (regardless of the jingle) of 'trains in conjunction with the Grand Junction.' Post-horses were kept 'in readiness' at the principal stations of the great railways, such as London, Birmingham, Bristol, &c., and on due notice given, would be sent to bring carriages from any part of London at the general charge of half a sovereign. As we have seen, the companies invariably use 'ride' as their favourite technical word for 'travel,'

but they furnished a happy *reductio ad absurdum* of this unpleasant word when they fixed a special tariff for 'servants and grooms *riding with their horses*.'

Close on fifty years have passed by, and our guide with every year has continued like Mr. Stiggins to be a 'swellin' wisibly.' The transformation is indeed almost like one in a pantomime. The existing 'Bradshaw' has become really a vast enterprise which entails a constant strain upon all the resources of its projectors, not the least being the difficulty in the face of ever increasing material to keep the whole within measurable bounds. Perpetual and minute changes are taking place in the hours and places, and these have to be introduced often at the last moment. The type is perhaps the most crowded of any known type, yet it has also to be made clear and brilliant. The paper must be thin and light, yet it must not be transparent, or the type will be seen through it. Another intricate problem is to compress the arrangement of a railway into two pages, so that a general view of the whole may be set before the traveller, an almost procrustean task. There are besides innumerable intellectual processes in the way of abstraction and simplification, so as to make the intricate complications of crossing or 'joining' trains clear and intelligible. Mystifying as all this is to the uninitiated, the practised hand soon learns the key and will thread his way readily through the maze; nay, by a little study will be rewarded by discovering extraordinary facilities for his movements, short cuts and happy solutions of difficulties, which will save him time and money. A few years ago there was a sort of abridgment of the time tables of some half-dozen of the great railways, supposed to give a clue to the bewildering maze of figures, but this has recently been dropped out.

Compressed into this wonderful 'sixpenn'orth' of information there is an amount of matter and type which only careful calculation and comparison can give an idea of. A single page will be found to contain an enormous collection of characters, words, numerals, which are as laborious to 'set' by the compositor as words. An ordinary page of a novel contains about five-and-twenty lines, each line holding from eight to ten words; so each page might be set down roughly as containing, say, three hundred words. But a page of Bradshaw contains some eighty lines, each line having about forty characters; the whole therefore displays about three thousand characters, and therefore equivalent to some ten

pages of the novel. Four hundred pages of the guide would be equivalent to, say four thousand pages of a novel, and as an ordinary novel 'runs' to three volumes, of three hundred pages each, this little manual will be found to contain the matter of some twelve octavo volumes. There are besides sixty pages of advertisements, equivalent at least to a couple of volumes more. To follow out the comparison further, the weight of the original little guide was but a couple of ounces, while the modern Bradshaw is over eleven.

What a monument this is of British Railway enterprise can be shown by yet another comparison. As is well known, the spirited Bradshaw soon supplemented his labours by a 'Continental Guide,' which now furnishes the tables of the foreign lines. Here we find all the railways of France, Germany, Belgium, Russia, Spain, Algiers, &c. Yet the whole universe and its railways put together fills but three hundred pages, a fourth less space than that devoted to England alone. As usual, foreign nations have offered the sincerest form of flattery by imitating *in omnibus* this useful model. In Germany there is found 'Hendschel's Telegraph,' a replica of our foreign Bradshaw; France has its 'Chaix Guide;' Belgium a rather lean compilation, 'Guide des Voyageurs.' In most of these countries there is an excellent and useful plan adopted, of displaying the whole railway system of the kingdom on a single sheet, which is affixed to the walls of every station. At the head of each line is set out in bold letters the names of the leading towns to which the line runs. The only drawback is that as every inquirer finds it necessary to run his finger down the figures till he reaches what he is in search of, the whole speedily becomes blackened and illegible. Another serviceable device is the printing in faint outlines on the time-table a general map of the railway system, which gives an idea of the distance, relative position, &c. In Italy, the railway companies place a streak of transparent colour on the columns devoted to night trains, while in other countries a larger form of figure is used to make the same distinction. This has been tried in England, but has apparently found no favour; the truth is our lines are so elaborate in their arrangements and the trains so multiplied, that all such attempts to simplify only cause confusion. The public prefers to find out these things for itself.

'Bradshaw's Railway and Steam Navigation Guide,' which once appealed so humbly for aid from Brown Street, Manchester, now

is issued from an imposing building devoted to its presses, composition, agencies, &c. It is published by Blacklock, one of the original firm of Bradshaw and Blacklock. The worthy, untiring 'G. Bradshaw' has himself long since passed away, and fell, as was becoming, in the cause of British home and duty, and the 'Guide'! He had gone to Norway in 1853, to make some arrangements with the companies of that country. The cholera was raging. He was seized with illness, and died. Let us hope that this public benefactor travelled peacefully 'through' to his 'destination,' a region where, it is to be hoped, he will no more be bewildered with such whirling words as 'express,' 'fast,' &c., and will never be checked at his journey's end by the black line and fatal word '*stop*.'

SOME MISTRANSLATIONS.

Of the curious, and sometimes amusing, errors that are to be found in the translations of the works of various English writers, a long list might be made. Howsoever clear and intelligible the language of the original, absurd mistakes have frequently occurred, owing to the ignorance of the translator of the idioms of our tongue.

It is well known that Voltaire, in his version of Shakespeare, perpetrated several egregious blunders; but, even in our own time, some of his countrymen, in some instances, have scarcely been more happy in their attempts to translate our great dramatist's works. Jules Janin, the eminent critic, rendered that part of Macbeth's speech in which he exclaims, 'Out, out, brief candle!' in these words: 'Sortez, chandelle!' Another French writer has committed an equally strange mistake. Northumberland, in 'Henry IV.,' says—

> Even such a man, so faint, so spiritless,
> So dull, so dead in look, *so woe-begone.*

The translator's version of the words italicised is 'Ainsi, douleur! va-t'en!'—'Thus, grief, go away with you!'

The celebration of the tricentenary anniversary of Shakespeare's birthday, in 1864, had the result of new editions of the poet's plays being issued in several Continental countries. One of these publications was a fresh translation of 'Hamlet,' by a French writer, the Chevalier de Chatelain. Some of the lines of the Prince's soliloquy in Act I. run thus:—

> How weary, stale, and unprofitable
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!
> Fie on't! oh, fie! 'tis an unweeded garden
> That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
> Possess it merely.

The Chevalier renders this speech in the following terms:—

> Fi donc! fi donc! Ces jours qu'on nous montre superbes
> Sont un vilain jardin rempli de folles herbes
> Qui donnent de l'ivraie et certes de plus
> Si ce n'est les engins du *cholera-morbus.*

The translator not only utterly fails to grasp the sense of the passage, but he gives an exquisitely absurd turn to the simile when he represents Hamlet as saying that the plants of the garden are 'provocative of cholera.'

That, in many cases, it is difficult to adequately reproduce the text of Shakespeare, and, indeed, that of many other of our poets, in a foreign language must be admitted, although the Germans have frequently been remarkably happy in their attempts in this direction. But, under any circumstances, such gross blunders as those above cited are almost unpardonable. On a par with these is the rendering of Cibber's comedy of 'Love's Last Shift' as 'La Dernière Chemise de l'Amour'—translating the title of Congreve's tragedy, 'The Mourning Bride,' by the phrase 'L'Epouse du Matin;' and in calling Sir Walter Scott's novel, 'The Bride of Lammermuir,' 'La Bride de Lammermuir'—'The Bridle of Lammermuir.'

The works of various English prose writers have, in some places, been incorrectly translated owing to the fact that in the original a phrase or word has been used in a purely technical sense. An English historian, referring to an incident in the Seven Years' War, said that Lord George Sackville was 'broken' for cowardice at the battle of Minden, employing this expression as a synonym for cashiered. A French writer, quoting this paragraph, translated the word 'broken' as 'roué,' which means broken on the wheel; and he appended a note to the statement, in which he commented strongly upon the barbarity of inflicting—for a purely military offence—a punishment which, in France, was reserved for crimes only of the deepest dye.

Miss Cooper, a daughter of the American novelist, states that, when in Paris, she saw a French translation of her father's tale, 'The Spy,' in which there were several mistakes; but one of them was such that it was almost incredible that any one could possibly have been guilty of it. The residence of Mr. Wharton, one of the characters who figure in the story, is spoken of by the author as 'The Locusts.' Now, the translator had been evidently ignorant of the circumstance of there being any species of trees bearing this name. Having, therefore, looked out the word in his dictionary, and finding the definition to be given as 'Les Sauterelles'—grasshoppers—thus he rendered it in the text. Presently, however, he came across a paragraph in the novel in which it was stated that a visitor to the house of Mr. Wharton had tied his

horse to a locust. Then it might be naturally supposed that the translator would at once have discovered his error. Not a bit of it! His reasoning would appear to have been somewhat on a parity with that of a celebrated countryman of his, when he declared that 'if the facts do not agree with the theory, so much the worse for the facts.' Nevertheless, the writer seems to have been conscious that some explanation was due of so extraordinary a statement as that a horseman had secured his steed to a grass-hopper. Consequently he went on to gravely inform his readers that in America these insects grow to an enormous size; and that in this case, one of these—dead and stuffed, of course—had been stationed at the door of the mansion for the convenience of visitors on horseback!

In comparison with this stupendous blunder, the following mistake of another French *littérateur* in translating a sentence in one of Sir Walter Scott's novels becomes quite a venial one. Meeting a statement in the text that some of the characters who figure in the tale had a 'Welsh rabbit' for supper, the translator not aware that the term was applied to toasted cheese, rendered the phrase as 'un lapin du pays de Galles'—'a rabbit of Wales.' Not content with this, he inserted a foot-note informing the reader that the rabbits of Wales were of such superior flavou that they were in great demand in Scotland (the scene of the story), and, consequently, they were forwarded to that country in considerable numbers. No authority was given for the assertion and it is pretty evident that the idea of the writer must have bee 'evolved from his inner consciousness.'

Again, a Monsieur Bouchette, engaged in writing a life o a German author, Jacob Boehm, gave in an appendix a list of hi works. One of these was a criticism upon a treatise by Isia Stiefel, a contemporary theological writer. The pamphlet o Boehm was entitled in the original 'Reflections upon Isia Stiefel.' Now, in German, the word Stiefel means *boot*, an M. Bouchette was ignorant of the fact that it was also a famil name. He therefore—knowing that the subject of the brochur in question was Scriptural—fell into the ludicrous error of trans lating the title of it as 'Réflections sur les Bottes d'Isaïe'— 'Reflections upon Isaiah's Boots.'

In an Italian journal, 'Il Giornale delle due Sicilie,' there wa not long ago, a translation of a paragraph in an English newspape giving an account of a man having killed his wife with a poke

The word 'poker' was not intelligible to the editor. He, however, had the candour to admit his ignorance, which he did in the following language: 'Non sappiamo, per certo, se questo "pokero" Inglese sia uno strumento domestico o bensi chirurgico'—'We do not know with certainty whether the English poker be a domestic or surgical instrument.'

'Traduttore, trauditore,' says an Italian proverb. A signal exemplification of this aphorism was afforded by the attempt once made to reproduce Mr. Dickens's novel, 'Our Mutual Friend,' in French; for seldom has an author been more thoroughly 'betrayed' by his translator than was the writer on this occasion. While the tale was in process of publication in this country, the proprietors of a Parisian newspaper, 'L'Opinion Nationale,' made arrangements for its appearing in the columns of that journal; and it came out under the title of 'L'Ami Commun.' The person who undertook the duty of translation proved utterly incompetent to the task. A contributor to 'All the Year Round,' commenting upon this circumstance, said, 'One would suppose that two qualifications are essential to constitute a good translator: a thorough acquaintance with the resources of the language used for reproduction being the first; and the second a not less intimate knowledge of the idioms to be reproduced.' This obvious truism would seem to have been completely lost sight of by the editor of the journal in question when he entrusted the translation of the novel to an individual who proved to be lacking in both these important qualifications. It was not simply that the peculiar humour of the original evaporated in the process of reproduction—which, perhaps, was under the circumstances almost inevitable—but the translator displayed a curious ignorance of the most common idioms of our tongue. In introducing Twemlow to the reader, Dickens employs this language: 'There was an innocent piece of dinner furniture that went on easy castors, and was kept over a livery stable-yard in Duke Street, St. James's, when not in use, to whom the Veneerings were a source of blind confusion. The name of this article was Twemlow.' The rendering of this sentence was as follows: 'Il y a dans le quartier de St. James, où, quand il ne sort pas, il est remisé au-dessus d'une écurie de Duke Street, un meuble de salle-à-manger, meuble innocent, chaussé de larges souliers de castor, pour qui les Veneerings sont un sujet d'inquiétude perpétuelle. Ce meuble, inoffensif, s'appelle Twemlow.' Now, translating the phrase 'went on easy castors' by language which means

in English 'shod with large beaver slippers,' can scarcely be said to be following the original quite as closely as is desirable. But a little further on a singularly absurd perversion of the text occurs, which completely throws the above error into the shade. The author, in his description of Podsnap's personal appearance, speaks of the 'red beads on his forehead.' This passage is rendered in these terms: 'Il avait un rang de boutons rouges sur son abdomen'—'He had a row of red buttons on his stomach.' Again, in the novel Boffin is spoken of as being in mourning for his master, and wearing a 'pea overcoat.' But in the translation it is stated that 'pour deuil, il portait un paletot de couleur de purée de pois'—'He wore, for mourning, a coat of the colour of pea soup.'

In fact, the translation of the first six or seven chapters of the story fairly bristled with blunders of a similar character to those quoted. The consequence was that the readers of 'L'Opinion Nationale' rose *en masse*, and energetically remonstrated against the further appearance in its columns of a tale which seemed to them—and with reason—to abound with palpable absurdities. The *feuilleton* of a French journal is a most important department of it, and on the merits of which its circulation largely depends. The result, therefore, of this protest was that the publication of 'L'Ami Commun' was brought abruptly to a close.

A LIFE'S MORNING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'DEMOS,' 'THYRZA,' ETC.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE LEVELS.

NOT the least of many mysteries in the natural history of the Cartwrights was, how they all managed to bestow themselves in the house which they occupied. To be sure, the family—omitting Mr. Cartwright, seldom at home—were all of one sex, which perhaps made the difficulty less insuperable; but the fact remained that Mrs. Cartwright and her five grown-up daughters, together with a maid-servant, lived, moved, and had their being in an abode consisting of six rooms, a cellar, and a lumber closet. A few years ago they had occupied a much more roomy dwelling on the edge of the aristocratic region of Dunfield; though not strictly in St. Luke's—the Belgravia of the town—they of course spoke of it as if it were. A crisis in the fortunes of the family had necessitated a reduction of their establishment; the district in which they now dwelt was humbler, but then it could always be described as 'near North Parade, you know'; North Parade being an equivalent of Mayfair. The uppermost windows commanded a view of the extensive cattle-market, of a long railway viaduct, and of hilly fields beyond.

The five Misses Cartwright did not greatly relish the change; they were disposed even to resist, to hold their ground on the verge of St. Luke's, to tell their father that he must do his duty and still maintain them in that station of life for which they were clearly designed by Providence. But Mr. Cartwright, after many cries of 'wolf,' found himself veritably at close quarters with the animal, and female argument had to yield to the logic of fact. 'Be thankful,' exclaimed the hard-driven paterfamilias, when his long patience came to an end, 'that we haven't all to go to the Union. It 'll come to that yet, mark my word!' And, indeed, few people in Dunfield would have expressed surprise at the actual incidence of this calamity. Mr. Cartwright was ostensibly a

commercial traveller, but obviously he must have joined with this main pursuit many odds and ends of money-making activity, seeing that the family kept out of debt, and still indulged themselves in extravagances which many substantial households would have declared themselves unable to afford. If the town were visited by an opera company, or by some dramatic star going the round of the provinces, the Cartwrights were sure to have prominent seats, and to exhibit themselves in becoming costume. If a bazaar were held, their ready-money was always forthcoming. At flower shows, galas, croquet parties, they challenged comparison with all who were not confessedly of the Dunfield *élite*. They regularly adorned their pew in the parish church, were liberal at offertories, exerted themselves, not without expense, in the Sunday school feast, and the like. How—cried all Dunfield—how in the name of wonder was it done?

We are not concerned to probe the mystery; suffice it that the situation be exhibited as it appeared to the eyes of the world. When the afore-mentioned crisis declared itself, though everyone enjoyed the opportunity of exclaiming 'I told you so!' there were few who did not feel really sorry for the Cartwrights, so little of envy mingled with the incessant gossip of which the family were the subject. Mrs. Cartwright was held in more or less affection by everyone who knew her. She was a woman of fifty, of substantial frame, florid, and somewhat masculine in manner; a thorough Yorkshirewoman, her tone and demeanour were marked by a frank good-nature which often exaggerated itself into bluffness, and was never consistent with the delicacy of refined taste, but which unmistakably evinced a sound and benevolent disposition. When her sharp temper was stirred—and her daughters gave it abundant exercise—she expressed herself in a racy and vigorous vernacular which there was no opposing; never coarse, never, in the large sense, unwomanly, she made her predominance felt with an emphasis which would fain have been rivalled by many of the mothers of Dunfield. Lavishly indulgent to her girls, she yet kept them thoroughly in hand, and won, if not their tenderness, at all events their affection and respect. The girls themselves were not outwardly charming; Jessie, the youngest but one, had perhaps a certain claim to prettiness, but, like all her sisters, she was of coarse type. Their education had been of the most haphazard kind; their breeding was not a little defective; but a certain tact, common to the family, enabled them to

make the very most of themselves, so that they more than passed muster among the middle-class young ladies of the town. As long as they sojourned on the borders of St. Luke's, nothing was farther from the thoughts of any one of them than the idea that they might have to exert themselves to earn their own living; it was only of late that certain emphatic representations on the part of their father had led Mrs. Cartwright to consider which of the girls was good for anything. Amy, the eldest, had rather a weak constitution; it was plain that neither in body nor in mind could she be called upon to exert herself. Eleanor, who came next, had musical faculties; after terrific family debates it was decided that she must give lessons on the piano, and a first pupil was speedily found. Barbara was good for nothing whatever, save to spend money on her personal adornment; considering that she was the plainest of the family—her sisters having repeatedly decided the point—her existence appeared on the whole singularly superfluous. Then came Jessie. Of Jessie her father had repeatedly said that she was the only girl of his who had brains; those brains, if existent, must now be turned to account. But Jessie had long since torn up her school-books into curl-papers, and, as learning accumulated outside her head, it vanished from the interior. When she declared that arithmetic was all but a mystery to her, and that she had forgotten what French she ever knew, there was an unprecedented outbreak of parental wrath: this was the result of all that had been spent on her education! She must get it back as best she could, for, as sure as fate, she should be packed off as a governess. Look at Emily Hood: why, that girl was keeping herself, and, most likely, paying her mother's butcher's bill into the bargain, and her advantages had been fewer than Jessie's. After storms beyond description, Jessie did what her mother called 'buckle to,' but progress was slight. 'You must get Emily Hood to help you when she comes home for her holidays,' was Mrs. Cartwright's hopeful suggestion, one night that the girl had fairly broken down and given way to sobs and tears. Emily was written to, and promised aid. The remaining daughter, Geraldine, was held to be too young as yet for responsible undertakings; she was only seventeen, and, besides, there was something rather hopeful going on between her and young Baldwin, the solicitor, who had just begun practice in Dunfield. So that, on the whole, Geraldine's lot looked the most promising of all.

In previous years, the family had never failed to betake them-

selves for three weeks or so to Scarborough, or Whitby, or Bridlington; this year they had for the first time contented themselves with humbler recreation; Mrs. Cartwright and four of the girls managed a week at Ilkley, Jessie was fortunate enough to be invited to stay for a fortnight with friends at the sea-side. She was the latest to return. Emily being now at home, there was no longer an excuse for postponing study; books were procured, and Jessie, by way of preparation, endeavoured to fathom the abysses of her ignorance.

We have heard Emily's opinion as to the possibility of studious application in the house of the Cartwrights. Her own visits thither were made as few as possible; she declared that she never came away without a headache. In spite of restricted space, the Cartwrights found it impossible to relinquish the habit of universal hospitality. As if discontented with the narrow proportions of her own family, Mrs. Cartwright was never thoroughly at ease unless she had three or four friends to occupy every available square foot of floor in her diminutive sitting-room, and to squeeze around the table when meals were served. In vain did acquaintances hold apart from a sense of consideration, or time their visits when eating and drinking could scarcely be in question; they were given plainly to understand that their delicacy was an offence, and that, if they stayed away, it would be put down to their pride. It was almost impossible to hit an hour for calling at which the family would be alone; generally, as soon as the front door opened, the ear of the visitor was assailed with laughter loud and long, with multitudinous vociferation, Mrs. Cartwright's rich voice high above all others. The room itself was a spectacle for men and gods. Not a member of the family had the most rudimentary instinct of order; no article, whether of ornament or use, had its recognised station. Needlework lay in heaps on table, chairs, and floor; you stretched out your legs too far, and came in contact with a casual flower-vase, put down to be out of the way; you desired to open the piano, and had first to remove a tray of wine-glasses. To listen to the girls' conversation for five minutes was to understand their surroundings; they were hopelessly feather-brained, they chattered and gabbled with deafening persistency. If there was no good in their talk, there could scarcely be said to be any harm; they lived so completely on the surface of things that they impressed one as incapable even of a doubtful thought. One reason why Geraldine was the only one

who had yet definitely attracted a male admirer might lie in the fact that there was no air of femininity about the girls, nothing whatever to touch the most susceptible imagination; a parcel of schoolboys would have been as provocative. And this notwithstanding that they talked incessantly of love-making, of flirtations, of the making and breaking of matches; it was the very freedom and shallowness of such gossip that made it wholly unexciting; their mother's presence put no check on the talk—she, indeed, was very much like her daughters in choice of subject—and the young men who frequented the house joined in discussion of sexual entanglements with a disengaged air which, if it impugned their delicacy, at all events seemed to testify to practical innocence.

Those young men! Dunfield was at that time not perhaps worse off in its supply of marriageable males than other small provincial towns, but, to judge from the extensive assortment which passed through the Cartwrights' house, the lot of Dunfield maidens might be held pathetic. They were not especially ignorant or vulgar, these budding townsmen, simply imbecile. One could not accuse them of positive faults, for they had no positive qualities, unless it were here and there a leaning to physical fatuity. Their interests were concerned with the pettiest of local occurrences; their favouritisms and animosities were those of overgrown infants. They played practical jokes on each other in the open streets; they read the local newspapers to extract the feeblest of gossip; they had a game which they called politics, and which consisted in badging themselves with blue or yellow, according to the choice of their fathers before them; they affected now and then to haunt bar-parlours and billiard-rooms, and made good resolutions when they had smoked or drunk more than their stomachs would support. If any Dunfield schoolboy exhibited faculties of a kind uncommon in the town, he was despatched to begin life on a more promising scene; those who remained, who became the new generation of business men, of town councillors, of independent electors, were such as could not by any possibility have made a living elsewhere. Those elders who knew Dunfield best could not point to a single youth of fair endowments who looked forward to remaining in his native place.

The tone of Dunfield society was not high.

No wonder that Emily Hood had her doubts as to the result of study taken up by one of the Cartwrights. Still, she held it a duty to give what help she could, knowing how necessary it was

that Jessie should, if possible, qualify herself to earn a living. The first thing after breakfast on Tuesday morning, she set forth to visit her friends. It was not quite ten o'clock when she reached the house, and she looked forward with some assurance of hope to finding the family alone. Jessie herself opened the door, and Emily, passing at once into the sitting-room, discovered that not only had a visitor arrived before her, but this the very person she would most have desired to avoid. Mr. Richard Dagworthy was seated in conversation with Mrs. Cartwright and her daughters; or rather he had been conversing till Emily's arrival caused a momentary silence. He had called thus early, on his way to the mill, to inquire for Mr. Cartwright's present address, having occasion to communicate with him on business matters.

The room was so small that Emily had a difficulty in reaching Mrs. Cartwright to shake hands with her, owing to Dagworthy's almost blocking the only available way round the table. He stood up and drew back, waiting his turn for greeting; when it came, he assumed the manner of an old friend. A chair was found for Emily, and conversation, or what passed for such, speedily regathered volume. The breakfast things were still on the table, and Miss Geraldine, who was always reluctant to rise of a morning, was engaged upon her meal.

'You see what it's come to, Mr. Dagworthy,' exclaimed the mother of the family, with her usual lack of reticence. 'Jessie can't or won't learn by herself, so she has to bother Emily to come and teach her. It's too bad, I call it, just in her holiday time. She looks as if she wanted to run about and get colour in her cheeks, don't *you* think so?'

'Well, mother,' cried Jessie, 'you needn't speak as if Emily was a child in short clothes.'

The other girls laughed.

'I dare say Emily wishes she was,' pursued Mrs. Cartwright. 'When you're little ones, you're are all for being grown up, and when you *are* grown up, then you see how much better off you were before,—that is, if you've got common sense. I wish my girls had half as much all put together as Emily has.'

'I'm sure I don't wish I was a child,' remarked Geraldine, as she bit her bread and butter.

'Of course you don't, Geraldine,' replied Dagworthy, who was on terms of much familiarity with all the girls. 'If you were,

your mother wouldn't let you come down late to breakfast, would she?'

'I never remember being in time for breakfast since I was born,' cried the girl.

'I dare say your memory doesn't go far enough back,' rejoined Dagworthy, with the smile of one who trifled from a position of superior age and experience.

Mrs. Cartwright laughed with a little embarrassment. Amy, the eldest girl, was quick with an inquiry whether Emily had been as yet to the Agricultural Show, the resort at present of all pleasure-seeking Dunfieldians. Emily replied that she had not, and to this subject the talk strayed. Mr. Dagworthy had dogs on exhibition at the show. Barbara wanted to know how much he would take for a certain animal which had captivated her; if she had some idea that this might lead to an offer of the dog as a present, she was doomed to disappointment, for Dagworthy named his price in the most matter-of-fact way. But nothing had excited so much interest in these young ladies as the prize pigs; they were in raptures at the incredible degree of fatness attained; they delighted to recall that some of the pigs were fattened to such a point that rollers had to be placed under their throats to keep their heads up and prevent them from being choked by the pressure of their own superabundant flesh. In all this conversation Dagworthy took his part, but not quite with the same freedom as before Emily's arrival. His eyes turned incessantly in her direction, and once or twice he only just saved himself from absent-mindedness when a remark was addressed to him. It was with obvious reluctance that he at length rose to leave.

'When are you all coming to see me?' he asked, as he stood smoothing his felt hat with the back of his hand. 'I suppose I shall have to give a croquet party, and have some of the young fellows, then you'll come fast enough. Old men like myself you care nothing about.'

'I should think not, indeed,' replied Barbara the plain. 'Why, your hair's going grey. If you didn't shave, you'd have had grey whiskers long ago.'

'When I invite the others,' he returned, laughing, 'you may consider yourself excepted.'

Amid delicate banter of this kind he took his departure. Of course he was instantly the subject of clamorous chatter.

'Will he really give a croquet party?' demanded one, eagerly.

'Not he!' was the reply from another. 'It would cost him too much in tea and cakes.'

'Nonsense!' put in Mrs. Cartwright. 'He doesn't care for society, that's what it is. I believe he's a good deal happier living there by himself than he was when his wife was alive.'

'That isn't very wonderful,' exclaimed Amy. 'A proud, stuck-up thing, she was! Served him right, if she made him uncomfortable; he only married her because her people were grand.'

'I don't believe they ever go near him now,' said the mother.

'What did they quarrel about, mother?' asked Jessie. 'I believe he used his wife badly, that's the truth of it.'

'How do *you* know what the truth of it is?' returned her mother, contemptuously. 'I know very well he did nothing of the kind; whatever his faults are, he's not that sort of man.'

'Well, you must confess, mother, he's downright mean; and you've often enough said Mrs. Dagworthy spent more money than pleased him. I know very well I shouldn't like to be his wife.'

'You wait till he asks you, Jessie,' cried Barbara, with sisterly reproof.

'I don't suppose he's very likely to ask any of you,' said Mrs. Cartwright, with a laugh which was not very hearty. 'Now, Geraldine, *when* are you going to have done your breakfast? Here's ten o'clock, and you seem as if you'd never stop eating. I won't have this irregularity. Now to-morrow morning I'll have the table cleared at nine o'clock, and if you're not down you'll go without breakfast altogether, mind what I say.'

The threat was such an old one, that Geraldine honoured it with not the least attention, but helped herself abundantly to marmalade, which she impasted solidly on buttered toast, and consumed with much relish.

'Now you've got Emily here,' pursued Mrs. Cartwright, turning her attack upon Jessie, 'what are you going to do with her? Are you going to have your lessons in this room?'

'I don't know. What do *you* say, Emily?'

Emily was clearly of opinion that lessons under such conditions were likely to be of small profit.

'If it were not so far,' she said, 'I should propose that you came to me every other day; I should think that will be often enough.

'Why, it's just as far for you to come here,' exclaimed Mrs. Cartwright. 'If you're good enough to teach her—great, lazy thing that she is!—the least she can do is to save you all the trouble she can.'

'I've got an idea,' observed Jessie. 'Why shouldn't we have lessons in the garden?'

'That's just as bad. Emily 'll have the same distance to walk. Don't hear of it, Emily; you make her come to Banbrigg!'

'I don't in the least mind the walk,' Emily said. 'Perhaps we might take it in turns, one lesson in the garden and the next at Banbrigg.'

After ten minutes' vociferous discussion, during which Emily held her peace, this plan was eventually agreed upon.

Jessie ran upstairs to prepare herself to go forth.

'Now don't you let her waste your time, Emily,' said Mrs. Cartwright, in the girl's absence. 'If you see she's doing no good, just give it up. I don't half like the thought of making you drudge in this way in your holidays. I'm sure it's very kind of you to have offered to do it, and it's certain she'll mind you more than she would anyone else. She doesn't care a scrap for all I say to her, though she knows well enough it's as much as her father can do to keep things going at all. There never was such bad times in *my* recollection! How are things in London? Did you hear much complaint?'

Emily found it hard to resist a smile at the thought of Mr. Athel or any of those belonging to him indulging in complaints of this nature.

'And what sort of people are they you've got with this time?' the other went on to ask. 'Do they treat you well?'

'Very well indeed.'

It would have been difficult for a stranger, comparing Emily, her tone and bearing, with the members of the Cartwright family, to believe that she came of the same class and had lived through her girlhood under precisely similar conditions. So marked a difference could not but impress even the Cartwrights themselves; the girls did not behave with entire freedom in her presence, and influences to which they were anything but readily susceptible were apparent in the tone they adopted in addressing her. In spite of themselves, they bowed to a superiority but vaguely understood. Jessie, perhaps, exhibited less of this instinctive reverence than the others, although, in point of fact, her endowments were decidedly above those of her sisters; the reason being, no doubt, that acknowledged precedence in intellect had fostered in her the worst kind of self-confidence. The girl was intolerably conceited. Emily almost disliked her; she would have found it a more agree-

able task to endeavour to teach any one of the more stupid sisters. It was in the certainty of a couple of hours' moral suffering that she left the house with Jessie.

The garden which was to be the scene of study was ten minutes' walk away from the house. To reach it, they had to pass along a road which traversed the cattle market, a vast area of pens, filled on one day in each week with multitudes of oxen, sheep, and swine. Beyond the market, and in the shadow of the railway viaduct previously referred to, lay three or four acres of ground divided up by hedges into small gardens, leased by people who had an ambition to grow their own potatoes and cabbages, but had no plot attached to their houses. Jessie opened a rough wooden door, made fast by a padlock, and, closing it again behind them, led the way along a narrow path between high hedges, till a second wooden door was reached, which opened into the garden itself. This was laid out with an eye less to beauty than to usefulness. In the centre was a patch of grass, lying between two pear trees; the rest of the ground was planted with the various requisites of the kitchen, and in one corner was a well. In the tool house were kept several Windsor chairs; two of these were now brought forth and placed on the grass between the pear trees. But Jessie was not disposed to apply herself on the instant to the books which she had brought in a satchel; her first occupation was to hunt for the ripest gooseberries and currants, and to try her teeth in several pears which she knocked down with the handle of a rake. When at length she seated herself, her tongue began to have its way.

'How I do dislike that Mr. Dagworthy!' she said, with transparent affectation. 'I wonder what he came for this morning. He said he wanted father's address, but I know that was only an excuse. He hasn't been to see us for months. It was like his impudence to ever come at all, after the way he behaved when he married that stuck-up Miss Wedlin.'

'Will you tell me how many of these French exercises you have written?' Emily asked as soon as a pause gave her the opportunity.

'Oh, I don't know,' was the answer; 'about ten, I think. Do you know, I really believe he thinks himself good-looking? And he's as plain as he can be. Don't you think so, Emily?'

'I really have no opinion.'

'It was strange he should come this morning. It was only yesterday I met him over there by the mill,'—Dagworthy's mill

stood at one end of the cattle-market,—'and you can't think the impudent way he talked. And, oh, how did he know that you were going to give me lessons?'

'I can't say.'

'Well, he did know, somehow; I was astonished. Perhaps your father told him?'

'That is not very likely.'

'Well, he knew—I wonder who he 'll marry next. You may depend upon it he did treat his wife badly; everybody said so. If he were to propose to me, I should answer like that woman did to Henry the Eighth, you know.' She tittered. 'I can't fancy marrying a man who's been married before, could you? I said that to Mrs. Tichborne one day, at Bridlington, and what do you think she answered? Oh, she said, they're the best husbands. Only a good-natured fool marries a second time.'

This was the kind of talk that Emily knew she would have to endure; it was unutterably repugnant to her. She had observed in successive holidays the growth of a spirit in Jessie Cartwright more distinctly offensive than anything which declared itself in her sisters' gabble, however irritating that might be. The girl's mind seemed to have been sullied by some contact, and previous indications disposed Emily to think that this Mrs. Tichborne was very probably a source of evil. She was the wife of an hotel-keeper, the more vulgar for certain affectations of refinement acquired during bar-maidenhood in London, and her intimacy with the Cartwrights was now of long standing. It was Jessie whom she specially affected; with her Jessie had just been spending a fortnight at the sea-side. The evil caught from Mrs. Tichborne, or from some one of similar character, did not associate itself very naturally with the silly *naïveté* which marked the girl; she had the air of assuming the objectionable tone as a mark of cleverness. Emily could not trust herself to utter the kind of comment which would naturally have risen to her lips; it would be practically useless, and her relations to Jessie were not such as could engender affectionate zeal in a serious attempt to overcome evil influences. Emily was not of the women whose nature it is to pursue missionary enterprise; instead of calling forth her energies, a situation like the present threw her back upon herself; she sought a retreat from disgust in the sheltered purity of her own heart. Outwardly she became cold; her face expressed that severity which was one side of her character.

'Don't you think it would be better if we made a beginning this morning?' she said, as soon as another pause in the flow of chatter gave her opportunity.

'What a one you are for work!' Jessie protested. 'You seem to take to it naturally, and yet I'm sure it isn't a natural thing. Just think of having to muddle over French grammar at my age! And I know very well it 'll never come to anything. Can you imagine me teaching? I always hated school, and I hate the thought of being a governess. It's different with you; you're right down clever, and you make people take an interest in you. But just think of me! Why, I should be thought no more of than a servant. I suppose I should have to make friends with the milkman and the butcher's boy; I don't see who else I should have to talk to. How's a girl to get married if she spends all her time in a nursery teaching children grammar? You don't seem to care whether you're ever married or not, but I do, and it's precious hard to have all my chances taken away.'

This was Jessie's incessant preoccupation; she could not talk for five minutes without returning to it. Herein she only exaggerated her sisters' habits of mind. The girls had begun to talk of 'sweethearts' and husbands before they were well out of the nursery. In earlier years Emily had only laughed at what she called such foolishness; she could not laugh now. Such ways of thinking and speaking were a profanation of all she held holiest; words which she whispered in trembling to her heart were vulgarised and defiled by use upon these tinkling tongues; it was blasphemy against her religion.

Once more she endeavoured to fix the girl's thoughts on the work in hand, and by steady persistence conquered at length some semblance of attention. But an hour proved the utmost limit of Jessie's patience, then her tongue got its way again, and the inevitable subjects were resumed. She talked of the 'gentlemen' whose acquaintance, in a greater or less degree, she had made at the sea-side; described their manœuvres to obtain private interviews with her, repeated jokes of their invention, specified her favourites, all at headlong speed of disjointed narrative. Emily sat beneath the infliction, feeling that to go through this on alternate days for some weeks would be beyond her power. She would not rise and depart, for a gathering warmth within encouraged her to await a moment when speech would come to her aid. It did so at length; her thought found words almost involuntarily.

'Jessie, I'm afraid we shall not do much good if we always spend our mornings like this!'

'O, but I thought we'd done enough for to-day.'

'Perhaps so, but—— What I want to say is this. Will you, as a kindness to me, forget these subjects when we are together? I don't mind what else you talk about, but stories of this kind make me fidgety; I feel as if I should be obliged to get up and run away.'

'Do you really mean it? You don't like me to talk about gentlemen? What a queer girl you are, Emily! Why, you're not settling down to be an old maid at your age, are you?'

'We'll say so; perhaps that explains it.'

'Well, that's queer. I can't see, myself, what else there is to talk about. Grammar's all very well when we're children, but it seems to me that what a grown-up girl has to do is to look out for a husband. How you can be satisfied with books'—the infinite contempt she put into the word!—'is more than I can make out.'

'But you will do what I ask, as a kindness? I am in earnest; I shall be afraid of seeing you if you can't help talking of such things.'

Jessie laughed extravagantly; such a state of mind was to her comical beyond expression.

'You *are* a queer one! Of course I'll do as you wish; you shan't hear me mention a single gentleman's name, and I'll tell all the others to be careful whenever you come.'

Emily averted her face; it was reddened with annoyance at the thought of being discussed in this way by all the Cartwright household.

'You can do that if you like,' she said, coldly, 'though it's no part of my wish. I spoke of the hours when we are together for study.'

'Very well, I won't say anything,' replied the girl, who was good-natured enough beneath all her vulgarities. 'And now what shall we do till dinner-time?'

'I must make the best of my way home.'

'Oh, nonsense! Why, you're going to have dinner with us; of course that was understood.'

Not by Emily, however. It cost a good deal of firmness, for the Cartwrights one and all would lay hands on you rather than lose a guest; but Emily made good her escape. Once well on her way to Banbrigg, she took in great breaths of free air, as if after a close and unwholesome atmosphere. She cried mentally

for an ounce of civet. There was upon her, too, that uneasy sense of shame which is apt to possess a reticent nature when it has been compelled, or tempted, to some unwonted freedom of speech. Would it not have been better, she asked herself, to merely avoid the talk she found so hateful by resolutely advancing other topics? Perhaps not; it was just possible that her words might bear some kind of fruit. But she wished heartily that this task of hopeless teaching had never been proposed to her; it would trouble her waking every other day, and disturb with a profitless annoyance the ideal serenity for which she was striving.

Yet it had one good result; her mother's follies and weaknesses were very easy to bear in comparison, and, when the midday meal was over, she enjoyed with more fulness the peace of her father's room upstairs, where she had arranged a table for her own work. Brilliant sunlight made the bare garret, with its outlook over the fields towards Pendal, a cheerful and homelike retreat. Here, whilst the clock below wheezed and panted after the relentless hours, Emily read hard at German, or, when her mind called for rest, sheltered herself beneath the wing of some poet, who voiced for her the mute hymns of her soul. But the most sacred hour was when her parents had gone to rest, and she sat in her bedroom, writing her secret thoughts for Wilfrid some day to read. She had resolved to keep for him a journal of her inner life from day to day. In this way she might hope to reveal herself more truthfully than spoken words would ever allow; she feared that never, not even in the confidence of their married life, would her tongue learn to overcome the fear of its own utterances. How little she had told him of herself, of her love! In Surrey she had been so timid; she had scarcely done more than allow him to guess her thoughts; and at their last meeting she had been compelled into opposition of his purpose, so that brief time had been left for free exchange of tenderness. But some day she would put this little book of manuscript into his hands, and the shadowy bars between him and her would vanish. She could only write in it late at night, when the still voice within spoke clearly amid the hush. The only sound from the outer world was that of a train now and then speeding by, and that carried her thoughts to Wilfrid, who had journeyed far from her into other countries. Emily loved silence, the nurse of the soul; the earliest and the latest hours were to her most dear. It had never been to her either an impulse or a joy to realise the

existence of the mass of mankind; she had shrunk, after the first excitement, from the thronged streets of London, passing from them with delight to the quiet country. Others might find their strength in the sense of universal human fellowship; she would fain live apart, kindly disposed to all, but understanding well that her first duty was to tend the garden of her mind. That it was also her first joy was, by the principles of her religion, justification in pursuing it.

In a few days she obliged her mother to concede to her a share in the work of the house. She had nothing of the common feminine interest in such work for its own sake, but it was a pleasure to lessen her mother's toil. There was very little converse between them; for evidently they belonged to different worlds. When Mrs. Hood took her afternoon's repose, it was elsewhere than in the room where Emily sat, and Emily herself did not seek to alter this habit, knowing that she often, quite involuntarily, caused her mother irritation, and that to reduce their intercourse as far as could be without marked estrangement was the best way to make it endurable to both. But the evening hours she invariably devoted to her father; the shortness of the time that she was able to give him was a reason for losing no moment of this communion. She knew that the forecast of the evening's happiness sustained him through the long day, and even so slight a pleasure as that she bestowed in opening the door at his arrival, she would not willingly have suffered him to lose. It did not appear that Mrs. Hood reflected on this exclusive attachment in Emily; it certainly troubled her not at all. This order in the house was of long standing; it had grown to seem as natural as poverty and hopelessness. Emily and her father reasoned as little about their mutual affection; to both it was a priceless part of life, given to them by the same dark powers that destroy and deprive. It behoved them to enjoy it while permitted to do so.

Had she known the recent causes of trouble which weighed upon her parents, Emily would scarcely have been able to still keep her secret from them. The anxiety upon her father's face and her mother's ceaseless complaining were too familiar to suggest anything unusual. She had come home with the resolve to maintain silence, if only because her marriage seemed remote and contingent upon many circumstances; and other reasons had manifested themselves to her even before Wilfrid's visit. At

any time she would find a difficulty in speaking upon such a subject with her mother; strange though it may sound, the intimacy between them was not near enough to encourage such a disclosure, with all the explanations it would involve. Nor yet to her father would she willingly speak of what had happened, until it became necessary to do so. Emily's sense of the sanctity of relations such as those between Wilfrid and herself had, through so different a cause, very much the same effects as what we call false shame. The complex motives of virgin modesty had with her become a conscious sustaining power, a faith; of all beautiful things that the mind could conceive, this mystery was the loveliest, and the least capable of being revealed to others, however near, without desecration. Perhaps she had been aided in the nurturing of this ideal by her loneliness; no friend had ever tempted her to confidences; her gravest and purest thoughts had never been imparted to any. Thus she had escaped that blunting of fine perceptions which is the all but inevitable result of endeavouring to express them. Not to speak of mere vulgarity such as Jessie Cartwright exhibited, Emily's instinct shrank from things which usage has, for most people, made matters of course; the public ceremony of marriage, for instance, she deemed a barbarism. As a sacrament, the holiest of all, its celebration should, she felt, be in the strictest privacy; as for its aspect as a legal contract, let that concession to human misery be made with the smallest, not the greatest, violation of religious feeling. Thinking thus, it was natural that she should avail herself of every motive for delay. And in that very wretchedness of her home which her marriage would, she trusted, in a great measure alleviate, she found one of the strongest. The atmosphere of sordid suffering depressed her; it was only by an effort that she shook off the influences which assailed her sadder nature; at times her fears were wrought upon, and it almost exceeded her power to believe in the future Wilfrid had created for her. The change from the beautiful home in Surrey to the sad dreariness of Banbrigg had followed too suddenly upon the revelation of her blessedness. It indisposed her to make known what was so dreamlike. For the past became more dreadful viewed from the ground of hope. Emily came to contemplate it as some hideous beast, which, though she seemed to be escaping its reach, might even yet spring upon her. How had she borne that past so lightly? Her fear of all its misery was at moments excessive. Looking at

her unhappy parents she felt that their lot would crush her with pity did she not see the relief approaching. She saw it, yet too often trembled with the most baseless fears. She tried to assure herself that she had acted rightly in resisting Wilfrid's proposal of an immediate marriage, yet she often wished her conscience had not spoken against it. Wilfrid's own words, though merely prompted by his eagerness, ceaselessly came back to her—that it is ill to refuse a kindness offered by fate, so seldom kind. The words were true enough, and their truth answered to that melancholy which, when her will was in abeyance, coloured her views of life.

But here at length was a letter from Wilfrid, a glad, encouraging letter. His father had concluded that he was staying behind in England to be married, and evidently would not have disturbed himself greatly even if such had been the case. All was going well. Nothing of the past should be sacrificed, and the future was their own.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STERNER WOOING.

It was an unusual thing for the middle of August to find Richard Dagworthy still in Dunfield. Through all the other months of the year he stuck closely to the mill, but the best three weeks of August were his holiday; as a rule, he went to Scotland, sometimes in company with a friend, more often alone. In the previous year he had taken a wider flight, and made his first visit to the Continent, but this was not likely to be repeated for some time. He always referred to it as more or less of a feat. The expense, to begin with, was greater than he could readily reconcile himself to, and the indulgence of his curiosity, not inactive, hardly compensated for his lack of ease amid the unfamiliar conditions of foreign travel. Richard represented an intermediate stage of development between the hard-headed operative who conquers wealth, and his descendant who shall know what use to make of it. Therein lay the significance of the man's life.

Its pathos, moreover. Looking at him casually from the outside, one found small suggestion of the pathetic in his hard face and brusque manners; nearer companionship revealed occasional glimpses of a mood out of harmony with the vulgar pursuits and

solicitudes which for the most part seemed to absorb him. One caught a hint of loneliness in his existence; his reticences, often very marked in the flow of his unpolished talk, seemed to indicate some disappointment, and a dislike to dwell upon it. In point of fact, his life was rather lonely; his two sisters were married in other towns, and, since the death of his wife, he had held no communications with her relatives. The child was all he had of family, and, though his paternal affections were strong, he was not the man to content his hours of leisure with gambols in a nursery. His dogs were doubtless a great resource, and in a measure made up to him for the lack of domestic interests; yet there sometimes passed days during which he did not visit the kennels, always a sign to the servants to beware of his temper, which at such seasons was easily roused to fury. The reputation he had in Dunfield for brutality of behaviour dated from his prosecution for violent assault by a groom, whom, in one of his fits of rage, he had all but pounded to a jelly. The incident occurred early in his married life, and was, no doubt, the origin of the very prevalent belief that he had ruled his wife by similar methods. Dunfield society was a little shy of him for some time after, until, indeed, by becoming a widower, he presented himself once more in an interesting light. Though he possibly brought about his wife's death by ill-usage, that did not alter the fact that he had a carriage and pair to offer to the lady whom he might be disposed to make her successor.

His marriage had been of a kind that occasioned general surprise, and, in certain circles, indignation. There had come to live, in one of the smaller houses upon the Heath, a family consisting of a middle-aged lady and her two daughters; their name was Hanmer, and their previous home had been in Hebsworth, the large manufacturing town which is a sort of metropolis to Dunfield and other smaller centres round about. Mr. Hanmer was recently dead; he had been a banker, but suffered grave losses in a period of commercial depression, and left his family poorly off. Various reasons led to his widow's quitting Hebsworth; Dunfield inquirers naturally got hold of stories more or less to the disgrace of the deceased Mr. Hanmer. The elder of the two daughters Richard Dagworthy married, after an acquaintance of something less than six months. Dunfield threw up its hands in amazement; such a proceeding on young Dagworthy's part was not only shabby to the families which had upon him the claim of old-

standing expectancy, but was in itself inexplicable. Miss Hanmer might be good-looking, but Richard (always called 'young' to distinguish him from his father) had surely outgrown such a very infantile reason of choice, when other attractions were, to the Dunfield mind, altogether wanting. The Hanmers were not only poor, but, more shameful still, positively 'stuck up' in their poverty. They came originally from the South of England, forsooth, and spoke in an affected way, pronouncing their vowels absurdly. Well, the consoling reflection was that his wife would soon make him see that she despised him, for if ever there was a thorough Yorkshireman, it was Richard.

Dunfield comments on Mrs. Dagworthy seemed to find some justification in the turn things took. Richard distinctly began to neglect those of his old friends who smacked most of the soil; if they visited his house, his wife received them with an affected graciousness which was so unmistakably 'stuck up' that they were in no hurry to come again, and her behaviour, when she returned visits, was felt to be so offensive that worthy ladies—already prejudiced—had a difficulty in refraining from a kind of frankness which would have brought about a crisis. The town was perpetually busy with gossip concerning the uncomfortableness of things in the house on the Heath. Old Mr. Dagworthy, it was declared, had roundly bidden his son seek a domicile elsewhere, since joint occupancy of the home had become impossible. Whether such a change was in reality contemplated could never be determined; the old man's death removed the occasion. Mrs. Dagworthy survived him little more than half a year. So there, said Dunfield, was a mistake well done with; and it was disposed to let bygones be bygones.

What was the truth of all this? That Dagworthy married hastily and found his wife uncongenial, and that Mrs. Dagworthy passed the last two years of her life in mourning over a fatal mistake, was all that could be affirmed as fact, and probably the two persons most nearly concerned would have found it difficult to throw more light upon the situation. Outwardly it was as commonplace a story as could be told; even the accession of interest which would have come of Dagworthy's cruelty was due to the imagination of Dunfield gossips. Richard was miserable enough in his home, and frequently bad-tempered, but his wife had nothing worse from him than an angry word now and then. After the first few months of their marriage, the two lived, as far as

possible, separate lives; Mrs. Dagworthy spent the days with her mother and sister, Richard at the mill, and the evenings were got through with as little friction as might be between two people neither of whom could speak half a dozen words without irritating or disgusting the other. The interesting feature of the case was the unexpectedness of Dagworthy's choice. It evinced so much more originality than one looked for in such a man. It was, indeed, the outcome of ambitions which were not at all clear to their possessor. Miss Hanmer had impressed him as no other woman had done, simply because she had graces and accomplishments of a kind hitherto unknown to him; Richard felt that for the first time in his life he was in familiar intercourse with a 'lady.' Her refined modes of speech, her little personal delicacies, her unconscious revelation of knowledge which he deemed the result of deep study, even her pretty and harmless witticisms at the expense of Dunfield dignitaries, touched his slumbering imagination with singular force. Miss Hanmer, speedily observing her power, made the most of it; she was six-and-twenty, and poverty rendered her position desperate. Dagworthy at first amused her as a specimen of the wealthy boor, but the evident delight he found in her society constrained her to admit that the boor possessed the elements of good taste. The courtship was of rapid progress, the interests at stake being so simply defined on either side, and circumstances presenting no kind of obstacle. The lady accepted him without hesitation, and triumphed in her good fortune.

Dagworthy conceived that his end was gained; in reality it was the beginning of his disillusion. It speedily became clear to him that he did not really care for his wife, that he had been the victim of some self-deception, which was all the more exasperating because difficult to be explained. The danger of brutality on his part really lay in this first discovery of his mistake; the presence of his father in the house was a most fortunate circumstance; it necessitated self-control at a time when it was hardest to maintain. Later, he was too much altered from the elementary creature he had been to stand in danger of grossly ill-using his wife. His marriage developed the man surprisingly; it made him self-conscious in a degree he could not formerly have conceived. He had fully believed that this woman was in love with him, and the belief had flattered him inexpressibly; to become aware that she regarded him with disgust, only kept under by

fear, was to receive light on many things besides the personal relations between himself and her. If he had not in reality regarded her at any time with strong feeling, what had made him so bent on gaining her for his wife? To puzzle this over—the problem would not quit his mind—was to become dimly aware of what he had hoped for and what he had missed. It was not her affection: he felt that the absence of this was not the worst thing he had to bear. Gradually he came to understand that he had been deceived by artificialities which mocked the image of something for which he really longed, and that something was refinement, within and without, a life directed by other motives and desires than those he had known, a spirit aiming at things he did not understand, yet which he would gladly have had explained to him. There followed resentment of the deceit that had been practised on him; the woman had been merely caught by his money, and it followed that she was contemptible. Instead of a higher, he had wedded a lower than himself; she did not care even to exercise the slight hypocrisy by which she might have kept his admiration; the cruelest feature of the wrong he had suffered was that, by the disclosure of her unworthiness, his wife was teaching him the real value of that which he had aimed at blindly and so deplorably failed to gain. Dagworthy had a period almost of despair; it was then that, in an access of fury, he committed the brutality which created so many myths about his domestic life. To be hauled into the police-court, and to be well aware what Dunfield was saying about him, was not exactly an agreeable experience, but it had, like his marriage, an educational value; he knew that the thrashing administered to the groom had been a vicarious one, and this actively awakened sense of a possible inner meaning of things was not without its influence upon him. It was remarked that he heard the imposition of his fine with a suppressed laugh. Dunfield, repeating the story with florid circumstance, of course viewed it as an illustration of his debauched state of mind; in reality the laugh came of a perception of the solemn absurdity of the proceedings, and Richard was by so much the nearer to understanding himself and the world.

His wife's death came as an unhoped for relief; he felt like a man beginning the world anew. He had no leaning to melancholy, and a prolongation of his domestic troubles would not have made him less hearty in his outward bearing, but the progress of time had developed elements in his nature which were scarcely

compatible with a continuance of the life he had been leading. He had begun to put to himself ominous questions; such, for instance, as—What necessity was he under to maintain the appearance of a cheerful domesticity? If things got just a trifle more unbearable, why should he not make for himself somewhere else a new home? He was, it is true, startled at his own audacity, and only some strangely powerful concurrence of motives—such as he was yet to know—could in reality have made him reckless. For the other features of his character, those which tended to stability, were still strong enough to oppose passions which had not found the occasion for their full development. He was not exactly avaricious, but pursuit of money was in him an hereditary instinct; by mere force of habit he stuck zealously to his business, and, without thinking much about his wealth, disliked unusual expenditure. His wife had taunted him with meanness, with low money-grubbing; the effect had been to make him all the more tenacious of habits which might have given way before other kinds of reproof. So he had gone on living the ordinary life, to all appearances well contented, in reality troubled from time to time by a reawakening of those desires which he had understood only to have them frustrated. He groped in a dim way after things which, by chance perceived, seemed to have a certain bearing on his life. The discovery in himself of an interest in architecture was an instance; but for his visit to the Continent he might never have been led to think of the subject. Then there was his fondness for the moors and mountains, the lochs and islands, of the north. On the whole, he preferred to travel in Scotland by himself; the scenery appealed to a poetry that was in him, if only he could have brought it into consciousness. Already he had planned for the present August a tour among the Hebrides, had made it out with his maps and guide-books, not without careful consideration of expense. Why did he linger beyond the day on which he had decided to set forth?

For several days it had been noticed at the mill that he lacked something of his wonted attention in matters of business. Certainly his occupation about eleven o'clock one morning had little apparent bearing on the concerns of his office; he was standing at the window of his private room, which was on the first floor of the mill, with a large field-glass at his eyes. The glass was focussed upon the Cartwrights' garden, in which sat Jessie with Emily Hood. They were but a short distance away, and Dag-

worthy could observe them closely; he had done so, intermittently, for almost an hour, and this was the second morning that he had thus amused himself. Yet, to judge from his face when he turned away, amusement was hardly his state of mind; his features had a hard-set earnestness, an expression almost savage. And then he walked about the little room, regarding objects absently.

Four days later he was again with his glass at the window; it wanted a few minutes of ten o'clock. Emily Hood had just reached the garden; he saw her enter and begin to pace about the walks, waiting for Jessie's arrival. Dagworthy of a sudden put the glass aside, took his hat, and hastened away from the mill. He walked along the edge of the cattle-market till he came into the road by which Jessie must approach the garden; he saw her coming, and went on at a brisk pace towards her. The girl was not hurrying, though she would be late; these lessons were beginning to tax her rather too seriously; Emily was so exacting. Already she had made a change in the arrangements, whereby she saved herself the walk to Banbrigg; in the garden, too, it was much easier to find excuses for trifling away time than when she was face to face with Emily at a table. So she came along the road at a very moderate pace, and, on seeing who it was that neared her, put on her pleasantest smile, doubly glad of the meeting; it was always something to try her devices on Richard Dagworthy, and at present the chat would make a delay for which she could urge reasonable excuse.

'The very person I wanted to meet!' Dagworthy exclaimed. 'You've saved me a run all the way up to your house. What are you doing this way? Going to school?'

He pointed to the books she carried.

'Something like it,' replied Jessie, with a wry movement of her lips. 'Why did you want to meet me, though?'

'Because I want you to do something for me—that is, if you will. But, really, where were you going? Perhaps you can't spare time?'

'I was going to the garden,' she said, pointing in that direction. 'I have lessons there with Emily Hood. Beastly shame that I should have to do lessons, isn't it? I feel too old for that; I've got other things to think about.'

She put her head on one side, and rustled the pages of a French grammar, at last throwing a glance at Richard from the corners of her eyes.

'But do you expect Miss Hood to come soon?' Dagworthy asked, playing his part very well, in spite of a nervousness which possessed him.

'No doubt she's in the garden already; I've given her a key, so that if she gets there first—— But what do you want me to do?'

'Why, I was going to ask you to walk to the station and meet the ten thirty-five train from Hebsworth. Your father will get in by it, I expect, and I want him to come and see me at once at the mill.'

'All right,' Jessie exclaimed with eagerness, 'I'll go. Just let me run and tell Emily——'

Dagworthy was consulting his watch.

'You've only bare time to get to the station, walking as quickly as you can. Which is your garden? Let me go and tell her you are not coming.'

'Will you? The second door round the corner there. You'll have to apologise properly—I hope you know how to?'

This was Jessie's maidenly playfulness; she held out her hand, with many graces, to take leave.

'If he doesn't come,' said Dagworthy, 'will you just walk over to the mill to let me know?'

'I don't know that I shall; I don't think it would be proper.'

'Ho, ho! I like that! But you'll have to be off, or you'll never get there in time.'

She ran away, rejoicing in her escape from the lesson. Of course she looked back several times; the first glance showed her Dagworthy still gazing after her, at the second she saw that he was walking towards the garden.

He pushed open the wooden door, and passed between the hedges; the next door stood open, and he already saw Emily; she had seated herself under one of the pear trees, and was reading. As soon as his eyes discovered her, he paused; his hands clasped themselves nervously behind him. Then he proceeded more slowly. As soon as he stepped within the garden, Emily heard his approach and turned her head with a smile, expectant of Jessie. At the sight of Dagworthy the smile vanished instantly, she became noticeably pale, and at length rose with a startled motion.

Dagworthy drew near to her; when close enough to hold out his hand, he could no longer keep his eyes upon her face; they fell, and his visage showed an embarrassment which, even in her

confusion—her all but dread, Emily noticed as a strange thing. She was struggling to command herself, to overcome by reason the fear which always attacked her in this man's presence. She felt it as a relief to be spared the steady gaze which, on former meetings, he had never removed from her.

'You are surprised to see me here?' he began, taking hold of the chair which Emily had risen from and swaying it backwards and forwards. Even his voice was more subdued than she had ever known it. 'I have come to apologise to you for sending Miss Cartwright to meet her father at the station. I met her by chance just out there in the road, and as I wanted a messenger very badly I took advantage of her good-nature. But she wouldn't go unless I promised to come here and explain her absence.'

'Thank you,' Emily replied, as naturally as she could. 'Will she still come back for her lesson, do you think?'

'I'm afraid not; she said I had better ask you to excuse her this morning.'

Emily gathered up two or three books which lay on the other chair.

'You find her rather troublesome to teach, I should be afraid,' Dagworthy pursued, watching her every movement. 'Jessie isn't much for study, is she?'

'Perhaps she is a little absent now and then,' replied Emily, saying the first thing that occurred to her.

She had collected her books and was about to fasten a strap round them.

'Do let me do that for you,' said Dagworthy, and he forestalled her assent, which she would probably not have given, by taking the books from her hands. He put up his foot on the chair, as if for the convenience of doing the strapping on his knee, but before he had finished it he spoke again.

'You are fond of teaching, I suppose?'

'Yes, I like it.'

She stood in expectant waiting, her hands held together before her, her head just bent. The attitude was grace itself. Dagworthy raised his eyes slowly from her feet to her face.

'But you wouldn't care to go on with it always?'

'I—I don't think about it,' she replied, nervousness again seizing her. There was a new look in his eyes, a vehemence, a fervour, which she dared not meet after the first glance. He

would not finish the strapping of the books, and she could not bid him do so. Had she obeyed her instinct, she would have hastened away, heedless of anything but the desire to quit his presence.

'How long will your holidays be?' he asked, letting the books fall to the chair, as if by accident.

'Till the end of September, I think.'

'So long? I'm glad to hear that. You will come again some day to my house with your father, won't you?'

The words trembled upon his lips; it was not like his own voice, he could not control it.

'Thank you, Mr. Dagworthy,' she replied.

He bent to the books again, and this time succeeded in binding them together. As he fastened the buckle, drops of perspiration fell from his forehead.

Emily thanked him, and held forth her hand for the books. He took it in his own.

'Miss Hood——'

She drew her hand away, almost by force, and retreated a step; his face terrified her.

'I sent Jessie off on purpose,' he continued. 'I knew you were here, and wanted to speak to you alone. Since I met you that day on the Heath, I have had no rest—I've wanted so to see you again. The other morning at the Cartwrights' it was almost more than I could do to go away. I don't know what's come to me; I can't put you out of my thoughts for one minute; I can't give my attention to business, to anything. I meant to have gone away before now, but I've put it off, day after day; once or twice I've all but come to your house, to ask to see you——'

He spoke in a hurried, breathless way, almost with violence; passion was forcing the words from him, in spite of a shame which kept his face on fire. There was something boyish in the simplicity of his phrases; he seemed to be making a confession that was compelled by fear, and at length his speech lost itself in incoherence. He stood with his eyes fixed on the ground; perspiration covered his face.

'Mr. Dagworthy——'

Emily tried to break the intolerable silence. Her strength was answering now to the demand upon it; his utter abashment before her could not but help her to calmness. But the sound of her first word gave him voice again.

'Let me speak first,' he broke forth, now looking full at her. 'That's nothing of what I wanted to say; it sounds as if I wasn't man enough to know my own mind. I know it well enough, and I must say all I have to say, whilst you're here to listen to me. After all, you're only a girl; but if you'd come here straight from heaven, I couldn't find it harder to speak to you.'

'Mr. Dagworthy, don't speak like this—don't say more—I beg you not to! I cannot listen as you would wish me to.'

'You can't listen? But you don't know what I have to say still,' he urged, with hasty entreaty, his voice softer. 'I'm asking nothing yet; I only want you to know how you've made me feel towards you. No feeling will ever come to you like this that's come to me, but I want you to know of it, to try and understand what it means—to try and think of me. I don't ask for yes or no, it wouldn't be reasonable; you haven't had to think of me in this way. But God knows how I shall live without you; it would be the cruelest word woman ever said if you refused even to give me a hope.'

'I cannot—do hear me—it is not in my power to give you hope.'

'Oh, you say that because you think you must, because I have come to you so suddenly; I have offended you by talking in this way when we scarcely know each other even as friends, and you have to keep me at a distance; I see it on your face. Do you think there is a danger that I should be less respectful to you than I ought? That's because you don't understand me. I've spoken in rough, hasty words, because to be near you takes all sense from me. Look, I'm quieter now. What I ought to have said at first is this. You're prejudiced against me; you've heard all sorts of tales; I know well enough what people say about me—well, I want you to know me better. We'll leave all other feelings aside. We'll say I just wish you to think of me in a just way, a friendly way, nothing more. It's impossible for you to do more than that at first. No doubt even your father has told you that I have a hasty temper, which leads me to say and do things I'm soon sorry for. It's true enough, but that doesn't prove that I am a brute, and that I can't mend myself. You've heard things laid to my charge that are false—about my doings in my own home—you know what I mean. Get to know me better, and some day I'll tell you the whole truth. Now it's only this I ask of you—be just to me. You're not a woman like these in

Dunfield who talk and talk behind one's back; though I have seen so little of you, don't I know the difference between you and them? I'm ignorant enough, compared with you, but I can feel what it is that puts you above all other women. It must be that that makes me mad to gain a kind word from you. One word—that you'll try to think of me; and I'll live on that as long as I can.'

The mere utterances help little to an understanding of the terrible force of entreaty he put into this speech. His face, his hands, the posture of his body, all joined in pleading. He had cast off all shamefacedness, and spoke as if his life depended on the answer she would return; the very lack of refinement in his tone, in his pronunciation of certain words, made his appeal the more pathetic. With the quickness of jealousy, he had guessed at the meaning there might lie in Emily's reluctance to hear him, but he dared not entertain the thought; it was his passionate instinct to plead it down. Whatever it might be that she had in mind, she must first hear him. As he spoke, he watched her features with the eagerness of desire, of fear; to do so, was but to inflame his passion. It was an extraordinary struggle between the force of violent appetite and the constraint of love in the higher sense. How the former had been excited, it would be hard to explain. Wilfrid Athel had submitted to the same influence. Her beauty was of the kind which, leaving the ordinary man untouched, addressed itself with the strangest potency to an especially vehement nature here and there. Her mind, uttering itself in the simplest phrases, laid a spell upon certain other minds set apart and chosen. She could not speak but the soul of this rude millowner was exalted beyond his own intelligence.

Forced to wait the end of his speech, Emily stood with her head bowed in sadness. Fear had passed; she recognised the heart-breaking sincerity of his words, and compassionated him. When he became silent, she could not readily reply. He was speaking again, below his breath.

'You are thinking? I know how you can't help regarding me. Try only to feel for me.'

'There is only one way in which I can answer you,' she said; 'I owe it to you to hide nothing. I feel deeply the sincerity of all you have said, and be sure, Mr. Dagworthy, that I will never think of you unjustly or unkindly. But I can promise nothing more; I have already given my love.'

Her voice faltered before the last word, the word she would never lightly utter. But it must be spoken now; no paraphrase would confirm her earnestness sufficiently.

Still keeping her eyes on the ground, she knew that he had started.

'You have promised to marry someone?' he asked, as if it were necessary to have the fact affirmed in the plainest words before he could accept it.

She hoped that silence might be her answer.

'Have you? Do you mean that?'

'I have.'

She saw that he was turning away from her, and with an effort, she looked at him. She wished she had not; his anguish expressed itself like an evil passion; his teeth were set with a cruel savageness. It was worse when he caught her look and tried to smile.

'Then I suppose that's—that's the end,' he said, as if he would make an effort to joke upon it, though his voice all but failed in speaking the few words.

He walked a little apart, then approached her again.

'You don't say this just to put me off?' he asked, with a roughness which was rather the effect of his attempt to keep down emotion than intentional.

'I have told you the truth,' Emily replied, firmly.

'Do other people know it? Do the Cartwrights?'

'You are the only one to whom I have spoken of it.'

'Except your father and mother, you mean?'

'They do not know.'

Though so troubled, she was yet able to ask herself whether his delicacy was sufficiently developed to enjoin silence. The man had made such strange revelation of himself, she felt unable to predict his course. No refinement in him would now have surprised her; but neither would any outbreak of boorishness. He seemed capable of both. His next question augured ill.

'Of course it is not any one in Dunfield?'

'It is not.'

Jealousy was torturing him. He was quite conscious that he should have refrained from a single question, yet he could no more keep these back than he could the utterance of his passion.

'Will you——'

He hesitated.

'May I leave you, Mr. Dagworthy?' Emily asked, seeing that he was not likely to quit her. She moved to take the books from the chair.

'One minute more.—Will you tell me who it is?—I am a brute to ask you, but—if you—— Good God! how shall I bear this?'

He turned his back upon her; she saw him quiver. It was her impulse to walk from the garden, but she feared to pass him.

He faced her again. Yes, the man could suffer.

'Will you tell me who it is?' he groaned rather than spoke. 'You don't believe that I should speak of it? But I feel I could bear it better; I should know for certain it was no use hoping.'

Emily could not answer.

'It is someone in London?'

'Yes, Mr. Dagworthy. I cannot tell you more than that. Please do not ask more.'

'I won't. Of course your opinion of me is worse than ever. That doesn't matter much.—If you could kill as easily as you can drive a man mad, I would ask you to still have pity on me.—I'm forgetting; you want me to go first, so that you can lock up the garden.—Good-bye!'

He did not offer his hand, but cast one look at her, a look Emily never forgot, and walked quickly away.

Emily could not start at once homewards. When it was certain that Dagworthy had left the garden, she seated herself; she had need of rest and of solitude to calm her thoughts. Her sensation was that of having escaped a danger, the dread of which thrilled in her. Though fear had been allayed for an interval, it regained its hold upon her towards the end of the dialogue; the passion she had witnessed was so rude, so undisciplined, it seemed to expose elementary forces which, if need be, would set every constraint at defiance. It was no exaggeration to say that she did not feel safe in the man's presence. The possibility of such a feeling had made itself known to her even during the visit to his house; to find herself suddenly the object of his almost frenzied desire was to realise how justly her instinct had spoken. This was not love, as she understood it, but a terrible possession which might find assuagement in inflicting some fearful harm upon what it affected to hold dear. The Love of Emily's worship was a spirit of passionate benignity, of ecstatic calm, holy in renunciations, pure unutterably in supreme attainment. Her knowledge of life was insufficient to allow her to deal justly with

love as exhibited in Dagworthy; its gross side was too offensively prominent; her experience gave her no power of rightly appreciating this struggle of the divine flame in a dense element. Living, and having ever lived, amid idealisms, she was too subjective in her interpretation of phenomena so new to her. It would have been easier for her to judge impartially had she witnessed this passion directed towards another; addressed to her, in the position she occupied, any phrase of wooing would have been painful; vehemence was nothing less than abhorrent. Wholly ignorant of Dagworthy's inner life, and misled with regard to the mere facts of his outward behaviour, it was impossible that she should discern the most deeply significant features of the love he expressed so ill, impossible for her to understand that what would be brutality in another man was in him the working of the very means of grace, could circumstances have favoured their action. One tribute her instinct paid to the good which hid itself under so rude a guise; as she pondered over her fear, analysing it as scrupulously as she always did those feelings which she felt it behoved her to understand once for all, she half discovered in it an element which only severe self-judgment would allow; it seemed to her that the fear was, in an infinitesimal degree, of herself, that, under other conditions, she might have known what it was to respond to the love thus offered her. For she neither scorned nor loathed the man, notwithstanding her abhorrence of his passion as devoted to herself. She wished him well; she even found herself thinking over those women in Dunfield whom she knew, if perchance one of them might seem fitted to make his happiness. None the less, it was terrible to reflect that she must live, perhaps for a long time, so near to him, ever exposed to the risk of chance meetings, if not to the danger of a surprise such as to-day's; for she could not assure herself that he would hold her answer final. One precaution she must certainly take; henceforth she would never come to the garden save in Jessie's company. She wondered how Dagworthy had known of her presence here, and it occurred to her to doubt of Jessie; could the latter have aided in bringing about this interview? Dagworthy, confessing his own manœuvre, would naturally conceal any conscious part in it that Jessie might have taken.

Her spirits suffered depression as she communed thus with herself; all the drearier aspects of her present life were emphasised; she longed, longed with aching of the heart, for the day which

should set her free for ever from these fears and sorrows. Another secret would henceforth trouble her. Would that it might remain a secret! If Jessie indeed knew of this morning's events, there was small likelihood that it would remain unknown to others; then the whole truth must be revealed. Would it not be better to anticipate any such discovery, to tell her father this very day what had happened and why it was so painful to her? Yet to speak of Dagworthy might make her father uneasy in his position at the mill—would inevitably do so. Therein lay a new dread. Was Dagworthy capable of taking revenge upon her father? O surely, surely not!—The words passed her lips involuntarily. She would not, she could not, believe so ill of him; had he not implored her to do him justice? . . . .

When Mr. Hood returned from business on the following day he brought news that Dagworthy had at last gone for his holiday. It was time, he said; Dagworthy was not looking himself; at the mill they had been in mortal fear of one of his outbreaks.

'Did he speak harshly to you, father?' Emily was driven to ask, with very slight emphasis on the 'you.'

'Fortunately,' was the reply, with the sad abortive laugh which was Mr. Hood's nearest approach to mirth, 'fortunately he left me alone, and spoke neither well nor ill. He didn't look angry, I thought, so much as put out about something.'

Emily was relieved from one fear at least, and felt grateful to Dagworthy. Moreover, by observation she had concluded that Jessie could not possibly be aware of what had taken place in the garden. And now Dagworthy was likely to be away for three weeks. Her heart was lighter again.

(*To be continued.*)

THE

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THE EAVESDROPPER.

AN UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

IN BED.

I HAD been very ill, some people (I know) had said 'dying,' for many days. Upon the whole I had been inclined to agree with them. It had neither pleased nor displeased me to do so; a pretty sure sign that my case was serious.

> For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey
> This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
> Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
> Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?

inquires the poet; to which I answer 'a good many people, and especially those who are half dead already.' When we are very ill it does not seem worth while to prolong the unequal contest which Nature herself seems to be waging against us. 'What must be, must be; and please, nurse, give me some more barley water.' There is no subject upon which more rubbish has been written than on the thoughts of sick men. When the Destroyer seizes us in health and strength and, like a policeman addressing a criminal, exclaims, 'You come along with me,' the case is quite different. We resent his brutality exceedingly, and above all his obstinacy in refusing bail. There *must* be, we think, some mistake somewhere; he is confusing us with Jones, our senior by ten

years, or with Brown, who is a chronic invalid with a temper to match, and who really *ought* to be sent for. But after lying here for weeks, between asleep and awake, 'to cease upon the midnight with no pain,' seemed no such very hard fate; or, at all events, I had learnt to face it with tolerable indifference. I had no dear ones to leave behind me, wherein, as all medical testimony is agreed, lies the rub. 'In an immense experience,' writes a great physician, 'I have never seen a patient distressed at dying, though often at the prospect of parting with those dear to him.' For, indeed, men are not so sure as they would have us believe of meeting with them again.

Well, that has been spared me. I cannot say I have neither kith nor kin, but such as I have are very distant relatives, and they have always maintained their distance with fine judgment and excellent taste. One may love one's cousin as well as anybody else, but to love him because he *is* my cousin—because my uncle (whom I never liked) married my aunt (whom I positively *dis*liked)—is a most illogical deduction. For my part I am indebted to nobody save for my existence, a thing as I have reason to believe about to slip away from me, and one moreover which I don't think was even so much as in the mind of the donors. In times like these one must be excused for taking a practical view of matters. My parents would doubtless have provided for me if they could, but it was out of their power. If it be true that Heaven helps them who help themselves, Providence befriended me. I could say of myself, indeed, if I were going to stay in it, that I am well-to-do in the world. If it be asked how I made my money—but nobody does ask when one has got it; it is only when one has lost it, or never had any, that folks are curious and sympathetic. ('How *could* you be such a fool? How the deuce do you manage to get along?' and so on.) I say if you ask, however, I must tell the truth; with men in my condition there are few reserves, little false pride, and no delicacy whatever. I made my money by literature.

Many will say 'Impossible!' and I admit that the operation is difficult—very different from an operation in the city, though so much smaller—but, nevertheless, I accomplished it. I had not, indeed, made what is somewhat pompously called 'an honoured name' for myself, but I had made a name that was honoured by, after all, the most important person in any civilised community—one's banker. The circumstances of my case—I am not

speaking of my physical condition, which is unhappily straightforward enough, but of my literary fortunes—are rather curious, and seem indirectly to bear out Mr Francis Galton's views upon heredity. I had an uncle (the one I never liked) devoted to literature, and whose works made exactly the same impression upon the public as my own—namely, none at all. The reason, too, was precisely the same—for they were never printed.

If I don't make myself intelligible all at once, my position must be my excuse for it; I am writing in pencil, under the bedclothes—pen and ink being denied me by the doctor's orders, and the nurse an uncommonly sharp one. I don't use the term 'cunning,' which I heard her apply to *me* the other day, when I was supposed to be under the influence of a narcotic pill—which I had slipped into my vest, like Jack the Giant-killer, and is now reposing under my pillow with the rest of them—because it is an offensive one, and recrimination just now is, I hope, far from my thoughts.

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECTIVE.

My family were agricultural; it was before these bad times came, when to be 'a little short of money' is more aristocratic than the gout, and suggests at once some connection with the landed interest; but, so far as we were concerned, they might just as well have already arrived. We had enough to live on, in a poorish way, and that was all; there was no margin, and the outlook for the next generation was hopeless enough. I was an only child, but the phrase lacked the usual prosperous significance. I was a well-conducted youth enough, but I might just as well, as far as prospects went, have been the prodigal son; nay, better, for he had at heart (though it was all over) the consciousness of having enjoyed himself.

I may as well admit at once that I was not of much use on the farm. Whether this arose from the delicacy of my constitution, as my mother asserted, or from mere idleness, as my father said, or from some marvellous prevision of genius (as I myself am inclined to think) which told me that the farming business was played out and not worth while exerting oneself about, it is now useless to inquire.

A great deal has been written about the attractions of husbandry, but in reality they are limited to the summer months. 'Falsely luxurious, will not man awake?' inquires the poet of the 'Seasons' (who, another poet tells us, was so constitutionally lazy that he was once caught eating peaches off a wall with his hands in his pockets); but to get up before it is light to superintend the operations of agriculture in winter is a hateful duty, the very remembrance of which is disagreeable to me. It is true that in due time there are some interesting results, the waving corn, the bearded barley, the new-mown hay; but in the meanwhile it is like going behind the scenes of a theatre weeks before the first rehearsal.

I much preferred to read about pastoral life in poems and novels, or to write about it in mellifluous verse, to taking an active part in it. To be fond of reading was phenomenal in my family, but to write things 'out of one's own head,' as they expressed it, seemed to them nothing less than a portent. The parents of Dick, Tom, and Harry, my cousins, could boast even more proudly than the Douglas (because they had no shameful exception of a Gawain to blush for), that no son of theirs had ever penned a line; whereas I was constantly writing lines, and even lines that rhymed with one another. Those horrid boys used to ride up to our house upon horses much too large for them and inquire scornfully after Ned the poet. At a time like this, I wish to say nothing against my own flesh and blood; if they had not lived in the same parish we might have been better friends; but, as it was, they were much more near than dear to me. It was only my mother who understood (and even she but dimly) that I was a born genius. The editors of our county newspapers, though they had many opportunities of being informed of the fact, showed themselves grossly ignorant of this by returning my MSS., while those of the metropolitan magazines entered into a conspiracy of silence. This, I am told, is one of their devices for promoting, or perhaps obtaining, a circulation. They do not answer you, and rely upon your purchasing copies of their periodical in hopes of seeing yourself in print; the whole of my pocket money, except what was spent in stationery, went in postage. It is all very well to talk about 'hiving one's sweet thoughts and putting them in books,' but it is much easier to do the first than the second. I hived enough of them to last for seven winters' reading, but they remained in manuscript; there were stacks of

them almost as big as those in our farmyard, but they rarely went to market, or if they did they came back again, generally unpaid. Dick, the most objectionable of my relatives, once inquired whether we insured them, like the ricks.

When I came of age, Uncle Theodore sent for me, as he had done, at the same epoch, with all my cousins. It was quite understood that we went to him on trial, and that if we pleased him we should hear of something to our advantage from his solicitors after his decease. As I have already observed, I never liked him, but it is only right and proper, as my readers will admit, when they come to know all, that he should have a few pages of description. He had been a son of the soil like the rest of us, but had fled from the plough—and the harrow—in early youth, and gone to sea, where, by some unknown means (though I always suspected piracy, and made him the unconscious hero of a good many tales of blood and treasure), he had amassed a considerable fortune. After thirty years of absence he had returned to his native land, purchased the farmhouse in Westmoreland in which he had been born, and retired there to end his days.

It was a long way off from our place, and the railway fare was itself a consideration, but of course such a golden chance was not to be thrown away, though I felt it to be a very small one. Tom, Dick, and Harry had all gone in their turn to Burton Hawse, to be weighed in Uncle Theodore's balance, and been found wanting; and so far I didn't blame him; they *were* 'wanting' in more senses than one; but, on the other hand, I seemed to be still less likely to please him. The virtues which were the passports to his favour, as he had already given out, were of the vulgarest description—Diligence, Duty, Perseverance, and so on; and of all his fellow-creatures he most admired those who began life with half-a-crown in their pockets and died worth half a million. The half-a-crown I had got, though at twenty-one I could scarcely be said to be beginning life with it; but as to Diligence and all the rest of it, the less a young farmer who never got up in the morning if he could help it, and preferred keeping up the parlour fire to any outdoor occupation whatever, was cross-examined upon that point the better. The notion of Ned the poet going to try *his* chance with Uncle Theodore tickled indeed those of my relatives who had already undergone that ordeal exceedingly, without arousing one single spark of jealousy or apprehension.

My mother, however, had her secret hopes, as I gathered from a reply I overheard my father make to her when speaking of my approaching visit, 'What's the use of his knowing how to play his cards, when his uncle has not a pack in the house?' My male parent was very literal and commonplace, but by no means without a certain practical vigour. An example of it, which afterwards (people tell me) proved of great importance to me, took place at the very moment of my departure. My slender wardrobe had been stowed in a portmanteau and carpet bag; but a very large package, under which Joe the Carter was staggering, was about to be added to them, when my father inquired what it contained.

'It has some of dear Ned's last stories and poems, which he means to read to his Uncle o' nights,' replied my mother, with some pardonable pride.

'Has it got anything else in it?'

'No.'

'Then give it here, Joe;' and with an almost superhuman exertion of his vast physical strength, my father chucked it into the horsepond.

CHAPTER III.

UNCLE THEODORE.

A MAN'S *amour propre* is always more or less tender, and that of the literary man especially so; it may therefore be imagined what I suffered at having my immortal works thus treated by the author of my being. Whatever editors and publishers may have thought of them, I had myself the very highest opinion of their value, and their loss might well have turned a proud young heart to gall; it did not turn mine, however, perhaps because my nature was an exceptionally noble one, though it is fair to say that the consciousness of having rough copies of every one of those precious MSS. under my little bed at home may have had something to do with it. This, however, my father did not know; he is gone where there are no MSS. and I have long forgiven him; but when I called to mind that he had heard them all read aloud from his son's lips I could only attribute his desire to prevent Uncle Theodore from enjoying the same treat to an unworthy jealousy.

The station was a good way from Burton Hawse; and a trap

driven by a farm servant had been sent to meet me. He was as taciturn as other members of his class, but had a habit of bursting out into guffaws of laughter, which a good deal discomposed me.

'What are you laughing about, my good man?' I ventured to inquire, at the third explosion.

'Master,' he replied with cheerful frankness; then added, as with an afterthought, 'and yourself.'

By dexterous cross-examination I got out of him that what tickled him so was the reflection that I was the fifth nephew whom he had driven to my uncle's house 'on approval;' and now, as he understood (and expressed it), he had got to 'the back end' of the family.

None of them had stayed beyond a week, except Harry, who had had the misfortune to break his leg (from one of the loose stone walls of the country having 'toppled over' him), and it was his impression, Giles said, that he should be driving me over that identical road, but in the contrary direction, within the same period at latest.

'Uncle Theodore must be a very singular character,' I observed.

'He's just a Warlock,' was his reply; and not a word of further explanation could I elicit from Giles.

Burton Hawse was a compact farmhouse built of stone that was not at all likely to topple over, the walls being immensely thick and the windows let into them so as to form broad seats, which supplied the place of chairs, of which there was a great scarcity. The place had no doubt been originally built for defence, though that anybody should have ever wished to acquire it proved the grasping disposition of the heroes of the old border wars. Its position as regards the picturesque left nothing to be desired, the mountain view on all sides being splendid; but the only two sitting-rooms of which it boasted looked into the kailyard, and the sole elevation they commanded was the midden.

'Where no oxen are the crib is clean, but much increase is by the strength of the ox,' says the proverb, and judging from the state of that kailyard, which I had plenty of time to contemplate, I drew favourable auguries of the state of its owner's exchequer.

At last Uncle Theodore came in; an old man, of great height, but skeleton thinness, and with a fire in his eye that seemed to speak more of fever than vitality; he had a long white beard,

which, however, failed to impart its usual air of venerableness; his expression was cynical, and when he was young and strong, had been probably truculent.

'So you've come to try *your* luck with the childless old man, have you, Master Ned?' was his first greeting. It would have been an embarrassing one enough in any case, but the harsh contemptuous laugh with which it was accompanied made it offensive in the highest degree.

I was not a bold rider, and a very poor performer at single-stick, but I was not without spirit; the consciousness of mental superiority to everybody (called by a limited and unappreciating circle my 'conceit') had always sustained me.

'Please to remember, sir,' I answered quietly, 'that though you are my uncle' (here I heaved a sigh of genuine regret) 'you are also my host.'

'What the devil do you mean?' he roared. I saw he knew what I meant quite well, and answered meekly, 'Well, only that I have been here nearly an hour, and been offered nothing to eat.'

He laughed this time with some heartiness, and rang the bell for refreshments. Then he threw himself into a chair, and with his hands plunged into his breeches pockets, rattled his money, and stared at me with cunning looks, like a moulting raven.

He waited in silence till I had finished my repast, to which I did ample justice, but without hurrying myself, for I perceived that conciliation would be utterly thrown away upon him, and then with the curt invitation 'Come out,' he led the way into the farmyard.

We visited the pigs, and were received by them in the usual way; I never could understand the satisfaction people seem to derive from calling upon these animals; *porker-verba*—grunts—is the most you get out of them, and sometimes a great deal of rudeness. From these we went to the cows and the horses; they looked round and then turned their backs upon us, just as they did in the south. I neither felt nor pretended to feel the slightest interest in any one of them. To do my Uncle Theodore justice, he seemed equally unmoved by their attractions.

'You can ride any of those you like,' he observed sententiously, when we had seen the last of them. I concluded he referred to the horses, though I should just as soon have thought of taking that liberty with the cows.

'Thank you, I never ride,' I replied.

'No more do I,' said Uncle Theodore.

Then we sauntered over the fields, both with our hands in our pockets, and looked over the sheep, and stopped at all the gates and looked over *them*, and chewed straws, and 'thought there would be a change in the weather presently,' and had a regular agricultural walk.

'You don't seem to care much about farming, Master Ned?' observed my uncle when we got home again.

'I hate it,' replied I, frankly.

'So do I,' said Uncle Theodore.

Next to having a taste—and especially an amusement—in common, the entertaining a common dislike for what other people admire, is the strongest bond of companionship; it has indeed one advantage over the former in affording no ground for disagreement. My uncle and I never disagreed about hunting, or shooting, or riding, or driving, or walking, because we detested them all. We used to sit for hours smoking our pipes in the garden in the sun, never interchanging a word, but thinking, no doubt (I can answer for myself at least) a good deal about one another. We got on very well together in a negative sort of way; and of course, though the life was very dull, this was a satisfaction to me. It was clear since my uncle neglected his farm that his money did not come from that source. I felt more convinced than ever that it was derived from maritime speculation—piracy. Such is indeed to this day my impression, though I have no proof of it, and it is fair to say that he had tastes and sentiments which seemed to have little to do with 'the Black Flag.'

'These broad acres,' my uncle observed to me one day, indicating with a sweep of his gaunt arm his extensive, but to say truth rather barren territory, 'have belonged to my race for three hundred years and more. Very few men can say that.'

'I have read of one man who could say it, however,' I answered drily, 'and who thought it an additional reason for selling them, since it was "high time they went out of the family."'

My uncle tapped the ashes out of his pipe, and with unconscious plagiarism observed, 'My sentiments to a hair! I bought back this ancestral domain in a moment of impulse, though in some respects it suits me. You have only seen one side of my character at present.'

I smiled a sickly smile; what I meant it to say was 'the

bright side, I am sure, Uncle Theodore,' but it was not a very successful performance, which as it turned out was lucky.

'Hitherto, Ned,' he continued, 'you have only beheld me as the Boor.'

I nodded. I ought to have shaken my head, but I had no time to reflect, and followed the dictates of nature.

'You have doubtless concluded from my sullen taciturnity that there was nothing in me, and little imagined that I was a far better scholar and greater student than yourself. You doubt me still, I see.' (It was not a question of doubt, but of distinct denial, though I took care to hold my tongue.) 'However, let that pass. The fact is, at first I mistrusted *you*. I thought your conceit and impertinence feigned, in order to arrive by a new route at the object in which others had failed. I now perceive that they are genuine and natural to your character. Nephew Ned, you are an honest man.'

Here he shook both my hands, as though to convince me that he was not paying me mere idle compliments, and drawing a huge key from the pocket of his shooting-jacket, invited me to follow him upstairs. At the top of the house there was a door belonging, as I had imagined, to some lumber room, since I had never seen anyone enter it, and into this apartment he led the way. The existence of such a room in such a house gave me little less astonishment than Blue Beard's chamber must have afforded to Fatima. It was lined with ancient books from floor to ceiling; from the latter, in place of a chandelier, hung a stuffed crocodile, and in one corner stood a human skeleton with an hourglass in its bony hand.

'You have never seen anything like this, my young friend,' he exclaimed with a boastful chuckle, and surveying the scene with all the arrogance of the collector.

'There is a print in Hogarth rather like it,' I replied in as indifferent a tone as I could muster, for the truth is I was rather frightened.

'Always honest; honest to the last,' he murmured admiringly. I didn't at all like that phrase 'to the last,' which if not absolutely superfluous seemed to have a very unpleasant significance. It began to strike me that my uncle, whom I knew to be shaky, was also cracked.

'I dare say, now,' he continued cunningly, 'you think I'm a conjuror or something of that sort?'

The position was most embarrassing; to say that I thought him 'no conjuror,' though perfectly true, might have aggravated him exceedingly, and to say I did think him one would be obviously unwelcome. I therefore took a middle course.

'I think you are only pretending to be a conjuror, Uncle Theodore.'

'Right again, Nephew Ned,' he exclaimed in high good-humour; 'and yet, can you believe it, there are fools about here who call me "the Warlock"?'

'Impossible!' I murmured, for of course I was not going to get the poor farm servant into trouble, without doing myself any good.

'They do,' he asserted confidently; 'I took a fancy one morning to put on my astrologer's robe and cast Giles's horoscope for him, and—such a little thing will set a rustic's tongue wagging!—he has believed me to be something uncanny ever since.'

This little incident was afterwards made the subject of dispute in a law court. It was absolutely adduced by those who denied my uncle's competence to make a will as a proof of his being out of his mind; but my advocate most ingeniously demonstrated that the flowing garment embroidered with stars was an ordinary dressing-gown, the black familiar (stuffed) upon his shoulder, the household cat, and the whole proceeding a well-intentioned though futile attempt upon my uncle's part to teach Giles the elements of Euclid.

'Here you see,' continued Uncle Theodore, pointing to the time-worn volumes around us, 'the text-books of the old magicians' trade. You have heard about Socrates, no doubt?'

I nodded; I had read about him at school in the *Memorabilia*, and was not likely to forget it.

'Now, what is your opinion about Socrates?'

Here, again, was an embarrassing position, but I have always held that when no happy idea suggests itself of evading a difficulty, it is better—and easier—to speak the truth.

'I believe him to have been a verbose old humbug,' I boldly replied; 'no person of genuine intelligence could have been so addicted to hair-splitting, or have put so many foolish questions.'

'Good boy; go to the top of the class,' continued my uncle approvingly. 'His pretence of keeping a demon in attendance upon him—though, it is true, out of livery—convinces me that he was ostentatious at bottom. I have always pursued my studies—as yet—without a demon.'

I did not feel quite so sure of that as I should like to have done. There was something uncommonly like manslaughter in my uncle's eye as he made the boast; and I thought those little words 'as yet' might just as well have been left unsaid.

'Here is another fellow,' continued my uncle, pointing disdainfully to a well-thumbed volume, 'whose vanity overshadowed an otherwise illustrious life—Empedocles. He travelled some way on his road to the Great Secret, yet when, in hopes to persuade the world he had discovered it, he threw himself into the volcano, he left his boots outside, and therefore deceived nobody.'

As it was evidently expected of me to say something, I murmured a few words about the force of habit, and his thinking, perhaps (for the moment), that he was going to bed. But my uncle shook his head.

'Cornelius Agrippa, yonder, went still further on the right track. We read that he was accustomed not to leave his room for weeks, and yet had such an accurate knowledge of everything that went on without, that it was supposed to be communicated to him by his dog. Now, what is your explanation of that very singular circumstance?'

'Well, upon my life, sir,' I answered in desperation, for it seemed to me—though upon reconsideration (when in the witness-box) I found reason (and good reason) to alter my opinion—that Uncle Theodore was getting very mad indeed. 'Upon my life, sir, I think it was a lie.'

'A lie,' repeated my uncle, frowning heavily; 'you mean, of course, as regards the dog.'

'I thought you were speaking of the dog, sir.'

'To be sure. "The dog it was that lied." Where does that line come from? You'd better be quick, *you dog*.'

Fortunately I *was* quick, and answered 'Goldsmith,' as though (to use the words of Mrs. Todgers' boy) someone had been behind me with a bradawl.

'Excellent youth,' cried my uncle, patting me on the head. The blandishment did not deceive me. I think—I mean I thought at the time—if there had been a moment of delay in my reply, he would have wrung my neck, or tried to wring it; I flatter myself he would have perished in the attempt, but what would have been the good of that, since (as I then surmised) he would have died intestate?

'Yes, Cornelius Agrippa was a good man. At the court of

the Elector of Saxony he was once requested by Erasmus to call up Plautus from the dead, and exhibit him as he appeared in garb and countenance, when grinding corn at his mill. As morbid a desire as was ever exhibited by any literary character. Is there any parallel to it, I ask you—quick ?'

His impatience was frightful to witness.

'Yes, sir, Mrs. Blimber, who thought she could have died happy if she could only have seen Cicero in his retirement at Tusculum.'

'Good. I like a boy who is familiar with the ancient classics; my own memory is not what it used to be, and I forget about Mrs. Blimber.—Those yonder are the works of Dr. Faustus; it is my opinion that he was subject to illusions. He predicted his own death, however, with great accuracy, in which I have also been very successful—very. *What* do you say ?'

'I said nothing, sir.' (What *could* one say beyond an ejaculation ?)

'But you said, "Oh!"'

'And does not "O" stand for nothing, Uncle Theodore ?'

It was a poor jest (and not my own), but it saved me.

'Here is the wisest and best of them,' continued my uncle, taking a little volume from its shelf, and opening it with reverent hands; 'this is all that remains of Apollonius of Tyana. He was the nearest to the Great Secret. You remember his noble speech to the tyrant Domitian ?'

I nodded; nobody can say that I told a lie about it.

'"'It is not for myself that I speak,' he said; 'my soul is invulnerable to your enmity, and it is not given to you by the gods to become master of my body.' *Whereupon*," we read, "*he precipitately disappeared.*" Now, what do you think of *that?*'

'I think it was most sagacious of him; I should have done it myself, sir, if I could.'

'Quite right; but in that reply you beg the whole question. You are young and strong, and should scorn to beg. The question is, with how much precipitancy did Apollonius of Tyana disappear ? Did he merely take to his heels, or vanish ? Upon this depends the answer to the momentous inquiry, "Did any of those necromancers and astrologers discover the Great Secret at all ?" For my part, I boldly answer "No." That was a stroke reserved for the hand of Genius: the greatest of all geniuses. I need scarcely ask you who *that* is ?'

I wished that he had not asked me; I was in doubt, from his look of excessive complacency, whether he did not expect me to answer 'You;' but, on the whole, I thought it better and wiser to say 'Shakespeare.'

'Well, of course,' he answered, to my great relief. 'But who was the man who found out that Shakespeare had discovered it? *Here* is the man!'

He drew himself up to his full height and smote his breast triumphantly. 'I found it in that volume;' here he pointed to a copy of Shakespeare's works. 'I put it in that pot;' here he touched with his finger a jar of enamelled copper. 'And, after all, I'm afraid to touch a grain of it;' here he sat down on the floor, and burst into tears.

I was really sorry for him, and also sorry for myself, for it was clear, if poor Uncle Theodore continued in this state, that his testamentary intentions, however favourable to me and honourable to himself, would be valueless. Presently he got up, and with the observation, 'This is weakness,' held out his hand; before I could take it, however, he withdrew it. 'I was forgetting,' he said, 'the day of the week, and was about to say good-bye as if it was Friday instead of Monday. On Friday I am going away for a good long while. That is the date I have always fixed on for going away, in case I failed to find the secret. Ned, we shall meet again, and yet I cannot leave you my direction.'

'Mackworth Praed,' I said, with a smile of recognition.

'Yes; you are as fond of quotation as myself; it is your damnable trick of iteration that endears you to me. Moreover, like myself, you have failed in literature. Of course, I could have published on my own account, but I was never such a fool as *that*. I have written scores of MSS., and to-morrow I will begin reading them to you.'

I shuddered, but mustered up a smile.

'I know what pleasure it gives a person,' he added, 'to hear another person read his works aloud.'

'Then I will read you *my* MSS., Uncle Theodore,' I said good-humouredly.

'Good heavens, no!' he replied distastefully. 'If you had ever attempted such an outrage I would have left all my money to erect a golden statue of Shakespeare, to whom I have (almost) owed so much. As it is, since you are persevering, diligent, and easily satisfied (for you are satisfied with yourself, though you are

a total failure), I have left it all to *you*. Now we will go downstairs and have a cup of tea.'

He had recovered his usual manner, and seemed to expect that matters would go on in their ordinary course. But I had made up my mind to leave Burton Hawse on the first opportunity, and that that opportunity should occur the next morning. I was certain to get a letter from my mother by the first post, and in that letter, unless I was very much mistaken indeed, there would be, in her own handwriting—or something that would look very like it—an urgent summons for my return home. I was not going to be shut up with Don Quixote for another twenty-four hours.

I had made a favourable impression on him, it seemed, which would certainly not be improved by my behaviour as an audience of one to his proposed 'readings.' No human being with any self-respect could stand *them*. Moreover (though this, as it turned out, was a hasty judgment), it struck me that Uncle Theodore was as mad as a March hare, and the sooner he was left to his necromancers and his Great Secret the better—and safer.

My parents were not one whit more surprised to see me back again than if they had really summoned me home. My father had all along expressed his conviction that I should return on his hands, like a bad penny, and with no other addition to the family exchequer; it was not to be supposed, he argued, that Uncle Theodore would ever take to a lad who did not know a swede from a turnip—for no one but myself had the least idea of the nature of our mysterious relative's eccentricity. He had not taken any of my cousins into his confidence, nor did I think it necessary to enlighten my father upon the matter; a reticence upon which I had presently good cause to congratulate myself.

My dear mother only observed that she was sure I had done my best, and that it was not my fault that I had been dowered with a soul above mangel wurzel. Of course, she pumped me night and day with questions, and well it was that I had the faculty ('called by a much coarser name out of doors') of 'making the thing that is not as the thing that is.' Even as it was, however, she had her suspicions, and expressed her belief that there was some great secret somewhere in connection with Uncle Theodore—a remark that proved her sagacity, and that theory of heredity which asserts intelligence to descend (in greatly increased volume) from mother to son.

On Friday night we received news by telegraph that Uncle

Theodore was no more. I was greatly moved, partly by regret, for (though I had never liked him) he had behaved far from unkindly to me, but chiefly by the coincidence of date with that he had fixed upon for 'going away for a good long while;' I also remembered what he had said of 'having been very successful—very,' in predicting the day of his own decease. I had not the least doubt in my own mind of his having caused his prophecy to come to pass, and though I entertained the strongest hopes that he would prove a man of his word in other respects, concealed them. The observations of Dick, Tom, and Harry at the lugubriousness of my aspect were only what were to be expected. They wanted to know what was 'the good of it,' since it could never be reported in the proper quarter, and I was not thinking (they supposed) of going upon the stage. My mother said, 'Our dear Ned has a tender heart.'

'It may be lucky for him,' was my father's reply.

I regret to say that he hinted, though vaguely, at the last extremity to which famishing persons (who have refused to work for their own bread) have been occasionally reduced.

On Monday morning, when I got up much earlier than usual to meet the post, things wore a very different complexion. A letter arrived from a lawyer at Appleby apprising me that his esteemed client, the late Mr. Theodore Browne, had left all his property, real and personal, to his nephew Edward Browne, 'on account of his devotion to letters,' and summoning me to Burton Hawse to the funeral.

It was thus that I became wealthy through literature—though not I regret to say immediately. Uncle Theodore's property was so considerable as to incite certain members of his family—who had always opposed themselves to his will—to dispute it in a law court. Justice triumphed (except that the costs of the trial, for some absurd technical reason, had to be paid out of the estate), and eventually I came to my own; not only as regarded the mere money, but the esteem and admiration of all who knew me, with the trifling exception of my cousins.

My father veered round like the weathercock on our barn.

'Upon my life, Master Ned,' he said, with a quaint smile, 'you have proved a cleverer fellow than we took you for, and taken your pigs to a better market than any of us.'

It was the first compliment in connection with farming matters he had ever paid me, and I was greatly touched by it.

My dear mother confined herself to saying, 'This is almost more than I expected of you, my darling,' and a greater eulogium could hardly have been conferred upon me.

Now that I am lying here upon my bed it is a comfort to reflect that I behaved very handsomely to both those old people. They have long been dead, but I have not forgotten them; only just now my mind reverts more especially to Uncle Theodore. I never liked him, but he always interested me immensely—especially in his character of a Warlock. He evidently did not believe in any of those old magicians whose works must have cost him a pretty penny, but which, when I came to sell them, realised such very moderate prices; and yet he had as certainly got hold of *something* extraordinary, though not as it were by the right end. If he failed in discovering the Great Secret, he had at least found out that there was one. It was somehow, it seemed, connected with Shakespeare and a copper jar.

By-the-bye, where *was* that jar? It had come to me with all the other rubbish from Burton Hawse, but I had never even looked at it since. There had been observations made at that trial which were very unpleasant, and had caused everything connected with my uncle's hobby to be distasteful to me. I now remembered that the jar had been locked up in the cupboard in my dressing-room. A sudden desire seized me to investigate it; but how was I to get it? My nurse had taken it into her head that I was delirious, and if I was to ask for such an article, it would corroborate this absurd suspicion. I knew perfectly well that when she had hinted at my 'cunning,' she had referred to the simple yet ingenious devices which persons 'under control,' as it it is delicately termed, make use of to obtain their ends. No sane man, of course, would dream of using such, but on the other hand, I wanted that jar.

'Nurse,' said I, in a faint voice, 'I think if I was left quite to myself for an hour or so, I could get a little sleep.'

She came to the foot of the bed and regarded me very sharply as I lay there, worn and weary, and with half-shut eyes. My ears, however, were as wide open as I could stretch them, and I caught quite distinctly what she was saying to herself: 'I wonder what he is after now?'

It was painful to think of such want of confidence in a fellow-creature, but it was clear that she suspected me of some artfulness.

'A little sleep,' I murmured faintly; 'just a little sleep.'

She drew down the blind, arranged the curtains, put away the sock she had been mending—confound the woman, I thought she would have never done messing about—and at last shut the door behind her. I was out of bed like a sky-rocket, slipped into the next room, opened the cupboard, seized the jar, and had got it between the sheets with me, all within a couple of seconds. Pretty well, I think, for an invalid who, amongst his other ailments, was supposed to be suffering from acute bronchitis!

The jar was of blue enamel and rather pretty, and I thought to myself, 'If I ever get better, I will keep tobacco in this.' But there was something in it already which Uncle Theodore had put there; a black and shining substance, the oleaginous nature of which had doubtless kept it moist for so many years.

'I found it in Shakespeare,' were his words; 'I put it in that pot, and now I am afraid to touch a grain of it.' What had my revered relative the Warlock meant by *that?* I was not much of an agriculturist, as I have confessed, but I knew what a grain was, and there was not a grain of anything to be seen. Thinking how very mad Uncle Theodore must really have been, I was about to replace the lid, when I noticed a slip of paper pasted on the inside. A few words were written upon it very faintly, but which I made out with little difficulty. 'The receipt: 1 Henry IV. II. 1.' There was a pocket edition of Shakespeare in my dressing-room, and I added it to my little property under the bedclothes in a twinkling. To read a book was strictly forbidden me, but surely one might verify a quotation. I looked out the passage with eager curiosity. '*We have the receipt of fernseed; we walk invisible.*'

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRANSFORMATION.

HERE, then, without doubt was the explanation of Uncle Theodore's 'fad'; his 'Great Secret' was the art of making oneself invisible, and he had flattered himself, though he had not had the courage to put it to the test, that he had really made the discovery. As to how he had made it, from that mere hint of Shakespeare's, I knew nothing; the ingredients of the receipt were of course his own, and could be procured at pleasure, and he

had contented himself with concocting a mere sample of the composition.

It did not look like fernseed at all, but the seed had doubtless been powdered and reduced to paste. Of course the whole thing was absurd; but if, like Uncle Theodore, one had really believed there was something in it, it was natural enough that a man should pause before venturing on the experiment of tasting that paste. Suppose it did make one invisible, and one couldn't get visible again? I was very far (as will have been gathered from my account of myself), from being a conceited person; the last man in the world to wish to cut a figure in it, or to place myself *en évidence* (I had had enough of *that* in the witness-box); but still one prefers to preserve one's identity, and at all events not to be sat upon, or trampled under foot, through not presenting an object recognisable by the human eye. To have a voice in everything, where it was least expected, would be very enjoyable, but to be a voice and nothing more would be carrying spirituality much too far. Sooner or later, if one had nothing substantial to back it with, one's voice would be no more listened to than that of conscience itself when one has once discovered that one can do all sorts of naughty things with impunity.

The idea, I repeat, of there being any kind of magic in the thing was absurd; but still, it was not without a tremor that I took a teaspoon from the table at my bedside, dipped it into the jar, and put the contents into my mouth. The effect was most extraordinary. I felt at once as free as air. The nurse, as I have hinted, had entertained the monstrous theory that I was light-headed; but she might have said so now with justice. Every limb was as light as gossamer. It was possible that my opinion might still have had some weight with intelligent persons, but otherwise I was absolutely imponderous. The sense of levity was so strong upon me, that I actually shook the sheet in the expectation that the wind thus raised would carry me up to the ceiling; but I remained just where I was, and a good deal weakened by the exertion. Of course there was no reason why I should fly; Uncle Theodore had not said one word about flying; but I felt a little disappointed. What fun it would have been to be able to flutter about like a Japanese butterfly, and drop in on one's friends (from the ceiling) without hurting oneself? However, one can't expect everything, and that some great change had happened to me was certain.

I left my bed like a feather escaped from the ticking, and was wafted (no other word can express the lightness of my movements) to the pierglass. *It gave no reflection of me.* I knew that I was much emaciated by illness, and of course I had very little on, but still there was *something* of me to reflect, and here there was nothing. Just as when one gentleman wishes to ignore another, he will affect an interest in all other objects but his late friend, the mirror took the most minute note of the bed and window on either side of me, and of the fireplace behind me, but it remained totally oblivious of *me*. The situation was unparalleled. I had been occasionally cut by broken glass, but never before by a whole one. The wardrobe was highly polished, but that also refused to take the slightest notice of me. I pulled up the blind and exhibited myself at the window, where my airy apparel would certainly —for it was midday—have attracted, I thought, at least the attention of the spectator ; a lady was passing by and she looked up, but it was only for an instant, and she hurried on. *It was clear that I was invisible !*

CHAPTER V.

THE ANTIDOTE.

It is impossible to depict the feelings with which this discovery overwhelmed me. In my early days, when I had dreams of a successful literary career, I had often imagined the waking up some fine morning 'and finding myself famous,' the cynosure of every eye; but the contrary of that position, the being imperceptible to human sight, had never entered into my mind. There was an excess of modesty about it, which, to say the truth, was not quite in keeping with my character. Even that well-known personification of seclusion, the violet by a mossy stone, was only *half* hidden from the eye; and just for the moment I confess it seemed to me that that retiring flower had so far the advantage of me. One talks about 'effacing oneself' for the benefit of others, but as a matter of fact it is never done, and I rather shrank from being made the first example of it. To 'make oneself scarce' is also a common phrase, but it implies that one is at some time or another to reappear, whereas, so far as I knew, I might have become so rare—or rarified—as never even

to rejoice the heart of a collector of curios, though he is satisfied with so little. It was strange, though only another proof of the Vanity of Human Wishes, that though I had attained the ideal of my expectations, and passed into a state of ethereal existence absolutely unknown out of a fairy tale, the most pressing question on my mind was how the deuce I was to get back again into my old 'form.'

That many novel experiences lay before me—and also a great deal of fun—was probable enough, but when I got tired of them, as I felt I should do, and wanted to be myself again, and to be recognised as such, for everyone desires *that—spectatum veniunt, veniunt spectentur ut ipsi*—how exceeding unpleasant it would be! I felt like an exceptionally nervous mouse, who having found its way into a trap full of good things, suddenly hears a little door fall behind him, and from that moment has no appetite for those too dearly bought dainties; he only wants to get out again. Nobody would pity me, for nobody could 'see anything' to pity *in* me. I was not 'an object' even for charity—but I intensely pitied myself. A good deal of sympathy has been wasted upon the man without a shadow, but to compare my case with his would be to compare the shadow with the substance. One might have said that he was literally 'nowhere' in the comparison, had not that been so much more my condition than his. However, as there was nothing to be done, and feeling uncommonly cold about the legs, I got into bed again, as being at least a more convenient place for reviewing my position.

When the nurse came back it was clear that there would be a row. A woman can explain almost anything to her own satisfaction, but how would she account to her superiors for the absence of her patient? There was to be a consultation upon my case that very day between Sir Lucas Lucca, a man of European reputation, and Mr. Scratchwig (the great specialist on the cerebellum); but eminent as were their talents, they could hardly prescribe for an invalid without seeing him. Would it be better, I wondered, to speak to the nurse or not? She had a good deal of presence of mind, and might get over my absence of body under the (unfortunately mistaken) idea of its being temporary, but if I was to *say* I was there, when I was not, it might be the death of her. It was a satisfaction of course to feel that I had not lost my consideration for others, but that, alas, was not a material reflection, which was what I wanted.

And now—it was very strange, considering my apprehensions for the future, though we all know how little *those* move us when we have the toothache, or an inverted eyelash, to distract our thoughts from them—I became conscious of a most unpleasant taste in my mouth; that receipt of Uncle Theodore's, as is the case with most medicines of great power, was exceedingly nasty. There was a sugar basin on my bed table, and I took a lump, which nearly choked me—for at that instant the dressing-room door opened.

It was of course the nurse, and I heard her say 'Drat him, if he hasn't been out of bed, and pulled the blind up,' in a grumpy undertone. I felt, however, no anger against the poor woman, but only thought of the terrible surprise that was awaiting her. She stood in the doorway between the two rooms, and stared at me, with an expression of countenance I had never seen her wear before.

'I really think, Mr. Browne,' she said, in a tone of dignified reproof, 'that you had better cover yourself up a little more.'

Suffused with blushes, I dived under the bedclothes.

'In your state of health,' she continued in a mollified tone, 'you should be very particular not to run the chance of catching cold.'

I knew that of course, but as far as *she* was concerned, I had thought it did not signify twopence whether I was out of bed or in. How grateful I felt to that excellent woman for her censure no tongue can tell, *for it convinced me that I was not invisible.*

Indeed I had now become conscious of having recovered my density as suddenly as I had lost it. But how had I accomplished this? I looked again very carefully at the words written on the lid of the jar, and after the 'Henry IV. II. 1,' I thought I could make out with infinite difficulty the figures IV. II. They were much fainter than the others; the light through the sheets was not adapted for such investigations, and of course I dared not let the nurse see what I was about. Then I turned to the place indicated in the play and continued to read through the whole scene. Never surely was the verification of quotation attended with such difficulties, and when I had finished nothing came of it. It was the scene in which Prince Hal proposes to chaff the waiter, and there was nothing in it about fernseed. True, but there were two references (which seemed almost as much out of place) to sugar.

This has much puzzled the commentators, none of whom had

ıt that time discovered that all Shakespeare is a cryptogram levised to save his Bacon. To what end did the waiter give him he sugar? asks the Prince. And well may he ask it. Nobody nows—except me. It was not a mere compliment, as most eople think; it was the complement of the receipt for fernseed. The taking of that lump of sugar had given me body again, and vould probably always do so.

'There's plenty sugar somewhere in the world,' sings some- ody, and as a matter of fact it can be got at every grocer's. It gives one gout, they say, but that would be merely another item ıdded to my complication of ailments, and such a risk was nothing n comparison with the one I had so lately hazarded with so light heart. I had not only discovered the Great Secret, but how to ıse it; the way in and the way out. My dear mother was right n always thinking me such a very clever fellow. I was not a onceited man, but one can't get over facts, even when they tell in ne's own favour, and I felt that Newton himself (to use a sporting xpression of my cousin Dick's) was 'not in it' when compared vith me. He had discovered the theory of gravity, but I had liscovered the theory of Levity *and* Gravity—and also the ractice—in less than five minutes!

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSULTATION.

THE doctors will be here directly,' observed the nurse, 'but I hall not say anything about your having been out of bed.' She poke in a most gracious tone, but it did not deceive *me*; I knew hat it was for her own sake that she was going to be so reticent, ınd replied with a demure wink. This obviously alarmed her. I hought it a good opportunity for making terms with her, for, so o speak, getting leave of absence in case I should have a fancy or experimentalising with the Secret.

'I shall hold my tongue,' I said, 'if you hold yours; let mum e the word for both of us. When I go away from here, I don't vant you to miss me.'

'Oh dear me, Mr. Browne, but we should all do that,' she ınswered, with a little break in her voice intended for pathos (she could put that 'break' on at pleasure).

'Nobody will miss me except you,' said I severely, 'or at all events not so much.'

This silenced her, and though I was not quite sure she had understood my meaning, I thought it best to close the subject.

Presently the doctors came upstairs, and sent the nurse away.

Sir Lucas Lucca took up his station on one side of the bed, and Mr. Scratchwig on the other. Sir Lucas was a tall and portly gentleman, with a voice of honey, and eyes that glowed through his gold-rimmed glasses with a sort of moonlight benevolence. Mr. Scratchwig was short and thin, with the voice of a nutmeg-grater and eyes like gimlets. They asked me questions, to which I answered nothing. It was their business—for which they were to get three guineas apiece—to say what was the matter with me, and not mine. They pounded me about, and tortured me a good deal, but I remained obstinately mute.

'You are better, sir,' exclaimed Mr. Scratchwig sharply. His tone was so very menacing, and his genius in finding out I was better (when he had never seen me before) impressed me so vividly, that I could keep silence no longer; still I was not going to agree with him.

'I'm worse,' I murmured faintly.

'You *think* so,' said Sir Lucas, with a heavenly smile. 'That's a good sign, my dear sir.'

It was obviously useless to converse with learned persons of this sort any more; and I didn't.

They left the room to talk over my case together in the next apartment, and a passionate desire seized me to make a third in their consultation. I swallowed a spoonful of the magic mixture, and floated in after them like swansdown; an instant later, and I should have been smashed like a periwinkle in the closing door; as it was, my nightgown was shut in it, and imprisoned me. Here was a position! Though I could not be seen, it was evident that I was not impalpable as I had supposed. When they left the room they would find me out, though only to a certain extent, and in quite a different sense from what would be the experience of the nurse. I softly opened the door and set myself free.

'These houses are very badly built,' observed Mr. Scratchwig, closing it with a bang.

'A pretty room, too,' observed Sir Lucas sweetly; 'nice pictures these—very nice.'

He was examining the works of art that hung on the walls

through his gold-rimmed glasses. 'Our patient yonder had some taste.'

What did he mean by 'had,' confound him? I had as much taste as ever, and was sorry for it, for I had swallowed a larger quantity of the mixture than before; and of course, if I had brought any sugar, which I had had no time to do, I dared not have taken it.

'This is Windermere,' he went on complacently. 'You know the Lakes, of course, Scratchwig? A lovely district!'

'Devilish damp though,' observed the other. 'That's where I caught my cold last year. I hate a cold.'

'I suffer from colds myself,' said Sir Lucas sympathetically 'My bronchial tubes are easily affected. If these east winds continue I shall run down to some warm place or another for a day or two.'

'I thought you always sent your people to cold places, above the snow-line, for their bronchial tubes.'

'Patients, patients,' said Sir Lucas softly, as though he were saying, 'Don't let us hurry.'

'To be sure, that's different. They are safe to come back to you, are they not? except——'

Here the other coughed so loudly that I lost the conclusion of the sentence, to which, nevertheless, Sir Lucas seemed to address his reply.

'By-the-bye,' he said, 'that reminds me of the case of our friend next door.'

It was about time that something did; for hitherto, though these learned gentlemen had talked of their own ailments, they had not said one word about mine.

'We know, of course, what our friend Jones thinks about it,' continued Sir Lucas.

'Ought to be here,' growled Mr. Scratchwig.

'Well, no doubt; but this I will say for Jones, that directly a case becomes difficult, he hands it over to somebody else. "Responsibility Jones," we used to call him, you remember, because he would never take any.'

'Quite right too,' observed Mr. Scratchwig; 'lucky for him.'

This eulogium upon my own medical adviser was not very gratifying, but I was much too angry upon my own account to think of Jones.

'And now about Mr. What's-his-name—yes, Browne,' said Sir

Lucas, with the cheerful air of a man who finds his memory as good as ever. 'An interesting case.'

'Scarcely in *your* sense,' smiled Mr. Scratchwig.

It was rather a personal pleasantry, for Sir Lucas had been at one time a fashionable accoucheur, and had brought as many persons into the world as he had sent out of it. He now restricted his attentions in that line to Princesses only, and eschewed in a general way that branch of the medical business. He not only ignored the other's observation, but there was a perceptible diminution of blandness in his tone, as he continued, 'I am inclined to think Jones's view of this matter is the right one, Mr. Scratchwig.'

'You have anticipated what I was about to say myself, Sir Lucas,' said the other with obsequious acquiescence; he was making haste, it was clear, to atone for his little mistake. Apology, however, of any kind was distasteful to his nature, and the necessity for it (for on no other ground can I explain what followed) had soured him. 'The probable issue of this affair is not altogether to be deplored,' he continued. 'A narrow and sullen nature. Did you happen to observe the expression of his eye?'

It was fortunate that Mr. Scratchwig could not see it at that moment, or the fact that I shook my fist within half an inch of his nose.

'*I* saw it,' said Sir Lucas, smiling. 'It is one of those cases where one would rather be the doctor than the nurse.'

'Very good, very good!' cried Mr. Scratchwig. 'How I envy you that admirable quality of always saying the right thing in the right place! However, it won't last long—I mean as regards Mr. B.,' he added precipitately.

And this was the man who had said, 'You are better, sir,' and insisted upon it!

'We had better say, I suppose, "the same treatment"?' observed Sir Lucas. 'It can't signify much, and it would be only fair to Jones.'

'By all means; the same treatment, unless there are more complications, though that there can scarcely be. You seem to be very sweet upon that Windermere, Sir Lucas.'

The great physician was again regarding it through his glasses. 'Yes; do you know anything about the disposal of the property; the pictures, for example? Are they likely to be in the market?'

'I'll ask Jones, and drop you word,' said Mr. Scratchwig.

Here there was a knock at the door, and an agitated voice without cried, 'Gentlemen! good gentlemen!'

'Just what I expected,' observed Mr. Scratchwig; 'he's beyond control.'

This was not quite the case, though I was certainly extremely impatient to get back to my room without, so to speak, a row. I opened the door, which they thought the nurse did, and the nurse thought they did, and slipping past her, was in my bed and had swallowed a lump of sugar in half a second. While I was 'putting flesh on,' as the prizefighters say, or (more scientifically) changing from what was of no parts and no magnitude to a solid, I listened to what was being said outside. 'Good gentlemen, he's gone!' sobbed the nurse.

'Well, well, we must all go,' said Sir Lucas, consolingly. (He was thinking of how he should possess himself of that picture of Windermere, I *knew*.)

'He ought not to have done that,' said Mr. Scratchwig, severely; 'I had given him ten days.'

'But you don't understand, gentlemen,' exclaimed the nurse; 'he's not dead, but fled, and nobody knows where he's got to.'

This brought them both into the room at once, where they found me lying (literally enough) in bed, gazing at the ceiling with a placid smile.

'Why, he's got back again!' cried the nurse; 'well I never!'

'At all events, I hope not often,' said Sir Lucas, rebukefully. The two doctors exchanged significant looks.

'You're wrong,' said I, 'both of you. It isn't that.'

'It isn't *what*?' gasped Sir Lucas.

'It isn't drink, as you think. She's a total abstainer.'

The poor nurse cast a grateful look at me (for she did like her sherry at meals), and began to whimper.

'You are overwrought, my good woman,' said Sir Lucas kindly. 'It's a very trying case for you, as we have just been admitting.'

'She's going the same way as he is,' whispered Mr. Scratchwig, confidentially. 'It often happens when the cerebella are sympathetic.'

'Good heavens! what, both of 'em?' murmured Sir Lucas in tones of unconcealed alarm.

Mr. Scratchwig nodded. 'It may be only temporary; but it

is a clear case of delusion. Look here,' he said, turning to the nurse, 'you're a cup too low, and I advise you to take a little stimulant.' ('When we're gone,' put in Sir Lucas, hastily.) 'A glass of sherry or two with your meals won't hurt you.'

I nodded. Scratchwig was right there; they never *had* hurt her.

'There, you see, Mr. Browne agrees with me,' he continued, sardonically. 'We've nothing to say against you, nurse, I assure you. You are not so used to these little affairs as I am.' Then dropping his voice (but *I* heard him), he added, 'You mustn't be alarmed if you lose your patient occasionally. I have no doubt he got between the mattresses. Very likely he'll swarm up the chimney some day. They're very cunning. Come, Sir Lucas, I think we have done all that can be done—humanly speaking—for our patient to-day.' And off they went.

(*To be continued.*)

THE GRAND TOUR.

In these days of rapid locomotion, travelling on the Continent is a thing so easy and so common that it is sometimes difficult to realise what it must have been before the introduction of steam packets and railways. In those times it was a very serious business, involving a vast amount of forethought and preparation. Instead of buying a circular ticket and taking your choice of half a dozen Continental trains in the day, your first care was to buy a carriage—generally a berlin—built in the strongest fashion, in order to stand the wear and tear of the foreign roads. It is true that, if buying a carriage was beyond your means, you might place yourself in the hands of one of two enterprising firms—either that of Déjean or that of Emery—whose carriages set out '*almost every week*' from London to various parts of the Continent. This was at the time when the abdication of Napoleon had once more rendered Europe accessible to the English traveller. Finally, you could go by coach to Dover, and resume your journey on the other side of the Channel by diligence. But the standard guide-books of the period insist strongly on the advantages of travelling in your own carriage, 'going post through France, and, generally speaking, *en voiturier* in Switzerland and Italy.'

Those were the days when passports were matters of absolute necessity everywhere, and when the neglect to have them *viséd* by the proper authorities might entail an enormous delay, if not more serious inconvenience. You got your passport by giving 'a trifling gratuity to the minister's porter.' Having got this, you next thought of your outfit. The carriage had to be fitted up. To judge by the catalogue of things you were recommended to take with you, it must have been very like the van of a travelling salesman. To give the entire list would take up too much space; it will be sufficient to mention a few of the more conspicuous articles. You were advised to take your own bedding and pillows, together with the necessary linen. In somewhat startling contrast to the completeness of this arrangement is the recommendation to take 'a pocket-knife *to eat with*.' Pistols were a *sine quâ non*. Less intelligible are the 'leather sheets,' without which no traveller was to think of starting. A medicine chest, containing

enough drugs to stock a small chemist's shop, was deemed absolutely essential. These are but a few of the articles with which the man who then dared to contemplate a Continental journey was bidden to provide himself. The list closes with a mysterious item—a peculiar and apparently very precious oil, called 'anti-friction oil,' at that time only to be procured in London, though chiefly used and required on the Continent. It seems to have been very costly, but to what extent it really smoothed the poor traveller's way is not apparent. That something of the kind was wanted is, however, only too sadly evident; for in Bohemia, for example, in the vicinity of Prague, the roads were at that time so 'rocky' that heavy carriages were broken to pieces, and, out of one party that ventured upon them on their way to Dresden, 'two of the travellers broke bloodvessels in consequence, whilst the others were overturned and nearly killed with fatigue.' When the roads were not too hard, they had the uncomfortable habit of being too soft, that is, 'so boggy that the lightest vehicle could hardly escape overturning unless held up by men.' Hence what sounds to us the somewhat bold and startling recommendation that invalids, especially consumptive patients, should not attempt to travel except on horseback! How a modern invalid would stare at such a piece of advice!

Provided with passport, carriage, and outfit, the traveller, accompanied by his body-servant, and possibly by a courier—but the courier is not recommended—posted to Dover. There was at that time a boat to Calais four times a week, though English letters were delivered in Paris only twice a week. If Calais did not suit him, there was a boat to Ostend once a week. Finally, he might, if it so pleased him, hire a cutter to Calais for eight guineas. The fare to Calais for a passenger alone was then half-a-guinea, and to Ostend a sovereign. In every case, however, the passenger was expected to present the mariners with a gratuity. The gratuity is described as 'trifling,' but it was probably as much as the fare. In fact, 'trifling' seems as inseparable from 'gratuity' as 'little' is from 'bill.'

But the great business—and no wonder—was with the carriage. It was eagerly waited for and rapaciously pounced upon at Calais. It had, first of all, to be valued; and we may be sure that in the valuation every regard was shown to the owner's feelings, if not to his purse. When it had been thus generously valued, a third of the amount had to be deposited with the custom-house

officials. Such a carriage might easily have been estimated at 300*l*. The traveller would then have had to hand over 100*l*. as a kind of entrance-fee on making his appearance on French soil. It is true the money was only 'deposited,' but money, once deposited, is apt, like fallen seed, to take root. Under no circumstances could this sum ever be recovered intact. If the traveller returned within the year, he was entitled to recover two-thirds of it. But, if he honoured France with his presence for three years, he lost the whole of it. This was the 'ransom of property' in those days, and certainly a magnificent example of direct taxation.

After this, there must have seemed something tame and paltry in the duty which had still to be paid of twenty francs on each carriage, and the clearance fees of forty francs, which, being paid generally through an hotel servant, involved a 'trifling gratuity' of ten francs in addition to that individual.

Supposing the traveller not to have brought his own carriage, he might hire one at Calais to take him to Paris for five napoleons; this carriage would remain at his disposal for fifteen days. Or, if he preferred to go by diligence, he might of course do so. In this case the expense from London to Paris was about five pounds; but the traveller was limited to fourteen pounds in the way of luggage.

Arrived in Paris, the great thing was to know to what hotel to go. The proprietors of the great hotels had an objection to receive passengers by the day. Moreover, there were but few of the hotels at which you could get good meals. As regards prices, they do not seem to have altered very materially. Perhaps they were a little cheaper then than now. Tea was, of course, much dearer. A cup of tea at the *déjeuner* sometimes sufficed to treble the cost of that meal. In the provinces the price of dinner varied from three to six francs a head. But these provincial inns had their drawbacks. Many are described as places where a tolerable meal could be got, but where it was impossible to sleep. The description of even a large town sometimes ends with the significant words, 'not a sleeping-place.' And even at the inns where the food was tolerable, the environment was by no means always pleasant. If the palate was agreeably titillated, the nose was too often outraged. The sanitary reformer had not then appeared upon the scene, and the 'germ,' still undiscovered, wantoned at its will. One of the best inns on the Continent is thus gently stigmatised: 'The charges are moderate, the dinners well served,

but the smells in this house render it unpleasant.' It is noteworthy that there is no suggestion that the house may have been unhealthy also. It was a mere matter of taste, after all. The Britons of those days had no notion of allowing themselves to be injured by a mere evil odour. That idea came in with a sicklier and more nervous generation.

But if the French inns were bad enough, the German were worse. The traditions of the country in this respect were bad, and it almost seems as if nothing less than a railway can paralyse a tradition. How complete the isolation of villages, and even towns, could be in the days before the railway—how little people knew of their own country, or even of their own neighbourhood—is attested by many startling facts. For instance, it is stated in all seriousness, that Chamouni—that focus for travellers in Switzerland—was *discovered* in 1741. The happy discoverers were two Englishmen, Messrs. Windham and Pocock, and at that time even the inhabitants of Geneva, only eighteen leagues distant, had never so much as heard of it. Such complete isolation was, of course, very favourable to the survival of the unfittest. In some parts of Germany the inns were in many respects but little better than those so graphically described in 'The Cloister and the Hearth.' A traveller, writing in 1820, tells us that 'the Germans seldom have a wash-hand basin in any of their country inns, and even at Villach, a large town, we could not find one.' Even nowadays the English traveller—insular and semi-aquatic as he is—is apt to grumble at the exiguity of the washing apparatus provided for him in foreign parts; but the railway has at least rendered impossible the dismal spectacle of a whole town without a wash-hand basin.

One evil tradition has survived to the present day. The German beds have always been at once a trial and a mystery. That a race by no means short should delight in stunted bedsteads has puzzled many a French and English traveller in the Fatherland. Not less mysterious is the narrowness of the bedstead. When one compares the figures of the more substantial burghers of a German town with the receptacle provided for their accommodation at night, no effort of the imagination will make them conterminous; it is certain that the flesh must overlap the feathers. Then the bedclothes are a trial, consisting, as they do in summer, of a blanket with a sheet buttoned to its under surface, in winter, of an eider-down quilt enclosed in a cotton bag. Neither can be

tucked in or secured in any way, and only a born Teuton knows the art of retaining them in position. Most mysterious of all is the triangular section of a mattress which is placed at the head of the bed, and which forms, perhaps, the most effectual obstacle to the repose of a foreigner.

All this seems to have been much the same in the days before the railway. A traveller thus naïvely describes and explains the German beds in 1820. 'Tall people cannot sleep comfortably in any part of Germany; the beds, which are very narrow, being placed in wooden frames or boxes, so short that any person who happens to be above five feet high must absolutely sit up all night supported by pillows, and this is, in fact, the way in which the Germans sleep.'

Doubtless his explanation is the correct one; but those who are not accustomed to sleep in a sedentary posture can rest in such a bed at all only by assuming the shape of the last letter of the alphabet.

The German provisions are described as good, but they could not be eaten with much comfort, as clean table-linen was almost impossible to procure anywhere. Nor was this to be wondered at, as things were usually washed only once a quarter. To the present day the sheets are sometimes sewn on the blankets, which would hardly be done unless they were destined to a long career of usefulness.

One of the great bugbears of travellers has always been the custom-house. With hand as impartial as the foot of Death, the *douanier* knocks at the trunk and valise alike of peer and peasant. He never seems to discharge his task to the satisfaction of anyone but himself; he seldom discovers anything contraband. It is a Sisyphus-like task, which is for ever beginning anew, and leading to no result. Hence his proverbial ill-temper; hence the ruthless way in which he violates the profoundest sanctities of your portmanteau. He has always been essentially the same, but in former times it was easier than now for the traveller to throw dust in his eyes—gold dust, of course. When the *milord Anglais*, travelling in his berlin, passed the barrier of a frontier town, the *douanier* followed his carriage to the hotel, and examined the baggage there. This was a very comfortable arrangement, and could generally be made more comfortable still through the payment of a trifling fee. Sometimes half-a-crown would suffice to save the baggage of a whole family from profanation. More often,

five shillings or even more was expected. But occasionally things were made worse for the unlucky traveller than they ever can be now. The custom-house official was not bound to follow the traveller to his hotel. If he stood upon his strict rights, he could examine the baggage in the open street, and sometimes he did so. In this case he did not speculate upon a gratuity; he laid himself out for actual plunder. When every box and parcel and package should have been taken out of the berlin, and every article which they contained strewed upon the road, it would be hard indeed if he did not manage to secure some modest pickings for himself—especially if the examination took place, as it often did, by lamp-light. 'It needed,' says one traveller, who underwent this exhaustive process, 'Argus-eyes not to be plundered of everything valuable our trunks contained, and herculean strength to unpack and repack after the fatigue of a twelve hours' journey. It was a great object of the custom-house officials to thieve, for which purpose they endeavoured to throw small parcels on the ground under the carriage, and even examined coach seats, writing boxes, and letters. They seized gold and silver lace, snuff, and tobacco. They would accept no fees, and were slower in their operations than it is possible to conceive.'

A few miscellaneous items of intelligence recorded for the benefit of travellers in 1820 may not be without their interest for the more fortunate travellers in 1887. At that time the passenger by diligence from Paris to Brussels had to sleep two nights on the road. The fare for this journey, viz. seventy francs, does not seem exorbitant, especially when we bear in mind that it included bed and board *en route*. It is true that for this payment you had no right to a separate chamber; there might even be several beds in it; but an extra fee would generally secure privacy. And the waiter expected only six sous as a *pourboire*. Where are such waiters nowadays?

From London to Geneva, including dinners, suppers, and beds on the road, the fare was not far short of twenty pounds, whilst the fare to Florence was about thirty-five. Fares by sea were perhaps not higher than now in proportion to the time taken on the voyage. Thus from Falmouth to Gibraltar the fare was 38*l.*, to Malta 59*l.*, to Messina, 61*l.* But passengers had to provide their own bedding, and there was no reduction in the fares for female servants. The packets sailed 'every three weeks, weather permitting.' From Hamburg to Harwich every 'whole passenger' paid

five pounds; every 'half-passenger' three. Here, again, female servants were counted as 'whole passengers,' as also were all children over six years of age.

In 1820 the height of Mont Blanc was known only approximately; but it was estimated by one authority at 15,303 feet. The woods of Chamouni abounded with rabbits, white hares, martens, and ermines, the rocks with marmots and chamois. There were two inns there, neither of which was more than tolerable.

At that time every town of importance had its gates, which were closed during the night. The gates of Geneva were opened at 5 A.M. and shut at 10 P.M. The belated traveller was often refused admittance, and had to content himself with the accommodation of some wayside pothouse. Then, as now, Russia was the most difficult country to get into or to escape from. But whereas secrecy is now the pride of the police, publicity was then their practice. The shy and shrinking foreigner who had found his way thither and desired to get home again had notoriety thrust upon him; he could not leave the country until his name had been advertised in full three times in the Gazette. It was a parody of the publication of banns, only in this case as the preliminary, not to marriage, but to a divorce from the soil of Russia.

Considering the number of disbanded soldiers with whom the cessation of the Napoleonic wars must have encumbered Europe, travelling in those days seems to have been remarkably safe. Only in Italy is there a hint of danger. The confines of the Roman and the Neapolitan territories were certainly infested with bandits. Even the guide books, whose *raison d'être* it was to encourage travel, could not deny this. But they extenuated it in a curious way. These knights of the road were, after all, not so much banditti as patriots. They were in fact a nation, the inhabitants of Abruzzo, who plundered, not because they had no other means of subsistence, but because they considered it a national duty. It is not easy to see how this nice distinction could benefit the traveller. Few men, even in our day, have developed the altruistic spirit to such an extent as to enable them to bear cheerfully the spoiling of their goods, provided the spoilers have some noble object in view.

However, except in certain districts of Italy, the Continent seems to have been tolerably free from the more open kind of robbers. But there are warnings enough against the cheat and

the peculator. For instance, the traveller was warned that in Tuscany the man who sold asses' milk was in the habit of selling his customers also by carrying under his cloak a bottle filled with hot water, some of which he contrived to mix with the milk so expertly that it was difficult to detect him. Alas! *mutatis mutandis, de nobis fabula narratur!*

Another warning of a different kind has reference to the Neapolitan churches. Few of these could then be entered with any comfort, as the Neapolitans were accustomed to throw the bodies of the dead, without coffins, into the vaults beneath the churches. Nor did they trouble themselves about such a trivial detail as cementing the pavements of the churches. The consequence was an effluvium which even the sacred character of the edifice could not transform into the odour of sanctity.

The Pope of those days had a fancy for the English. Pio Nono was also said to favour them, especially those of the fairer sex. But the etiquette of his Court was in one respect the very opposite to that of England. Even the British Matron, when she goes to Court, must in her own person furnish a slight example of what she so rigorously condemns on the walls of the Academy. The right place for her would be the Court of Rome; for there the rule was, and is, that no lady can be presented to the Pope unless she wears a dress coming up to the throat. *Humanum est errare*; and it is well that even popes should be kept as free as possible from temptation.

Berlin has always been famous, since the days of Frederick the Great, for the strictness of its discipline; but it seems odd to read that in 1820 the prices at the hotels were regulated by Government. This no doubt was in the interest of the public, and even as a mere reminiscence of the past, it excites a feeling akin to gratitude. Nor was this all. The public will have *circenses* as well as *panes*, and the Berlin Government provided the former absolutely free. All for whom there was room were admitted to the Italian Opera without charge, the second and third rows of boxes being reserved for foreigners.

No doubt in those days foreigners were as a class a good deal more select than they are now. Every travelling Englishman was a lord, actual or potential. In Austria, even in the present day, a very trifling outlay of ready money will ensure your being addressed as 'Herr Graf' or 'Euer Gnaden.' But in 1820 almost every travelling Englishman was really rich, and deserved and

received the consideration always shown to wealth. One curious evidence is to be found in the fact that, when milord arrived in certain towns, it was usual for the town band to assemble and honour him with a serenade. And as late as 1850 it was the custom to salute the guests approaching Karlsbad with a grand flourish of trumpets from the Stadtthurm.

Alas! *nous avons changé tout cela.* Travellers are now too numerous, and time is too precious, to give them the honours that were formerly their due. The era of ceremony and inconvenience has given place to an era of comfort and nonchalance. Who shall adjust the balance of comparative advantage? Probably our grandfathers, if they suffered more, also gained more from their foreign travels. We sit at ease in the first-class carriage of a through express, and instead of studying a country, glimpse a panorama. The Grand Tour was an education; our Continental 'outings' leave but little mark upon our characters.

MR. SANDFORD.

IV.

MR. SANDFORD knew nothing till he found himself in the Regent's Park, not far from his house. He had passed through the crowds in the street with his life and thoughts suspended, feeling that to think was impossible, seeing only before him the line of the three pictures standing against the wall. They seemed to accompany him on his way, showing against the front of the houses wherever he turned his eyes. Three pictures, painted cheerfully, without a premonition, or any sense of failure, or a moment's fear that they would ever stand with their faces against a dealer's wall. One of them had been a great favourite with his wife. The youngest girl—little Mary—had sat for one of the figures, and Mrs. Sandford had not wished to let it go. 'I wish we could afford to keep this,' she said; 'it is like selling our own flesh and blood.' But most painters have to accustom themselves to that small trouble, and even she had laughed at herself. And now to think that it had never been sold at all—that it was unsaleable—oh, heaven! The sense of a dreadful humiliation, far more than was reasonable, filled the painter's mind. The man whom he had always liked, but partly despised—Daniells, who was as ignorant as a pig, who knew a picture indeed when he saw it, but had not a notion why he liked it, nor could render a reason or tell how he knew one to be bad or another good—that he should be losing by his kindness, should be out of pocket, burdened by three 'Sandfords' with their faces against the wall! Mr. Sandford's gentle contempt came back upon him with a shock of humiliation and shame. To sneer at a man who had suffered by him, who had given money for his unsaleable work—a man who had thus shown himself a better man than he: for Daniells had never said a word, probably never would have said a word, listened to the painter's calm assumptions and taken no notice, having it in his power all the time to shame him! Nay, he had done even more than this—he had brought his own customer out of his way, in pity and friendship, to buy that 'Black Prince,' no doubt equally unsaleable, though—heaven help the poor painter!—he had not found it out. The pang of this humiliation, mingled with tingling shame and a painful

gratitude and admiration, quivered through and through him, penetrating the dark dismay and pain of his suspended thoughts.

He came to notice everything better when he got into the park. The August afternoon was softening every moment into the deeper sweetness of the evening. He avoided instinctively the frequented parts, where the children were playing and people walking about, and made a long circuit round the outskirts of the park, where only a rare passenger was to be met with now and then. The air was sweet, though it was the air of town. The leaves were fluttering in a light breeze, the birds singing their evening songs, thrushes repeating a hundred questions, blackbirds unconditional, piping loud and clear, almost as good as nightingales. He was a man who was not hard to please, and even Regent's Park delighted him on a summer evening. He felt it even now, notwithstanding the shadow that was over him. Never, up to this time, had care hung so heavy on Mr. Sandford but what he could escape from it by help of the artist-eye, ever ready to seize a passing effect, or by the gentle heart which was full of sympathy with every human emotion or even whim of passing fancy. His heart was unaccustomed to anything tragical. It tried even now to beguile him and escape; to withdraw his attention to the long, streaming, level rays of the sinking sun; to get him out of himself to the aid of the child who had broken its toy and was crying with such passion—far more than a man can show for losses the most terrible—by the side of the road. And these expedients answered for the moment. But what had befallen him now was not to be eluded as other troubles had been. He could not escape from it. The most ingenious imagination could not lessen it by turning it over and over. Behind the sunset rays a strange vision of the unsold pictures came out into the very sky. They shaped themselves behind the child, whom it was so easy to pacify with a shilling, against the park palings. Three—which was one of the complete numbers, as if to prove the fulness of the disaster—three pictures unsold in Daniells' inner room, and not a commission in hand, nothing wanted from him, no one to buy. After thus trying every device to escape, his heart grew low and faint within him, giving up the conflict; he felt a dull buzzing in his ears, and a dull throbbing in his breast.

But thinking was not so easy a matter as it seemed. Think it over? How was he to think it over? If it were possible to imagine the case of a man who, walking serenely over a wide and

peaceful country, suddenly, with the softest, scarcely audible, roll of the pebbles under his feet, sees the earth yawn before him and finds himself on the brink of a fearful precipice, that would have been like his case: but not so bad as his case, for the man would have it in his power to draw back, to retire to the peaceful fields behind: whereas, to Mr. Sandford, there were no peaceful fields, but a gulf all round that one spot of undermined earth on which he stood. Presently he found himself at his own door, very tired and a little dazed in mind, thinking of that precipice, of nothing more distinct. The house stood very solid, very tranquil, its red roof all illumined with the last level line of the sun, the garden stretching into shady corners under the trees, the flower-beds blazing in lavish colours, the little lawn all burnt bare by the ardent sun and worn with the feet of the tennis players: all so peaceful, certain, secure—an old-established home with deep foundations dug, and the assured, immovable look of household tranquillity and peace. If the walls had been tottering, the garden relapsing into weeds and wildness, he would not have been surprised—that would have been suitable to his circumstances. The thing unsuitable was to come back to that trim order and well-being, to that modest wealth and comfort and beauty, and to know that all this too, like himself, was on the edge of the precipice. Tired as he was, he went round the garden before he went in, and gazed wistfully at the pleasant dwelling with its open windows, wondering, when the next shock of the earthquake came, whether it would all fall to pieces like a house of cards, and everybody become aware that the earth was rent and a great chasm yawning before the peaceful door.

He never seemed to have realised, before now, how full of modest luxury and exquisite comfort that house was. It was not yet covered up and dismantled, though the fingers of the maid-servants had been itching to get at that delightful task since ever 'the family' left. All was empty and still, but all in good order; no false pretension or show, everything temperate and well chosen; rich, soft carpets in which the foot sank, curtains hanging in graceful folds, the cosiest chairs, Italian cabinets, Venice glass, pictures, not only of his own but of many contemporary artists—a delightful interior, without a bare corner or vacant spot anywhere. He went over it with a sort of despairing pleasure and admiration, his head aching and giddy, with a sense that at any moment the next shock might come, and all collapse like the

shadows of a dream. Presently he was served with his dinner, which he could not eat, in the cool dining-room, with a large window opening to the garden and the sweet air breathing about him as he sat down at the vacant table. What a mockery of all certitude and safety it was!—for nothing could seem more firmly established, more solid and secure. If he had been a prince of the blood he might have had a more splendid dwelling, but no more comfort, more pleasantness. All that a sober mind could desire was there—the utmost refinement of comfort, beautiful things all around, every colour subdued into perfection, no noise or anything to break the spell. He was glad that the others were absent—it was the only alleviation to the dismay within him. There would have been questions as to what was the matter—'Are you ill, Edward?' 'What is wrong with papa?' and other such questions, which he could not have borne.

Afterwards he went into the studio. The first thing that caught his eye was the glow of that piece of drapery which he had painted under the keen stimulant of the first warning. It had been a stimulant then, and he was startled by the splendour of the colour he had put into that piece of stuff—the roundness of it, the clear transparence of the shadows. It stood out upon the picture like something by another hand, painted in another age. Had he done that only a few hours ago—he with the same brushes which had produced the rest of the picture which looked so pale and insignificant beside it? how had he done it? It made all the rest of the picture fade. He recognised in a moment the jogtrot, the ordinary course of life, and against it the flush of the sudden inspiration, the stronger handling, the glory and glow of the colour. He had never done anything better in his life; he whose pictures were drugs in the market, who had not a commission to look forward to. He stood and looked at it for a long time, growing sadder and sadder. He was not a man who had failed, and who could rail against the world; he was a man who had succeeded; not a painter in England but would laugh out if anyone said that Sandford had been a failure. Why, who had been successful if he had not? they would have said. He had not a word to say against fate. Nobody was to blame, not even himself, seeing that now, in the midst of all, he could still paint like that. He knew the value of that as well as any man could know it. He could not shut his eyes to it because he himself had done it. If he saw such a bit of painting in a young fellow's picture

he would say, 'Well done;' he would say, 'Paint like that, and you have your fortune in your own hand.' Ah, but he was himself no longer a young fellow. Success was not before him; he had grasped her, held her, and now it seemed his day was past.

It is never cheerful to have to allow that your day is past. But there are circumstances which make it less difficult. Sometimes a man accepts gracefully enough that message of dismissal. Then he will retire with a certain dignity, enjoying the ease which he has purchased with his hard work, and looking on henceforward at the struggle of the others, not sorry, perhaps, or at least saying to the world that he is not sorry, to be out of that conflict. Mr. Sandford said to himself that in other circumstances he might have been capable of that; might have laid aside his pencil, occupied himself with guiding the younger, helping the less strong, standing umpire, perhaps, in the strife, giving place to those who represented the future, and whose day was but beginning. Such a retirement must always seem a fit and seemly thing: but not now: not in what he felt was but the fulness of his career: not, above all—and this gave the sting to all—not while he was still depending upon his profession for his daily bread. His daily bread, and what was worse than that, the daily bread of those he loved. How many things that simple phrase involved! Oh for the simplicity of those days when it meant but what it said! He asked himself with a curious, fantastic, half-amused, half-despairing curiosity whether it had ever meant mere bread? Bread and a little fruit, perhaps; a cake, and a draught from a spring in the primitive Eastern days when the phrase was invented. 'Day by day our daily bread:' a loaf like that of Elijah which the angel brought him: the cakes of manna in the wilderness of which only enough was gathered to suffice for one day: and the tent at night to retire to, or a cave, perhaps, —a shelter which cost nothing. How different now was daily bread; so many things involved in it, that careful product of many men's work, the house which was his home: and all the costly nameless necessities, so much more than food and clothing, the dainty and pleasant things, the flowers and gardens, the amusements, the trifles that make life delightful and sweet. Give us our daily bread: had it ever been supposed to mean all that? All these many years, these necessities had been supplied, and all had gone on as if it were part of the constitution of the world.

But now the time had come when the machinery was stopped, when everything was brought to a conclusion. Mr. Sandford turned his eye from that bit of painting which stood out upon his picture as if the sun had touched it, to the sheaves of old studies and sketches in the portfolios, the half-finished bits about the walls, all those scraps and fragments, full of suggestion, full of beautiful thoughts, which make the studio of a great painter rich. He had thought a few days ago that all this meant wealth. Now his eyes were opened, and he saw that it meant nothing, that all about him was rubbish not worth the collection, and himself, who could work no longer, who was no more good for anything, only one piece of lumber the more, the most valueless of all.

He paused and tried to say to himself that this was morbid. But it was not morbid, it was true. With that curious hurrying of the thoughts which a great calamity brings about, he had already glimpsed everything, seeing the whole situation and all that was involved. There was a certain sum of money in the bank, no more anywhere, except on his own death. There was his insurance, a little for everyone, enough he had hoped, though in a much changed and subdued manner, to support his wife and the girls, enough for that daily bread of which he had been thinking; but it could not be had till he died; and that was all. There was nothing, nothing more; nothing to live upon, nothing to turn to. If you have losses, if your income is reduced, you can retrench and diminish your expenses. But when everything is cut off in a moment, when you have no income at all? such utter loss paralyses the unfortunate. He stood in his studio with a sort of vague smile upon his face, and something of the imbecility of utter helplessness taking possession of him. Everything cut off. Nothing to turn to. Vague visions passed through his mind of the expenses of that seaside house, for instance, which could not be got rid of now; of Lizzie's fifty pounds a year which he had promised not without forebodings; of Jack's fee of two guineas which the children had all made so merry about; of the easy course of their existence, their life, which was so blameless, so innocent, so kind: they were all ready to give, ready to be hospitable; none of the family could see another in want and not eagerly offer what they had. Good God! and to think they had nothing, nothing! It was not a question of enough, it was that there was nothing; that all the streams were closed, and all the doors shut, and the successful man, with his large income, had

suddenly become like a navvy out of work, like a dock labourer, or whatever was most pitifully unprovided for in the world.

It made Mr. Sandford's brain whirl. So much in the bank, and after that nothing; and all the liberal life going on; the servants who could not be sent off at a moment's notice; the house, which could not be abandoned; the family all so cheerful in their false security, who had no presentiment of evil. He asked himself what people did who were ruined? He had no great acquaintance with such things. What did they do? He was very helpless. He could not realise the possibility of breaking up the house, having no home; of dispersing all the pleasant things which had been part of his being so long; of stopping short—— He could not understand how such things were done. And those people who were ruined generally had something upon which they could fall back. A merchant could begin again. He might have friends who would help him to a new start, and there was always hope that he might do as well at last as at first. But an artist (at sixty) could have no new start. The public would have none of him. He had done his best; he could not begin anew. His career when once closed was over, and nothing more could be made of it. He remembered with a forlorn self-reproach of having himself said that So-and-so should retire; that it would be more dignified to give up work before work gave him up. Ah! so easy a thing to say, so cruel a thing to say; but he had not realised that it was cruel, or that such an end was cruel. He had never supposed it possible that such a thing could happen to himself.

The insurances: yes, there were always the insurances: a thousand pounds for each child, that was the calculation they had made. They had said to each other in the old times, Mary and he, that they never could save money enough to make any appreciable provision for so many children, but that if they could but secure for each a thousand pounds, that would always be something. It would help to give the boys a start; it would be something for the girls. That the boys should all have professions in which they would be doing well, and the girls husbands to provide for them, had seemed too commonplace a certainty even to be dwelt upon: and a thousand pounds is never to be despised; it would help the young ones over any early struggle, it would make all the difference. 'So long as we live,' Mrs. Sandford had said, 'they will always have us to fall back upon;

and afterwards—what a thing it would have been for us, Edward, to have a thousand pounds to the good to begin upon!' They had thought they made everything safe so, for the young ones. Mr. Sandford, indeed, still felt a faint lightening of his heart as he thought of the insurances. It had always done him good to think of them; that would be something at least to leave behind. But then it was necessary first that he should die.

He had never thought urgently of that necessity. So long as there is nothing pressing about it, no appearance of its approach, it is easy enough to speak of that conclusion. Sometimes there is even a pensive pleasure in it. 'When I am out of the way;' 'When our day is over,' are things quite simple to say. For of course that must come one time or another, as everybody knows. It is more serious, but still not anything very bad, to speak now and then of what is to be done if anything happens to one. These things make but little impression upon the mind, even when old age is on its way. And Mr. Sandford at sixty had as yet felt very few premonitions of old age. He had called himself an old man with a laugh, for his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated; and it was still pleasantly absurd to think that he could be supposed an old man. But now all this took a different aspect. He felt no older, indeed, but his position was altogether changed. In the shock of his new circumstances he stood helpless, not knowing how to meet this unfeared, unthought-of contingency. But his mind went off with a spring to further eventualities. The only comfort was this, they had a thousand pounds apiece laid up for them. But it would be necessary first that he should die.

Thinking it all over, he thought, on the whole, that this was the best thing that could happen. The changes which he surveyed with such a sense of impossibility, not knowing how they could be brought about, would become quite natural if he died. There was always a change on the death of the father. It was the natural time for remodelling life, for altering everything. The family would not be able, of course, to remain in this house, to keep up their present superstructure of existence: but then in the change of circumstances that would seem quite natural, and they would not feel it. They could put everything, then, upon a simple footing. And they would have an income, not much of an income, perhaps, but yet something that would come in punctually to the day, and which would be independent of anything they did,

which would have nothing to do with picture dealers or patrons of art, or the changes of taste that affected them. What a thing that was, when one came to think of it, to have an income—something which came in all the same whether you worked or not, whether you were ill or well, whether you were in a good vein and could get on with your picture, or whether it dragged and did not satisfy you! It gave him a sensation of pleasure to think of it: but then he reflected on the one preliminary which was not so easy to bring about, which no planning of his could accomplish just when it was wanted, just when it would be of most use.

For before this state of things could ensue, it would be necessary that Mr. Sandford should be dead; and so far as he was aware there was no immediate prospect of anything of the kind. People do not die when it is most necessary, when it would be most expedient. It is a thing independent of your own will, horribly uncertain, happening just when it is not wanted. This difficulty, when he had begun to take a little comfort in the possible arrangement of everything, sent the painter back into all the confusion of miserable thoughts. Was it possible that he was in circumstances which made it impossible for him to do anything, even to die?

V.

Mr. Sandford went down next day to the seaside to join his family. They had got the best rooms of a very pleasant house, in full sight of the sea. 'What was the use of going to the sea at all,' Mrs. Sandford said, 'unless you got the full good of it? All the sunsets and effects, and its aspect at every hour of the day, which was so very different from having merely glimpses of it—that is what my husband likes,' she said. And of course this meant the most expensive place. He was met at the station by his wife and little Mary, the youngest, who was always considered papa's favourite. The others had all gone along the coast with a large pic-nic party, some of them in a boat, some riding—for there were fine sands—and a delightful gallop along that crisp firm road, almost within the flash of the waves, was most invigorating. 'They all look ever so much the better for it already,' said the fond mother.

'There was not much the matter with them before that I could see.'

'Oh, nothing the matter! But they do so enjoy the sea. And I find there are a great many people here whom we know—more than usual; and a great deal going on.'

'There is generally a good deal going on.'

'My dear Edward, staying behind has not been good for you; you are looking pale: and I never heard you grudge the children their little pleasures before.'

'*I* stayed at home, papa,' said little Mary, not willing to be unappreciated, 'to be the first to see you.'

'You are always a good little girl,' said the father gratefully.

'I assure you they were all anxious to stay: but I did not think you would like them to give up a pleasure,' said Mrs. Sandford, never willing to have any of her children subjected to an unfavourable comparison.

'No; oh no,' he said, with a sigh. It was almost impossible not to feel a grudge at the thought of that careless enjoyment, no one taking any thought; but he could not burst out with any disclosures of his trouble before little Mary, looking up wistfully in his face with a child's sensitiveness to the perception of something wrong. Mary was more ready to perceive this than Mrs. Sandford, who only thought that her husband was perhaps a little out of temper, or annoyed by some trifling matter, or merely affected by the natural misanthropy of three days' solitude. She clasped his arm caressingly with her hand as she led him away.

'You have got some cobwebs into your mind,' she said, 'but the sea breezes will soon blow them away.'

The sea breezes were very fresh; the sea itself spread out under the sunshine a dazzling stretch of blue; the wide vault of heaven all belted with lines of summer cloud, 'which landward stretched along the deep' like celestial countries far away. The air was filled with the soft plash of the water, the softened sound of voices. The whole population seemed out of doors, and all in full enjoyment of the heavenly afternoon and the sights and sounds of the sea. Walking along through these holiday groups, with his wife by his side and his little girl holding his hand, Mr. Sandford felt an unreasonable calm—a sense of soothing quiet come over him. He could not dismiss the phantom which overshadowed him, but he felt for the moment that he could ignore it. It was necessary that he should ignore it. He could not communicate to his wife so tragical a discovery there and then, in her ease and cheerful holiday mood. He must prepare her for

it. Not all in a moment could that revelation burst upon her. Poor Mary! so happy in her children, so full of their plans and pleasures, so secure in the certainty of prosperous life: and the child who, strange to think it, understood him better, being nearer, he supposed, to those springs of life where there are no shades of intervening feeling, but all is either happiness or despair. A profound sorrow for these innocent creatures came into his mind; he could not overcloud them, either the mother or the child. They were so glad to have him again; so proud to walk on either side of him, pointing out everything: and all was so happy, were it not for one thing; nothing to trouble them, all well, all full of pleasure, confidence, health, lightheartedness; not a cloud—except that one.

'You have been tiring yourself—doing too much while you have been alone; the servants have made you uncomfortable; they have been pulling everything to pieces, though I left the most stringent orders——'

'No, the servants were very good; they disturbed nothing, though they were longing to get at it.'

'They always are; they take a positive pleasure in making the house look as desolate as possible—as if nobody was ever going to live in it any more.'

'Nobody going to live in it more!' he repeated the words with a faint smile. 'No—on the contrary, it looked the most liveable place I ever saw. I never felt its home-look so much.'

'It is a nice little place,' she said, with a little pressure of his arm. 'Whatever may happen to the children in after life, we can always feel that they have had a happy youth and a bright home.'

'What should happen to them?' he said, alarmed with a sudden fear that she must know.

'Oh, nothing, I hope, but what is good; but the first change in the family always makes one think. I hope you won't mind, Edward: Lance Moulton is here.'

'Oh, he is here!'

'If it is really to be so, Edward, don't you think it is better they should see as much of each other as possible?' his wife said, with another tender pressure of his arm. 'And somehow, when there is a thing of that kind in the air, everything seems quickened; I am sure I can't tell how it is. It gives a "go" to all they are doing. There are no end of plans and schemes among

them. Of course, Lance has a friend or two about, and the Dropmores are here, who are such friends of our girls.'

'And all is fun and nonsense, I suppose?'

'Well, if you call it so—all pleasure, and kindness, and real delightful holiday. Oh, Edward,' said Mrs. Sandford, with the ghost of a tear in her eye, 'don't let us check this! It is the brightest time of their lives.'

The sunset was blazing in glory upon the sea, the belts of cloud all reddening and glowing, soft puffs of vapour like roses floating across the blue of the sky. And the air full of young voices softened and musical, children playing, lovers wandering about, happy mothers watching the sport, all tender gaiety, and security, and peace. Everything joyful—save one thing. 'No; God forbid that I should check it,' he said hastily, with a sigh that might have been a groan.

They all came back not long after, full of high spirits and endless talk; they were all glad to see father, who had never been any restraint upon their pleasure, whose grave gentle presence had never checked or stilled them. They were sure of his sympathy more or less. If he did not share their fun, he had at least never discouraged it. And soon in the plenitude of their own affairs they forgot him, as was so natural, and filled the room with laughing consultations over to-morrow's pleasure, and plans for it. 'What are we going to do?' they all cried, one after another, even Lizzie and Lance, coming in a little dazzled from the balcony, where they had been enjoying the last fading lights of the ending day, while the others had clamoured for lamps and candles inside; 'what are we going to do?' Mrs. Sandford sat beaming upon them, hearing all the suggestions, offering a new idea now and then. 'I must know to-night, that the hampers may be got ready,' she said; and then there was an echoing laugh all round. 'Mother's always so practical.' Mr. Sandford sat a little outside of that lively circle with a book in his hand. But he was not reading; he was watching them with a strange fascination; not willing to check them; oh, no! feeling a helpless sort of wonder that they should play such pranks on the edge of the precipice, and that none of them should divine—that even his wife should not divine! The animated group, full in the light of the lamps—girls and young men in the frank familiarity of the family, interrupting each other, contradicting each other, discussing and arguing—was as charming a study as a

painter could have; the mother in the midst with her pencil in her hand and a sheet of white paper on the table before her, which threw back the light; and behind, the lovers stealing in out of the soft twilight shadows, the faint glimmer of distant sea and sky. He watched it with a strange dull ache under the pleasure of the father and the painter: the light touching those graceful outlines, shining in those young eyes, the glimmer of shining hair, the play of animated features, the soft dreamlike suggestive shadows of the two behind. And yet the precipice yawning gaping at their feet, though nobody knew.

'Papa,' said suddenly a small voice in his ear, 'I am not going to-morrow. I want to stay with you.'

'My little Mary! But I am a dull old fellow, not worth staying with.'

'You are sorry about something, papa!'

'Sorry? There are a great many things in the world to be sorry about,' he said, stroking her brown head. The child had clasped her hands about his arm, and was nestling close up to him whispering. They were altogether outside of the lively group at the table. This little consoler comforted Mr. Sandford more than words could say.

It was thus that the holiday life went on. The young people were always consulting what to do, making up endless excursions and expeditions, Mrs. Sandford always explaining for them. What was the use of being at the seaside if they did not take full advantage of it? What was the use of being in a new part of the country if they did not see everything? Sometimes she went with them, compelled by the addition of various strangers with whom the girls could not go without a chaperon; sometimes stayed at home with her husband, calculating where they would be by this time; whether they had found a pleasant spot for their luncheon; when they might be expected back. Meanwhile, Mr. Sandford took long solitary walks—very long, very solitary—along the endless line of the sands, within sight and sound of the sea. Little Mary and her next brother, the schoolboy, always started with him: but the fascination of the rocks and pools was too much for these little people, and the father, not ill-pleased, went on with a promise of picking them up again on his way back. He would walk on and on for the whole of the fresh shining morning, with the sea on one side and the green country on the other, and all the wonderful magical lights of the sky and water shining as

if for him alone. They beguiled him out of himself with their miraculous play and shimmer and wealth of heavenly reflection: and sometimes he seemed to feel a higher sensation still—the feeling as of a silent great Companion who filled the heavenly space, yet moved with him, an all-embracing, all-responsive sympathy, till he thought of God coming down to the cool of the garden and walking with his creatures, and all his trouble seemed to breathe away in a heavenly hush, which every little wave repeated, softly lapping at his feet.

But when he came back into the midst of his cheerful family other subjects got the upper hand. There was not the least harm in the gaiety that was about him—not the least harm; it was mere exuberance of youthful life and pleasure. If things had been running their usual course, and his usual year's work had been in front of him, Mr. Sandford said to himself that he too would have come out to the door to see the children start on their expeditions, as his wife did, with pleasure in their good looks, and in the family union and happiness. He might have grumbled a little over Harry's idleness, or even shaken his head over the expense; but he too would have liked it—he would have admired his young ones, and taken pleasure in seeing them happy. But to stand by and watch all that, and know that presently the revenue which kept it all up would stop, and the ground be cut from under their feet, sheer down, like a precipice! Already he had begun to familiarise himself with this idea. It had a sort of paralysing effect, as well as one of panic and horror. It is not a thing that happens often. People grow poorer, or even they get ruined at a blow, but there is generally something remaining upon which economy will tell; he went over these differences in his lonely hours, imagining a hundred cases. A merchant, for instance, who ruins himself by speculation, if he is an honourable man, has means at his disposal of trying again, or at least can get a situation in an office (at the worst), where he will still have an income—a steady income, though it may be small; his friends, and the people who had business relations with him, would be sure to exert themselves to secure him that; or if his losses were but partial, of course nothing could be easier than to retrench and live at a lower rate. So Mr. Sandford said to himself. But what can a few economies do when at a critical moment, at a period close at hand, all incoming must cease, and nothing remain? It did not now give him the violent shock of sensation

which he had felt at first when this fact came uppermost. He had become accustomed to it. It was not *après moi*, but in three months or so, the deluge: an end to everything, no half measures, no retrenchment, but the end. He began to wonder when that time came what would be done. The house could be sold, and all that was in it, but where then would they go for shelter? They would have to pay for the poorest lodgings, and at least there was nothing to pay for the house. Mr. Sandford was not a man of business, he was a man of few resources; he did not know what to do, or where to turn when his natural occupation failed him.

These thoughts went through his mind in a painful round. Three months or so, and then an end of everything. Three months, and then the precipice so near that the next step must be over it. Perhaps in other circumstances, or if he had not been known to be so near the head of his profession, he might have thought of artists' work of some other kind which he could do. He might have tried to illustrate books, to take up one of the art manufactures: might have become a designer, a decorator, something that would bring in money. But in this respect he was so helpless, he knew no more what to do than the most ignorant, his heart failed him when he tried to penetrate into the darkness of that future. The only thing that came uppermost was the thought of the insurances, and of the thousand pounds for each which the children would have. It was not very much, but still it was something, a something real and tangible, not like a workman's wages for work, which may fail in a moment as soon as he fails to please his employer, or loses his skill, or grows too old for it. It had never occurred to Mr. Sandford before how precarious these wages are, how little to be relied on. To think of a number of people depending for their whole living upon the skill of one man's hand, upon the clearness of his sight, the truth of his instincts, even the fashion of the moment! It seems, when you look at it in the light of a discovery such as that which he had made, so mad, so fatal! A thing that may cease in a moment as if it had never been, yet with all the complicated machinery of life built upon it, based on the strange theory that it would go on for ever! On the other hand a thousand pounds is a solid thing, it would be a certainty for each of them. Harry might go to one of the colonies and get an excellent start with a thousand pounds in his

pocket. Jack would no doubt be startled into energy by the sense of having something which it would be fatal to lose, yet could not be lived upon. A thousand pounds would make all the difference to Lizzie on her marriage. When he thought of his wife a quiver of pain went over him, and yet he tried to calculate all the chances there would be for her. All friends would be stirred in sympathy for her; they would get her a pension, they would gather round her: it would be made easy for her to break up this expensive way of living, and begin on a smaller footing. There would be the house, which would bring her in a little secure income if it was let. Whatever she had would be secure—it would be based on something solid, certain—not on a man's work, which might lose its excellence or go out of fashion. He felt himself smile with a kind of pleasure at the contemplation of this steady certainty—which he never had possessed, which he never could possess, but which poor Mary, with a pension and the rent of the house, would at last obtain. Poor Mary! his lip quivered when he thought of her. He wondered if the children would absorb her interest as much when he was no longer in the background, whether she would be able to find in them all that she wanted, and consolation for his absence. It was not with any sense of blame that this thought went through his mind. Blame her! oh no. To think of her children was surely a mother's first duty. She was not aware that her husband wanted consolation and help more than they did. How could she know when he did not tell her? And he felt incapable of telling her. He had meant to do it. When he came he had intended as soon as possible to prepare her for it, to lead by degrees to that revelation which could not but be given. But to break in upon all their innocent gaieties, to stop her as she stood kissing her hand to the merry cavalcade as they set out, her eyes shining with a mother's delight and pride; to call her away from among her pretty daughters (she, her husband thought the fairest of them all), and their pleasant babble about pleasures past and to come, and pour black despair into the cheerful heart, how could he do it, how could anyone do it? Such happiness was sacred. He could not interrupt it, he could not destroy it; it was pathetic, tragic, beyond words—on the edge of the precipice! Oh no, no! not now, he could not tell her. Let the holidays be over, let common life resume again, and then—unless by the grace of God something else might happen before.

They all noticed, however, that papa was dull—which was the way in which it struck the young people—that he had no sympathy with their gaiety, that he was 'grumpy,' which was what it came to. Lizzie thought that this probably arose from dissatisfaction with her marriage, and was indignant. 'If he doesn't think Lance good enough, I wonder what would please him. Did he expect one of the princes to propose to me?' she cried.

'Oh, Lizzie, my love, don't speak so of your father!'

'Well, mamma, he should not look at us so,' cried the girl.

Mrs. Sandford herself was a little indignant too. Her sympathies were all with the children. She saw disapproval in his subdued looks, and was ready at any moment to spring to arms in defence of her children. And indeed sometimes, in his great trouble, which no one divined, Mr. Sandford would sometimes become impatient.

'I wish,' he would say, 'that Jack would do something—does he never do anything at all? It frets me to see a young man so idle.'

'My dear Edward!' cried his wife, 'it is the Long Vacation. What should he have to do?'

'And Harry?' Mr. Sandford said.

'Poor boy! You know he would give his little finger to have anything to do. He has nothing to do. How can he help that? When we go back to town you must really put your shoulder to the wheel. Among all your friends surely, surely, something could be got for Harry,' said his mother, thus turning the tables. 'And in the meantime,' she added, 'to get all the health he can, and the full good of the sea, is certainly the best thing the poor fellow could do.'

What answer could be made to this? Mr. Sandford went out for his walk—that long silent walk, in which the great Consoler came down from all the silvery lights and shining skies, and walked with him in the freshness of the morning, all silent in tenderness and great solemnity and awe.

VI.

'Unless, by the grace of God, something should happen'—that was what he kept saying to himself when he reflected on the disclosure which must be made when the seaside season was over. The great events of life rarely happen according to our will. A man cannot die when he wishes it, though there should be every

argument in favour of such an event, and its advantages most palpable. The moment passes in which that conclusion would have all the force and satisfactory character of a great tragedy, and a dreary postscript of existence drivels on, destructive of all dignity and appropriateness. We live when we should do much better to die, and we die sometimes when every circumstance calls upon us to live.

Most people will think that it was a very dreary hope that moved Mr. Sandford's mind—perhaps even that it was not the expedient of a brave man to desire to leave his wife and children to endure the change and the struggle from which he shrank in his own person. But this was not how it appeared to him. He thought, and with some reason, that the change which becomes inevitable on the death of the head of a house is without humiliation, without the pang of downfall which would be involved in an entire reversal of life which had not that excuse; he thought that everybody who knew him would regret the change, and that every effort would be made to help those who were left behind. It would be no shame to them to accept that help; it would seem to them a tribute to his position rather than pity for them. His wife would believe that her husband, a great painter, one of the first of the day, had fully earned that recognition, and would be proud of the pension or the money raised for her as of a monument in his honour. And then the insurances. There could be no doubt, he said to himself with a rueful smile, that so much substantial money would be much better to have than a man who could earn nothing, who had become incapable, whose work nobody wanted. He had no doubt whatever that it would be by far the best solution. It would rouse the boys by a sharp and unmistakable necessity; it might, he thought, be the making of the boys, who had no fault in particular except the disposition to take things easily which was the weakness of this generation. And as for the others they would be taken care of—no doubt they would be taken care of. Their condition would appeal to the kindness of every friend who had ever bought a 'Sandford' or thought it an honour to know the painter. He would even himself be restored to honour and estimation by the act of dying, which often is a very ingratiating thing, and makes the public change its opinion. All these arguments were so strongly in favour of it that to think there was no means of securing it depressed Mr. Sandford's mind more than all. By the grace of God. But it is certain that the

Disposer of events does not always see matters as His creatures see them. No one can make sure, however warmly such a decree might be wished for, or even prayed for, that it will be given. If only that would happen! But it was still more impossible to secure its happening than to open a new market for the pictures, or cause commissions to pour in again.

It may be asked whether Mr. Sandford's conviction, which was so strong on this subject, ever moved him to do anything to bring about his desire. It was impossible, perhaps, that the idea should not have crossed his mind—

> When we ourselves can our demission make
> With a bare bodkin.

And we can scarcely say that it was, like Hamlet, the fear of something after death that restrained him. It was a stronger sentiment still. It was the feeling that to give oneself one's dismissal is quite a different thing. It is a flight—it is a running away; all the arguments against the selfishness of desiring to leave his wife and children to a struggle from which he had escaped came into action against that. What would be well if accomplished by the grace of God would be miserable if done by the will of the man who might be mistaken in his estimate of the good it would do. And then another practical thought, more tragical than any in its extreme materialism and matter-of-fact character, it would vitiate the insurances! If the children were to gain nothing by his death, then it would certainly be better for them that he should live. On that score there could be no doubt. This made suicide as completely out of the question from a physical point of view as it was already from a spiritual. He could not discharge himself from God's service on earth, though he should be very thankful if God would discharge him: and he could not do anything to endanger the precious provision he had made for his family. It can scarcely be said that Mr. Sandford considered this case at leisure or with comparison of the arguments for and against, for his decision was instinctive and immediate; nevertheless the idea floated uppermost sometimes in the surging and whirl up and down of many thoughts, but always to be dismissed in the same way.

Two or three weeks had passed in this way when one evening Mr. Sandford received a letter from Daniells, the dealer, inviting him to join a party on the Yorkshire moors. Daniells was well enough off to be able to deny himself nothing. He was not a

gentleman, yet the sports that gentlemen love were within reach of his wealth, and gentlemen not so well off as he showed much willingness to share in his good things. Some fine people whose names it was a pleasure to read were on his list, and some painters who were celebrated enough to eclipse the fine people. That all these should be gathered together by a man who was as ignorant as a pig, and not much better bred, was wonderful; but so it was. Perhaps the fact that Daniells was really at heart a good fellow had something to do with it: but even had this not been the case, it is probable that he could still have found guests to shoot on his moor, and eat the birds they had shot. Mr. Sandford was no sportsman, and at first he had little inclination to accept. It was his wife who urged him to do so.

'You are not enjoying Broadbeach as you usually do,' she said; 'you are bored by it. Oh, don't tell me, Edward, I can see it in your eyes.'

'If you think so, my dear, no denial of mine——'

'No,' she said, shaking her head; 'nothing you say will change my opinion. I am dreadfully sorry, for I am fond of the place; but I have made up my mind already never to come here again, for you are bored—it is as plain as possible: you want a change: you must go.'

'It is not much of a change to visit Daniells,' said Mr. Sandford.

'Oh, it isn't Daniells; it's the company, and the distance, and all you will find there. I have no objection to Mr. Daniells, Edward.'

'Nor I; he is a good fellow in spite of his "h's."'

'I don't care about his "h's." He's very hospitable and very friendly, and all the nice people go to him. I saw in the papers that Lord Okeham was there. You might be able to speak a word for Harry.'

Mr. Sandford smiled. 'I am to go, then, as a business speculation,' he said; but his smile faded away very soon, for he reflected that Lord Okeham was the first to give him that sensation of being wanted no longer, of having nobody to employ him, which had risen to such a tragic height since then.

'Don't laugh,' said his wife. 'I do think indeed it is your duty—anything that may help on the children; and you do like Mr. Daniells, Edward.'

'Yes, I do like Daniells; he is a very good fellow.'

'And the change will do you good. You must go.'

It was arranged so almost without any voluntary action on his part. His wife's anxiety that he should 'speak a word for Harry' seemed to him half-pathetic, half-ridiculous in what he knew to be the position of affairs; but then she did not know. It can scarcely be said that it was other than a relief to him to leave his family to their own lighthearted devices, or that the young ones were not at least half-pleased when he went away. 'Papa was not a bit like himself,' they said; probably it was because the heat was too much for him (he preferred cooler weather), and the freshness of the moors would put him all right. Mrs. Sandford was by no means willing to confess to herself that she, too, was relieved by her husband's departure. It was the first time she had ever been conscious of that feeling in thirty years of married life; but she, too, said that he would be the better of the freshness of the moors, and they all gave themselves up to 'fun' with a new rush of pleasure when his grave countenance was away.

'I am sure he did not mean it,' said Lizzie, 'but I could not help feeling that it was poor Lance that was the cause.'

'Nothing of the sort, my dear,' said Mrs. Sandford. 'Your father would have told you if he had any objections. No; I know what it is; he is very anxious about the boys—and so am I.'

No one, however, who had seen her among them could have believed that Mrs. Sandford was very anxious. She was so glad that they should enjoy themselves. Afterwards, when the holidays were over, when they were all back in town again, then something, no doubt, must be done about Harry. He was very thoughtless, to be sure; he took no trouble about what was going to happen to him. Mrs. Sandford threw off any shade of distress, however, by saying to herself that now his father was fully roused to the necessity of doing something, now that he was about to meet Lord Okeham and other influential people, something *must* be found for Harry, and then all would go well. But the look in her husband's eyes haunted her, nevertheless, for the rest of the day. She had gone to the railway with him to see him off, as she always did, and when the train was just moving, he looked at her, waving his hand to her. The look in his eyes was so strange and so sad, that Mrs. Sandford felt disposed to rush after her husband by the next train. Failing that, she drew her veil over her face as she turned away and shed tears, she could not tell why, as if he had

been going away never to return. How ridiculous! how absurd! when he was only a little out of sorts and sure to be set right by the freshness of the moors. The impression very soon wore out, and the young people had already organised a little impromptu dance for the evening, which gave Mrs. Sandford plenty to do.

'It looks a little like taking advantage of your father's absence—as if you were glad he was gone.'

'Not at all,' they all cried. 'What a dreadful idea! The only thing is that it would have bored him horribly; otherwise,' added Harry, 'we are always glad of my father's company,' with an air of protection and patronage which made the others laugh. And Mrs. Sandford keenly enjoyed the dance, and felt it better that her husband's face, never so grave before, should not be there to overshadow the evening's entertainment. He would be so much more in his element discussing light and shade with the other R.A.s, or talking a little moderate politics with Lord Okeham, or breathing in the freshness of the moors.

And he did like the freshness of the moors, and the talk of his brother artists, and the discussions among the men. It was entirely a man's party, and perhaps a very domestic man like Mr. Sandford, a little neglected amid the exuberances of a young family, his very wife drawn away from him by the exigencies of their amusements, is specially open to the occasional refreshment of a party of his fellows, when congenial pursuits and matured views, and something of a like experience—at all events something which is a real experience of life—draw individuals together. The 'sport' of the painters was apt to be interrupted by realisations of the 'effects' about them, and by discussions on various artistic-scientific points which only masters in the art could settle; and that semi-professional flavour of the party was extremely interesting to the other men, the public personages and society magnates, who found it very piquant to be thrown amid the painters, and who were inspired thereby to talk their best, and tell their most entertaining stories. No atmosphere of failure accompanied Mr. Sandford into this circle, which was kept hilarious by the host's jovialities and social mistakes. If anybody knew that Daniells kept in his inner room three 'Sandfords' which he could not sell, there was no hint of that knowledge in anything that was said, or in the manner of the other painters towards their fellow, to whom all appealed as to as great an authority as could be found on all questions of art. He was restored,

thus, to the position which, indeed, nobody could take from him, though he should never sell a picture again. It soothed him to feel and see that, to all his brethren, he was as much as ever one of the first painters of his time, and to give his opinion and sustain it with the experience of his long professional life, and much experiment in art. A forlorn hope had been in his mind that Daniells might have some good news for him; that he might say some day, 'That was all a false alarm, old man—I've sold the pictures;' but this unfortunately did not come to pass. Daniells never said it was a false alarm; he even said some things in his rough but not unkindly way which to Mr. Sandford's ear, quickened by trouble, confirmed the disaster; but perhaps Daniells, who had no particular delicacy of perception, did not intend this.

The change, however, did Mr. Sandford a great deal of good: though sometimes, when he found himself alone, the settled shadow of calamity which had closed upon his life, and which must soon be known to all, came over him with almost greater force than at first. It was but seldom that he was alone, even in his own room: yet now and then he would find himself on the moors in the sun-setting, when the western sky was still one blaze of yellow or orange light, varied by bands of cloudy red, with the low hills and sweeps of moor standing black against that waning brightness which, magnificent as it was, sent out little light. Mr. Sandford did not compare his own going out of practical life and possibility, yet preservation of a glow of fame which neither warmed nor enlightened, with that show in the west. People seldom see allegories of their own disaster. But as he strayed along with the sense of dreariness in his heart which the dead and spectral aspect of hill and tree was so well calculated to give, his own circumstances came back to him in tragic glimpses. He thought of the gay group he had left behind, the heedless young creatures singing and dancing on the edge of the precipice, and of the peaceful home lying silent awaiting them, to which they had no doubt of returning, with all its security of comfort and peace, but on the edge of the precipice too. And he thought of Jack's fee, his two guineas, which they had all taken as the best joke in the world, and of Lizzie, who was to have fifty pounds a year from her father, and of Harry, quite happy and content on his schoolboy allowance; and all this going on as if it were the course of nature, unchangeable as the stars or the pillars of the earth. These things glided before him as he looked over all the

inequalities of the moor standing black against the western sky. They were the true facts about him, notwithstanding that in the shelter of this momentary pause he only felt them as at a distance, and less strongly than before realised the ease it would bring if by the grace of God something happened—before——

It was the time of the year when there are various race meetings in the north, and Mr. Daniells had planned to carry his party to the most famous of them. He had his landau and a brake, royally charged with provisions, and filled with his guests. Mr. Sandford had done his best to get off this unnecessary festivity, for which he had little taste. But all his friends, who by this time had begun to perceive that his spirits were not in their usual equable state, resisted and protested. He must come, they said: to leave one behind would spoil the party; he was not to be left alone with all the moorland effects to steal a march upon the other painters. And he had not sufficient energy to stand against their remonstrances. It was easier to yield, and he yielded. The race was not unamusing. Even with all his preoccupation, he took a little pleasure in it, more or less, as most Englishmen do: though it glanced across his mind that somebody might say afterwards, 'Sandford was there, amusing himself on the edge of the precipice.' These vague voices and glimpses of things were not enough to stand against the remonstrances and banter of his friends: and after all, what did it matter? The plunge over the precipice is not less terrible because you may have performed a dance of despair on the edge. It was about sunset on a lovely September evening when the party set out on their return home. They were merry; not that there had been any excess or indulgence unbecoming of English gentlemen. Daniells, it is true, who was not a gentleman, had, perhaps, a little more champagne under his belt than was good for him. But his guests were only merry, talking a little more loudly than usual about the events of the day and the exploits of the favourite, and settling some moderate bets which neither harmed nor elated anyone. Mr. Sandford, who had not betted, was the most silent of the party; the lively talk of the others left him free to retire to his own thoughts. He had got rather into a tangle of dim calculations about his insurances, and how the money would be divided, when somebody suddenly called out 'Hallo! we've got off the road!'

For some time Mr. Sandford was the only one who paid any

attention to this statement. Looking out with a little start, he saw the same scene against which his musings had taken form on previous nights. A sky glowing with a stormy splendour, deep burning orange on the horizon rising through zones of yellow to the daffodil sky above, every object standing out black in the absence of light; not the hedgerows and white line of the road alone, but the blunt inequalities of the moor, here a lump of gorse and gnarled hawthorn bushes, there a treacherous hollow with a gleam of water gathered as in a cup. The coachman and grooms had not been so prudent as their masters, their potations had been heavier than champagne. How they had left the road and got upon the moor could never be discovered. It was partly the perplexing glow above and blackness below, partly the fumes of a long day's successive drinkings in their brains; partly, perhaps, as one of the passengers thought, something else. The horses had taken the unusual obstacles on their path with wonderful steadiness at first, but by the time the attention of the gentlemen was fully attracted to what was happening, the coachman had altogether lost control of the kicking and plunging animals. The man was not too far gone to have driven home by the road, but his brain was incapable of any effort to meet such an emergency. He began to flog the horses wildly, to swear at them, to pull savagely at the reins. The groom jumped down to rush to their heads, and in doing so, as they made a plunge at the moment, fell on the roadside, and in a moment more was left behind as the terrified horses dashed on. By this time everybody was roused, and the danger was evident. Mr. Sandford sat quite still; he was not learned about horses, while many of his companions were. One of them got on to the box beside the terrified coachman to try what could be done, the others gave startled and sometimes contradictory suggestions and directions. He was quite calm in the tumult of alarm and eager preparation for any event. He was sensible, profoundly sensible, of the wonderful effect of the scene; the orange glow which no pigments in the world could reproduce, the blackness of the indistinguishable objects which stood up against it like low dark billows of a motionless sea. The shocks of the jolting carriage affected him little, any more than the shouts of the alarmed and excited men. He did not even remark, then, that some sprang off and that others held themselves ready to follow. His sensations were those of perfect calm. He thought of the precipice no more,

nor even of the insurances. Some one shook him by the shoulder, but it did not disturb him. The effect was wonderful; the orange growing intense, darker, the yellow light pervading the illuminated sky. And then a sudden wild whirl, a shock of sudden sensation, and he saw or felt no more.

VII.

Presently the light came back to Mr. Sandford's eyes. He was lying upon the dry heather on the side of the moor, the brown seed-pods nestling against his cheek, the yellow glow in the west, to which his eyes instinctively turned, having scarcely faded at all since he had looked at it from the carriage. A confused sound of noises, loud speaking, and moans of pain reached him where he lay, but scarcely moved him to curiosity. His first sensation was one of curious ease and security. He did not attempt to budge, but lay quite peacefully smiling at the sunset, like a child. His head was confused, but there was in it a vague sense of danger escaped, and of some kind of puzzled deliverance from he knew not what, which gave the strangest feeling of soothing and rest. He felt no temptation to jump up hastily, to go to the help of the people who were moaning, or to inquire into the accident, as in another case he would have done. He lay still, quite at his ease, hearing these voices as if he heard them not, and smiling with a confused pleasure at the glow of orange light in the sky.

He did not know how long it was till some one knelt down and spoke to him anxiously. 'Sandford, are you badly hurt? Sandford, my dear fellow, do you know me? Can you speak to me?'

He burst into a laugh at this address.

'Speak to you? Know you? What nonsense! I am not hurt at all. I am quite comfortable.'

'Thank God!' said the other. 'Duncan, I fear, has a broken leg, and the coachman is—— It was his fault, the unfortunate wretch. Give me your hand, and I'll help you to get up.'

To get up? That was quite a different matter. He did not feel the least desire to try. He felt, before trying and without any sense of alarm, that he could not get up; then said to himself that this was nonsense too, and that to lie there, however comfortably, when he might be helping the others, was not to be thought of. He gave his hand accordingly to his friend, and made

an effort to rise. But it would have been as easy (he said to himself) for a log of wood to attempt to rise. He felt rather like that, as if his legs had turned to wood—not stone, for that would have been cold and uncomfortable. 'I don't know how it is,' he said, still smiling, 'but I can't budge. There's nothing the matter with me, I'm quite easy and comfortable, but I can't move a limb. I'll be all right in a few minutes. Look after the others. Never mind me.' He thought the face of the man who was bending over him looked strangely scared, but nothing more was said. A rug was put over him and one of the cushions of the carriage under his head, and there he lay, vaguely hearing the groans of the man whose leg was broken as (apparently) they moved him, and all the exclamations and questions and directions given by one and another. What was more wonderful was the dying out of that wild orange light in the sky. It paled gradually, as if it had been glowing metal, and the cold night air breathing on it had paled and dwindled that ineffectual fire. A hundred lessening tints and tones of colour—yellows and faint greens, and shades of purple and creamy whiteness breaking the edges—melted and shimmered in the distance. It was like an exhibition got up for him alone, relieved by that black underground, now traversed by gigantic ebony figures of a horse and a man, moving irregularly across the moor. A star came out with a keen blue sparkle, like some power of heaven triumphant over that illumination of earth. What a spectacle it was! And all for him alone!

The next thing he was conscious of was two or three figures about him—one the doctor, whose professional touch he soon discovered on his pulse and his limbs. 'We are going to lift you. Don't take any trouble; it will give you no pain,' some one said. And before he could protest, which he was about to do good-humouredly, that there was no occasion, he found himself softly raised upon some flat and even surface, more comfortable, after all, than the lumps of the heather. Then there was a curious interval of motion along the road, no doubt, though all he saw was the sky with the stars coming gradually out; neither the road nor his bearers, except now and then a dark outline coming within the line of his vision; but always the deep blue of the mid sky shining above. The world seemed to have concentrated in that, and it was not this world, but another world.

He remembered little more, except by snatches; an unknown

face—probably the doctor's—looking exceedingly grave, bending over him; then Daniells' usually jovial countenance with all the lines drooping and the colour blanched out of it, and a sound of low voices talking something over, of which he could only make out the words 'Telegraph at once;' then, 'Too late! It must not be too late. She must come at once.' He wondered vaguely who this was, and why there should be such a hurry. And then, all at once, it seemed to him that it was daylight and his wife was standing by his bedside. He had just woke up from what seemed a very long, confused, and feverish night—how long he never knew. But when he woke everything was clear to him. Unless, by the grace of God, something were to happen—— Something was about to happen, by the grace of God.

'Mary!' he cried, with a flush of joy. 'You here!'

'Of course, my dearest,' she said, with a cheerful look, 'as soon as I heard there had been an accident.'

He took her hand between his and drew her to him. 'This was all I wanted,' he said. 'God is very good; He gives me everything.'

'Oh, Edward!' This pitiful protest, remonstrance, appeal to heaven and earth—for all these were in her cry—came from her unawares.

'Yes,' he said, 'my dear, everything has happened as I desired. I understand it all now. I thought I was not hurt; now I see. I am not hurt, I am killed, like the boy—don't you remember?—in Browning's ballad. Don't be shocked, dear. Why shouldn't I be cheerful? I am not—sorry.'

'Oh, Edward!' she cried again, the passion of her trouble exasperated by his composure; 'not to leave—us all?'

He held her hand between his, smiling at her. 'It was what I wanted,' he said—'not to leave you; but don't you believe, my darling, there must be something about that leaving which is not so dreadful, which is made easy to the man who goes away? Certainly, I don't want to leave you; but it's so much for your good—for the children's good——'

'Oh, never, Edward, never!'

'Yes; it's new to you, but I've been thinking about it a long time—so much that I once thought it would almost have been worth the while, but for the insurances, to have——'

'Edward!' She looked at him with an agonised cry.

'No, dear—nothing of the kind. I never would, I never

could have done it. It would have been contrary to nature. The accident—was without any will or action of mine. By the grace of God——'

'Edward, Edward! Oh, don't say that; by His hand heavy, heavy upon us!'

'It is you that should not say that, Mary. If you only knew, my dear. I want you to understand so long as I am here to tell you——'

'He must not talk so much,' said the voice of the doctor behind; 'his strength must be husbanded. Mrs. Sandford, you must not allow him to exhaust himself.'

'Doctor,' said Mr. Sandford, 'I take it for granted you're a man of sense. What can you do for me? Spin out my life by a few more feeble hours. Which would you rather have yourself? That, or the power of saying everything to the person you love best in the world?'

'Let him talk,' said the doctor, turning away; 'I have no answer to make. Give him a little of this if he turns faint. And send for me if you want me, Mrs. Sandford.'

'Thanks, doctor. That is a man of sense, Mary. I feel quite well, quite able to tell you everything.'

'Oh, Edward, when that is the case, things cannot be so bad! If you will only take care, only try to save your strength, to keep up. Oh, my dear! The will to get well does so much! Try! try! Edward, for the love of God.'

'My own Mary; always believing that everything's to be done by an effort, as all women do. I am glad it is out of my power. If I were in any pain there might be some hope for you, but I'm in no pain. There's nothing the matter with me but dying. And I have long felt that was the only way.'

'Dying?—not when you were with us at the sea?'

'Most of all then,' he said with a smile.

'Oh, Edward, Edward! and I full of amusements, of pleasure, leaving you alone.'

'It was better so. I am glad of every hour's respite you have had. And now you'll be able easily to break up the house, which would have been a hard thing and a bitter downfall in my lifetime. It will be quite natural now. They will give you a pension, and there will be the insurance money.'

'I cannot bear it,' she cried wildly. 'I cannot have you speak like this.'

'Not when it is the utmost ease to my mind—the utmost comfort——'

She clasped her hands firmly together. 'Say anything you wish, Edward.'

'Yes, my poor dear.' He was very very sorry for his wife. It burst upon her without preparation, without a word of warning. Oh, he was sorry for her! But for himself it was a supreme consolation to pour it all forth, to tell her everything. 'If I were going to be left behind,' he said, soothingly, 'my heart would be broken: but it is softened somehow to those that are going away. I can't tell you how. It is, though; it is all so vague and soft. I know I'll lose you, Mary, as you will lose me, but I don't feel it. My dearest, I had not a commission, not one. And there are three pictures of mine unsold in Daniells' inner shop. He'll tell you if you ask him. The three last. That one of the little Queen and her little Maries, that our little Mary sat for, that you liked so much, you remember? It's standing in Daniells' room; three of them. I think I see them against the wall.'

'Edward!'

'Oh no, my head is not going. I only *think* I see them. And it was the merest chance that the "Black Prince" sold; and not a commission, not a commission. Think of that, Mary. It is true such a thing has happened before, but I never was sixty before. Do you forget I am an old man, and my day is over?'

'No, no, no,' she cried with passion; 'it is not so.'

'Oh yes; facts are stubborn things—it is so. And what should we have done if our income had stopped in a moment, as it would have done? A precipice before our feet, and nothing, nothing beyond. Now for you, my darling, it will be far easier. You can sell the house and all that is in it. And they will give you a pension, and the children will have something to begin upon.'

'Oh, the children!' she cried, taking his hand into hers, bowing down her face upon it. 'Oh, Edward, what are the children between you and me?' She cast them away in that supreme moment; the young creatures all so well, so gay, so hopeful. In her despair and passion she flung their crowding images from her—those images which had forced her husband from her heart.

He laughed a low, quiet laugh. 'God bless them,' he said; 'but I like to have you all to myself, you and me only, for the last moment, Mary. You have been always the best wife that

ever was—nay, I won't say have been—you are, my dear, my wife. We don't understand anything about widows, you and I. Death's nothing, I think. It looks dreadful when you're not going. But God manages all that so well. It is as if it were nothing to me. Mary, where are you?'

'Here, Edward, holding your hand. Oh, my dear, don't you see me?'

'Yes, yes,' he said, with a faint laugh, as if ashamed at some mistake he had made, and put his other hand over hers with a slight groping movement. 'It's getting late,' he said; 'it's getting rather dark. What time is it? Seven o'clock? You'll not go down to dinner, Mary? Stay with me. They can bring you something upstairs.'

'Go down? Oh, no, no. Do you think I would leave you, Edward?' She had made a little pause of terror before she spoke, for, indeed, it was broad day, the full afternoon sunshine still bright outside, and nothing to suggest the twilight. He sighed again—a soft, pleasurable sigh.

'If you don't mind just sitting by me a little. I see your dear face in glimpses, sometimes as if you had wings and were hovering over me. My head's swimming a little. Don't light the candles. I like the half light; you know I always did. So long as I can see you by it, Mary. Is that a comfortable chair? Then sit down, my love, and let me keep your hand, and I think I'll get a little sleep.'

'It will do you good,' said the poor wife.

'Who knows?' he said, with another smile. 'But don't let them light the candles.'

Light the candles! She could see, where she sat there, the red sunshine falling in a blaze upon a ruddy heathery hill, and beating upon the dark firs which stood out like ink against that background. There is perhaps nothing that so wrings the heart of the watcher as this pathetic mistake of day for night which betrays the eyes from which all light is failing. He lay within the shadow of the curtain, always holding her hand fast, and fell asleep—a sleep which, for a time, was soft and quiet enough, but afterwards got a little disturbed. She sat quite still, not moving, scarcely breathing, that she might not disturb him; not a tear in her eye, her whole being wound up into an external calm which was so strangely unlike the tumult within. And she had forsaken him—left him to meet calamity without her support, without

sympathy or aid! She had been immersed in the pleasures of the children, their expeditions, their amusements. She remembered, with a shudder, that it had been a little relief to get him away, to have their dance undisturbed. Their dance! Her heart swelled as if it would burst. She had been his faithful wife since she was little more than a child. All her life was his—she had no thought, no wish, apart from him. And yet she had left him to bear this worst of evils alone!

Mrs. Sandford dared not break the sacred calm by a sob or a sigh. She dared not even let the tears come to her eyes, lest he should wake and be troubled by the sight of them. What thoughts went through her mind as she sat there, not moving! Her past life all over, which, until that telegram came, had seemed the easy tenor of every day; and the future, so dark, so awful, so unknown—a world which she did not understand without him.

After an interval he began to speak again, but so that she saw he was either asleep still or wandering in those vague regions between consciousness and nothingness. 'All against the wall—with the faces turned,' he said. 'Three—all the last ones: the one my wife liked so. In the inner room: Daniells is a good fellow. He spared me the sight of them outside. Three—that's one of the perfect numbers—that's—I could always see them: on the road, and on the moor, and at the races: then—I wonder—all the way up—on the road to heaven? no, no. One of the angels—would come and turn them round—turn them round. Nothing like that in the presence of God. It would be disrespectful—disrespectful. Turn them round—with their faces—' He paused; his eyes were closed, an ineffable smile came over his mouth. 'He—will see what's best in them,' he said.

After this for a time silence reigned, broken only now and then by a word sometimes unintelligible. Once his wife thought she caught something about the 'four square walls in the new Jerusalem,' sometimes tender words about herself, but nothing clear. It was not till night that he woke, surprising them with an outcry as to the light, as he had previously spoken about the darkness.

'You need not,' he said, 'light such an illumination for me—*al giorno* as the Italians say; but I like it—I like it. Daniells—has the soul of a prince.' Then he put out his hands feebly, calling 'Mary! Mary!' and drew her closer to him, and whispered a long earnest communication; but what it was the poor lady

never knew. She listened intently, but she could not make out a word. What was it? What was it? Whatever it was, to have said it was an infinite satisfaction to him. He dropped back upon his pillows with an air of content indescribable, and silent pleasure. He had done everything, he had said everything. And in this mood slept again, and woke no more.

Mr. Sandford's previsions were all justified. The house was sold to advantage, at what the agent called a fancy price, because it had been his house—with its best furniture undisturbed. Everything was miserable enough indeed, but there was no humiliation in the breaking up of the establishment, which was evidently too costly for the widow. She got her pension at once, and a satisfactory one, and retired with her younger children to a small house which was more suited to her circumstances. And Lord Okeham, touched by the fact that Sandford's death had taken place under the same roof, in a room next to his own (though that, to be sure, in an age of competition and personal merit was nothing), found somehow, as a Cabinet Minister no doubt can if he will, a post for Harry, in which he got on just as well as other young men, and settled down into a very good servant of the State. And Jack, being thus suddenly sobered and called back to himself, and eager to get rid of the intolerable thought that he, too, had weighed upon his father's mind, and made his latter days more sad, took to his profession with zeal, and got on, as no doubt any determined man does when he adopts one line and holds by it. The others settled down with their mother in a humbler way of living, yet did not lose their friends, as it is common to say people do. Perhaps they were not asked any longer to the occasional 'smart' parties to which the pretty daughters and well-bred sons of Sandford the famous painter, who could dispense tickets for Academy soirées and private views, were invited, more or less on sufferance. These failed them, their names falling out of the invitation books; but what did that matter, seeing they never had been but outsiders, flattered by the cards of a countess, but never really penetrating beyond the threshold?

Mrs. Sandford believed that she could not live when her husband was thus taken from her. The remembrance of that brief but dreadful time when she had abandoned him, when the children and their amusements had stolen her heart away, was

heavy upon her, and though she steeled herself to carry out all his wishes, and to do everything for them that could be done, yet she did it all with a sense that the time was short, and that when her duty was thus accomplished she would follow him. This softened everything to her in the most wonderful way. She felt herself to be acting as his deputy through all these changes, glad that he should be saved the trouble, and that humiliation and confession of downfall which was not now involved in any alteration of life she could make, and fully confident that when all was completed she would receive her dismissal and join him where he was. But she was a very natural woman, with all the springs of life in her unimpaired. And by-and-by, with much surprise, with a pang of disappointment, and yet a rising of her heart to the new inevitable solitary life which was so different, which was not solitary at all, but full of the stir and hum of living, yet all silent in the most intimate and closest circle, Mrs. Sandford recognised that she was not to die. It was a strange thing, yet one which happens often: for we neither live nor die according to our own will and previsions—save sometimes in such a case as that of our painter, to whom, as to his beloved, God accorded sleep.

And more—the coming true of everything that he had believed. After doing his best for his own, and for all who depended upon him in his life, he did better still, as he had foreseen, by dying. Daniells sold the three pictures at prices higher than he had dreamed of, for a Sandford was now a thing with a settled value, it being sure that no new flood of them would ever come into the market. And all went well. Perhaps with some of us, too, that dying which it is a terror to look forward to, seeing that it means the destruction of a home, may prove, like the painter's, a better thing than living even for those who love us best. But it is not to everyone that it is given to die at the right moment, as Mr. Sandford had the happiness to do.

OF DATES.

THE word date is exceedingly ambiguous. It is not what the logicians prettily describe as a univocal term. On the contrary, it is most distinctly and decidedly equivocal. Its equivocation has given rise, indeed, to one of the most marvellous *tours de force* in the way of a sustained and elaborate pun ever perpetrated in the English or any other language. Everybody remembers in the Heathen Chinee how, when Bill Nye and Truthful James go to examine Ah Sin's bland and childlike person, they discover winning cards of various values carefully concealed about that guileless Mongolian's sleeves and bosom. 'And we found on his nails, which were taper,' continues the innocent Caucasian narrator, 'what is frequent on tapers—that's wax.' Now, there is a famous Cambridge Senate-House parody of the Heathen Chinee, which describes the guile and wile of a naughty undergraduate who endeavours to get through his little-go examination on the same general principles as those which actuated poor benighted Ah Sin in his method of playing the game of poker. After describing how the undergraduate has tips of various kinds written upon his cuffs, his finger-nails, his sleeves, and his penholder, the university poet goes on to remark, in strict accordance with the ring of the lines parodied,—

> And we found on his palms, which were hollow,
> What is frequent on palms—that is dates.

Even as an isolated and original pun, that would be very neat and telling; but when we consider further how admirably the double play upon words is imitated, and the lilt of Bret Harte's verse is preserved in the imitation, the performance rises to absolute high-water mark of the parodying faculty. The man who could dance in such fetters as those would have been not unequal to the task of translating Aristophanes.

The dates wherewith we have here to deal, then, to be quite precise, are not the dates inscribed on the palms of the self-convicted candidate for academical honours, duly registered in Haydn's Dictionary; they are the dates that grow on those other palms which flourish among the allegories on the banks of the

Nile. It is always surprising to me how many articles we all use familiarly in our everyday life, about whose origin and real nature we know nothing or next to nothing. A city man one day was discoursing volubly to me about the recent remarkable fall in the price of fenugreek. 'And pray,' said I, 'what is fenugreek, and what do they use it for?' 'Upon my soul,' said the bold merchant, with a start of surprise, 'I haven't really the faintest notion; but I know it's something you sell by the ton.' (Lest I should seem too unjustifiably to arouse the curiosity of the invariably candid and courteous reader without stepping out of my way a moment to satisfy it, I may add parenthetically that fenugreek, as I found on further inquiry, is a sort of pulse, not unlike a very large clover; that it grows in India, Egypt, and the East; that the seeds yield a bitter and disagreeable oil; that they form an important ingredient in all curry-powders; that they are used to flavour a well-known food for cattle; and that 4*l.* 10*s.* a ton is the current quotation at the present moment for prime Egyptian. And having thus disburdened my soul of its accumulated store of knowledge anent this mysterious fenugreek, I will return once more from my sudden digression to the dates themselves from which I started.)

When we see Best Tafilats duly arranged like herrings in a box in the grocers' windows, we accept at once the fact that they are dates, and usually ask no more about them. But since the date forms the staff of life for large masses of our fellow-creatures, many of whom are now also all but our fellow-subjects, some little consideration of their origin and nature befits the imperial and imperious true-born Briton. For it is one of the peculiarities of our very varied and expanded empire, in these latter days, that in order to govern and administer it properly, our legislators and voters ought to know absolutely everything. They should be versed in monsoons, and rice crops, and metaphysics for India; in sugar-cane, and bananas, and bandanas for Jamaica; in lumber, and ermine, and fall wheat for Canada; in diamonds, and Zulus, and theology for the Cape; in Chinese, and Buddhism, and pigeon-English for Hong-Kong; and in coolies, vacuum-pans, and irrigation for Demerara. They must acquire a permanent squint by keeping one eye firmly fixed on a scientific frontier in Afghanistan, and the other steadily pointed to a Hudson's Bay outlet for the wheat of Manitoba. They must never forget the disaffection of Hyderabad, or go to sleep without

having ascertained beforehand the feelings of the Namaquas, the Maories, and the Blackfoot Indians. Why, the House of Lords alone, in its capacity of final court of appeal, must decide on cases in old French law from Lower Canada, in the Code Napoléon from Mauritius, in Dutch law from the Cape of Good Hope, in Hindoo law from India generally, in Mohammedan law from Bengal and Oudh, in Sikh law from parts of the Punjab, in Singhalese law from Ceylon, in local law from Ontario and Victoria, in Malay law from the Straits Settlements, and, for aught I know to the contrary, in cannibal law from the Fiji Islands and the King Country of New Zealand. 'Enough,' said Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, to the sage who discoursed to him on the poet's education; 'you have convinced me that no mortal can ever by any possibility become a poet.' How, then, can any mortal ever become, I do not say Prime Minister of England, but even a silent voting member of the imperial Parliament?

Nevertheless, since—let us say—eminent aldermen rush in where angels fear to tread, it is decidedly desirable that every unit in the great central governing oligarchy of our composite empire should at least know something about the fruit which forms the staple product of a country that has already cost us some odd millions, and is likely to cost us before we have done with it as many more. In the name of the Prophet, figs. Or if not figs, then dates at any rate.

The date-palm seems the most paradoxical of trees. It invariably insists upon impossible or at least impracticable combinations of circumstances. It requires a hot dry climate, and yet its roots must have access to abundant moisture. It flourishes best in rainless countries, and yet it can only live by means of natural or artificial irrigation. It will ripen its fruit in Portugal and Andalusia; and yet it refuses to come to perfection in the basking hot summers of Anatolia and Sicily. The fact is, the date-palm really belongs by origin to the desert belt, but even in the desert it grows only among the stray oases where a spring or stream allows a little group of its tall stems to raise their head of feathery branches high into the dry and scorching air. I need not dwell upon this idyllic Eastern picture of the native haunt of the date-palm, for everybody has it stamped indelibly on his memory from the familiar woodcuts of the Sunday-school books that amused or distressed his happy childhood. We know it well, that oasis in the desert: in the foreground stands the conventional

Arab sheikh, in turban and burnous, accompanied by his faithful negro slave and equally faithful double-humped camel; in the background, a stream of marvellous hydraulic pressure gushes up in gurgling flood as though from a street hydrant, while around it a circle of bending date-palms wave over the fountain, and hang down monstrous bunches of ripe dates for the behoof of the Arabian gentleman aforesaid, his suite and cattle. But why an oasis should never sit for its portrait except in the very height of the date season, and during the occasion of a visit from a sheikh with his camels, is a question that has long and unsatisfactorily engaged my attention.

Essentially a desert plant by origin, developed in, for, and by the sandy tracts, the date-palm still grows almost exclusively in the great desert zone of the Eastern Hemisphere. This zone begins in Sahara, and after being barely interrupted by the Nile and the Red Sea, continues across Arabia to the Persian Gulf, where the irrigated Euphrates valley once more intersects it, and finally runs on by Makran and the Indian Desert to the great Tibetan plateau and the sand wastes of Gobi. Along all the dry region thus mapped out the rainfall is very slight, and fertile tracts only occur in the artificially watered alluvial deposits of the great rivers, like the Nile, the Euphrates, the Indus, and the Ganges. This, then, is the true home of the date-palm, the district where it can obtain in many places its pet combination of desert drought above and irrigating springs or streams below. Its native range extends, in short, from North Africa, on the fringes of Sahara, through Arabia and Palestine, to the Indian plains. Mesopotamia is probably its most original home: its western limit is Senegal; its eastern, the Indus. Under exceptional circumstances, however, and in special places, it can be cultivated also in Southern Europe and some parts of Asia Minor, but only where the climate is naturally dry, and where abundant water can be supplied it by irrigating channels. In Portugal it loves the sunny dells among the dry rocks of Lower Estremadura; in Spain it grows luxuriantly along the Andalusian lowlands from Murcia to Alicante, and occasionally ripens good fruit even as far north as Valencia and Oviedo; in the south of Italy and Sicily it flowers well, but seldom brings its berries to perfection; and along the basking shore of the Riviera, between Marseilles and Genoa, it drags out a precarious existence on the promenade at Nice, or grows with greater freedom in the deep alluvial soil of Hyères and of the

Maures Mountains. Its average northern limit, in fact, as Martius and De Candolle have elaborately proved, is about the latitude of Sidon and Morocco, south of which it flourishes vigorously till it is stopped, as Mr. Haldane remarks, by the excessive moisture of the equatorial region.

Dates, to be concise, are conterminous with Mohammedanism. People who have only seen the date-palm on the sandy spit of Bordighera, or among the fashionable gardens of Cannes and Mentone, can form no idea of its beauty and gracefulness when allowed to grow to its natural height, and to drop its leaves in the natural manner among its native deserts.

> Nor knew we well what pleased us most,
> Not the clipt palm of which they boast,

says Tennyson of the Riviera in that beautiful little holiday excursion of his, 'The Daisy;' and, indeed, the palm is clipped and doctored out of all recognition by the prim and formal taste of French and Italian gardeners. Each year the old leaves are sawn off near the base, and a painfully artificial air is thus given to the mutilated trunks by the cut stumps of the dead foliage. But in its wild and native state the date-palm forms a tall and gracious tree of stately aspect, inferior in beauty, it is true, to the cocoa-nut, and still more to the mountain cabbage-palm, but, with the usual high and slender stem of all its class, surmounted at the top by a tuft or rosette of spreading feathery pinnate leaves, deep green in hue, and from nine to twelve feet long in well-grown specimens. There are some very fine ones, well known to most European tourists, in the gardens and courtyards of Algiers and Oran. In height they sometimes reach as much as eighty feet near running water; and as they live and bear seed for two hundred years, the follower of the Prophet who plants a date-palm may indeed be regarded as labouring for posterity. The trees begin to fruit at seven years old, produce abundantly at twenty, and go on supplying his children's children far on into a second century.

The most interesting item about the date-palm, however, is the fact that it was the first species in which the distinction of sex in plants was ever noticed. As long ago as the days of Herodotus, and doubtless dozens of centuries earlier, the Egyptians and Babylonians knew that the dates could only be fully set by hanging the clusters of male flowers where their pollen could fall upon the female blossoms and impregnate the

ovaries. As usual, this bit of abstract knowledge was earliest acquired where it brought itself to bear upon that universal subject of human sympathy, the question of dinner. Your countryman who knows all other fungi merely in the lump by the common name of toadstools, can discriminate as accurately as a trained fungologist the edible mushroom from all inferior species. Your epicure with the vaguest views as to slugs and snails can safely be trusted, not only to identify that familiar bivalve, *Ostrea edulis*, but even to distinguish between such minor varieties as the Portuguese and the Whitstable native, the Blue-point and the genuine Saddle-rock. And so, too, the distinction of male and female in the date-palm forced itself violently upon the attention of hungry humanity ages before Linnæus had demonstrated the functions of pollen or the arrangement of sexes in the rose and the buttercup.

Most plants, as all the world now knows, have the stamens, which produce the pollen, and the pistil, which contains the embryonic seeds, enclosed in one and the same blossom; though even in such cases provision is usually made for cross-fertilisation by the agency of insects, either because the stamens and pistils do not both mature simultaneously, or because the pollen is so arranged as never to fall naturally upon the sensitive stigma of the unripe capsule. But in a few plants—as, for example, in the common begonia and in box and pellitory—the male and female flowers are quite distinct, though both grow upon the same stem; and in yet others, like the red campion, the hop, and the hautboy strawberry, one plant will produce nothing but barren or stamen-bearing flowers, while another will produce only fertile or fruit-bearing blossoms. In this last case, to which category the date-palm belongs, the sexes are strictly and absolutely separated. Each individual plant of the sort may properly be regarded as a huge phalanstery or community of male or female flowers, for which the bee or other insect acts as go-between.

Now, every separate date-palm is thus either a pollen-bearer or a fruit-producer; and as it is impossible to tell beforehand whether any particular seed will bring forth a male or female plant, the Arabs, who wish of course for fertile palms only, do not usually propagate from seed at all, but prefer to raise their young stock by slips or suckers, taken from the foot of a female tree. During the flowering season they cut off the branches or spikes of blossom from the wild pollen-bearing palms, or from a few cultivated ones

grown for that special purpose, and hang them by the side of the fruit-bearing flowers in their own gardens. The bees and other insects then rapidly and effectually set the fruit, by unconsciously carrying the pollen about on their bodies as they hunt for honey in the adjacent bunches. The account given of this process by Herodotus is just as full and just as correct in principle as any that could be given by a modern botanist. The male flowers grow as a rule somewhat larger than the female, but both are built on the usual palm model, which is in fact merely that of the ordinary lilies a little diverted. Each has six petals, not very brightly coloured, but pale yellowish green in hue, inclosing either six stamens, or else a three-celled ovary, of which two cells have become abortive. The palms, indeed, are arborescent lilies on a large scale; and such tropical species as the yuccas and the dracænas on the one hand, with the sub-tropical palmettos and fan-palms on the other, help in part to bridge over the gulf between the two orders. In other words, under the exceptional conditions of tropical life, certain luxuriant lily-like forms assume the shape and stature of trees, and those trees are what we call palms, marked still by the original lily blossoms, and by the peculiar tufted character of their leaves.

The contrast between the date and the cocoa-nut, both exactly analogous fruits, produced by closely allied and similar trees, marks admirably the way in which purely human and culinary distinctions are allowed to mask for us the actual facts and analogies of nature. For a date and a cocoa-nut are built on precisely the same plan, and answer layer for layer to one another ; only the part that we eat in the date is the part that we throw away in the cocoa-nut, and the part that we eat in the cocoa-nut is the part that we throw away in the date. First of all comes an outside fleshy layer, which in the date becomes at last soft and pulpy, while in the cocoa-nut it grows stringier and more fibrous as the fruit ripens; next comes a hard stone or nutshell, alike in both; and inside all lies the kernel or seed, intended in either case to germinate or grow, but eaten in the nut, and thrown away, shell and all, in the date-fruit. Moreover, as the cocoa-nut usually has its outer fibrous layer stripped off before being exposed for sale, most people forget about it altogether; and so the real analogy between the two cases is still more easily overlooked.

But why should the date-palm produce an edible fruit with a pulpy outer covering, while its congener the cocoa-palm produces

a hard-shelled nut with a tough and fibrous outer layer? Simply because the cocoa-palm grows in oceanic islands, while the date-palm grows in desert oases. Cocoas flourish best by the sea-shore, on coral reefs and atolls, within easy reach of the salt-laden breezes. The seeds are wafted hither and thither by winds and waves from island to island; and in no other way, as Darwin and Wallace have shown, could any plant succeed in peopling the widely dispersed archipelagos of the South Pacific and the Malay region. Hence the cocoa-nut requires great floating power, protection from salt water, a hard shell, and an immense stock of nutriment for its tender early years upon the beaches and sand-banks where it is finally tumbled. These requirements are amply met by nature in its fibrous matting, its smooth outer rind, its solid covering, and its rich store of copious albumen. The date-palm, on the other hand, asks for dispersion from oasis to oasis across the open desert, and it lives in regions thickly peopled by baboons and other monkeys. What more natural than to develop a pulpy outer fruit, to entice these unconscious friends, inclosing a very tough and hard shell, which no monkey's teeth can possibly penetrate? For this reason the date has now a sweet and fleshy outer coat, where the cocoa-nut has a light and fibrous external covering; and the well-disposed monkey, climbing the tall stem, and appropriating the fruit, frequently throws away the stone and seed by the water's edge, where it may best take root and grow and flourish. Of course, he throws away millions unheeded on the bare expanse of desert too; but that does not count; Nature always provides against these little accidents. Of a thousand seeds, says the poet with some modesty of statement, she often brings but one to bear. Very well, then, the date-palm will at all costs be even with her. A single tree produces as many as 20,000 dates in one season. Since the object of all these seeds is merely to keep up the usual number of date trees in the world, and since each date tree lives about 200 years, an average of one date well placed out of four millions will be quite sufficient to effect her purpose. As a matter of fact, wherever you find a tiny spring or stream in the desert, there also you find a date-palm. The stones germinate wherever the playful baboon throws them down in wet soil near the source of a river, or even in a damp fissure of the rock. The date-palm uses the monkey to transport its seeds in just the same way as it uses the bee to transfer pollen from blossom to blossom.

This marvellous fecundity of the date-palm, a fecundity in which perhaps it is only rivalled by the banana and the bread-fruit, makes it one of the most valuable foodstuffs known to the countries in which its fruit will ripen. Each tree produces from eight to ten bunches of fruit, and the total yield by weight of a palm in full bearing varies from one hundred to four hundred pounds of dates yearly. An acre of land under dates will feed more people than under any other known crop except plantain. The fruit is gathered before it fully ripens, for if allowed to get ripe it cannot be kept, owing to the rapidity with which it ferments. Common dates are dried in the sun by negro slaves, and then sent to market for local use ; the best kind, which are exported to Europe, are cured with a little more show of care ; but even the best are badly done, and if the trade were wholly carried on by Europeans instead of by Arabs and Berbers, we should eat much less dirt per bushel of Best Tafilat than we do at present. In these matters 'tis folly to be wise, and I will not harrow the soul of the date-eater by dwelling upon the details of the curative process as performed in Africa. The European market is chiefly supplied from Tunis, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, and Bussorah.

But the date itself by no means exhausts the economic value and properties of the date-palm. Like that sacred animal the pig, which is all useful, from the tip of his snout, cut up for brawn, to the bristles on his tail, employed for tooth-brushes, the date-palm rivals Somebody's tea in being 'all good alike' for something or other. The bark yields a fibre which is employed for ropes, matting, baskets, and sacks. The leaves serve to thatch the Berber's hut, and to make little cases for packing the fruit in. The footstalks boil the family kettle or yabbah, and supply fencing for the cottage garden. The timber takes a good polish for cabinet work, or cut into lengths supplies the ordinary post of the North African circular hut. The unripe dates can be boiled down for vinegar. The ripe fruit, besides being eaten dry, may be made into spirits, or pressed fresh for an agreeable syrup. Finally, the tree can be tapped for toddy, as is done in Algeria with centenarian palms as soon as they attain their hundredth birthday. A gallon of toddy a day can be drawn off for a whole fortnight ; after that, the drain is injurious to the tree's constitution.

The sap thus obtained is at first a sweet and pleasant beverage, but the heat of the sun, aided of course by the ubiquitous germ, soon sets up fermentation, and the drink becomes sour, alcoholic,

and intoxicating. Palm wine is the commonest form in which it is drunk. While still sweet it can be boiled down into sugar, like the jaggery of the cocoa-palm; when fermented it can be easily distilled into that fiery and unpleasant spirit known as arrack. Mr. A. R. Wallace believes, indeed, that the wild date-tree will finally supersede the sugar-cane and the beetroot as a producer of sugar. From this necessarily brief and cursory account of the virtues of the date-palm it must be immediately obvious to the meanest comprehension that the Moslem who is lucky enough to possess a grove of them may consider himself practically independent of the remainder of humanity. He may feed himself, clothe himself, warm himself, house himself, furnish his humble cot, and attain to various degrees of pleasing intoxication, vinous or spirituous according to taste, without going beyond the precincts of his own orchard.

Mr. Haldane suggests that the date ought to be extensively planted in the desert interior of the Australian continent. Were it well dispersed there, he believes, it would some day be found of as great value as it now is in the oases of Sahara. Not only does it supply food, shade, and toddy for drink to the belated explorer, but it also marks out from afar by its tall stems and tufted foliage the existence of water in the midst of the desert, and so enables wayfarers to push their way straight across country from spring to spring. A supply of dates, it is suggested, ought to be sent with every expedition into the interior, and every means be taken to disseminate the seeds. Alphonse de Candolle also observed that it might be introduced with advantage into the South African desert and many parts of the Cape of Good Hope. The true difficulty in Australia would be that that oldest of faunas includes no monkeys; and without monkeys the dissemination of the date-palm would probably prove a complete failure. For you must sow the seeds broadcast everywhere over the ground in order that here and there one or two may spring up spontaneously in the best adapted places. True, in the African oases most of the palms have been planted by man, while some even of those which fringe the merest damp spots in the desert, far from the huts of men, may have sprung from stones casually cast away, as De Candolle believes, by passing caravans. But such deliberate planting or accidental dispersion by the hand of man in itself implies long civilisation and a developed transport system, which is just what one has not got and cannot have for many centuries in

Central Australia. Perhaps, however, parrots, of which there are abundance, might successfully take the place of monkeys; and if so the date-palm might advertise all the moist spots and streams in the Australian desert, as it already does in Egypt and Algeria.

A few words about the stray date-palms still to be found in Southern France and Italy may not perhaps be quite out of place in this connection. The date was introduced into the Riviera by the Moorish pirates, liegemen of the good Haroun-al-Raschid, who in the ninth century settled down in that rugged schistose region between Toulon and Fréjus still called after their name, the Montagnes des Maures. Here for two or three hundred years they held out as a petty independent Mohammedan principality, surrounded on every side by timid Provençal and Ligurian Christendom. They had their tiny Moslem capital at what is now the unimportant village of Garde Freinet; and all the country side from Hyères to St. Tropez still teems with interesting verbal and material memorials of the Saracen supremacy. African plants and flowers grow to this day in the gardens that fringe the banks of the Béal. Arab words and names abound in the *patois* of the Olbian peasantry. Moorish-looking gateways and quaint houses with blank African walls remain in all the hamlets of the Maures district. And here it is, too, that the date-palm flourishes better than in any other climate north of Sicily. Something African, indeed, reveals itself at once in the very aspect of the arid hill-sides, with their brown cottages packed close against the barren rock: and once at Bormes, in the heart of the little principality, I remember coming upon an ancient date-palm, overshadowing an old adobe hut with a tall mud wall, which looked like a stray little bit of Algeria transplanted to the wrong side of the Mediterranean. 'The Arabs who occupied this petty canton in the tenth and eleventh century,' says M. Elie de Beaumont, 'might easily be excused for still imagining themselves to be living in Africa.'

La Garde Freinet itself, the Castellum Fraxinetum of mediæval historians, where in the ninth century the Saracen corsairs established their head-quarters, also still retains several fine specimens of ancient palm trees. The Arabs built there a splendid fortress, known as Les Tours; and from this impregnable stronghold they sent on their booty to the African coast by the port of St. Tropez. Nowadays La Garde lies far remote from the ways of tourists, on the cross-country road from Cogolin to Le Luc; but the stranger from Northern Europe who has never seen sub-tropical vegetation

in its full perfection should make a pilgrimage to the ruins of the château in order to see the waving date-palms still clinging to the last reminiscence of their Saracen planters.

From La Garde Freinet the date-palm spread first to Hyères, where some really fine specimens grow in the valley below the town and on the Place des Palmiers, and afterwards to Nice, Cannes, San Remo, Mentone, and Bordighera, at which latter place exists the finest plantation of these trees in any part of Europe. M. Adolphe Joanne calls it 'une vaste forêt de palmiers;' but then M. Joanne, for all his erudition, is sometimes seized with the enthusiasm of the guide-book writer. These palms are grown for commercial purposes, and form the chief item in the export trade of Bordighera. Not, of course, for the dates: the fruit never ripens so far north in Italy; they are valued entirely for the sake of their foliage, which is sent to Paris, to Rome, and even to Holland, for the processions and decorations on Palm Sunday. All the gardens and fields about Bordighera are full of palms, which are carefully cultivated with a unique eye to the safety of the leaves, the terminal panicle being painfully tied up with string and rope, so that the wind may not dash together the precious branches, and in their earlier stage are protected with netting, so that dust and rain may not soil or darken them. Ever since the days of Sixtus V. Bordighera has possessed the prescriptive right of furnishing St. Peter's with the branches used on Palm Sunday, and a local legend attributes the privilege to services rendered by a Bordigheran during the elevation of the Egyptian obelisk which stands in the centre of the colonnade before the great central cathedral of Catholic Christendom. It is more probable that Bordighera has a monopoly of palms because its sandy soil and dry atmosphere are better fitted to the natural habits of the plant than those of any other suitable spot along the North Mediterranean.

It is in the East alone, however, that the date-palm can be seen in all its glory. One gets it well enough at Mustapha Supérieur and at the Hôtel de l'Algérie; but Cairo and Alexandria are its proper home; and as for Bagdad, our entire ideal of the Arabian Nights is simply overshadowed by the waving and whispering branches of the mysterious palm trees. The East depends upon them for its bare identity. Without the cocoa-nut, there could be no tropics: without the date-palm, there can be no Orient. When we look at a brilliantly lighted picture of a mud-

built mosque, all blank walls, and beehive domes, and pointed minarets, with a muezzin solemnly calling the faithful to prayer from his aërial watch-tower, and a couple of tall and stately palms in the full foreground, we know at once the artist means us to see we are in Lower Syria or the Euphrates valley. When we recognise an islet by a river side, with a massive ruined colonnade in the near distance, a grave Oriental mounted on a donkey by an arched gateway, a couple of camels heavily laden, and a bower of tall foliage on a slender trunk, a little on one side, to give it all the proper local colouring, we know at once we are on the banks of the Nile, and within full view of Karnak or of Luxor. Whatever else the picture may contain, it cannot afford to do without the date-palm. That is the painter's way of saying, 'Observe; there's no deception: this is the genuine Eastern article.' As well think of painting the desert without a camel as of painting an Egyptian or Oriental scene without the aid of that overarching foliage. I have seen a sketch in Egypt which neglected the Pyramids; I have known such drawings to omit the obelisks, to forget the mosques, to avoid the dahabeeyas, to slight the sphinx, to ignore the Memnon, to commit high sacrilege against the sacred scarabæus; I have gone without the ibis, the hieroglyphs, the cataracts, and the turbans: but if a young painter were to do me a scene at Cairo or a view near Syene without the date-palms, I should immediately refuse to accept his picture as up to the terms of my original commission, and insist upon his painting in at least a tiny palm in the dim distance, that the world might know what it was really looking at.

WITH THE DUKE.

'Stole away—stole away!' from the gorse in the hollow,
Old stealthy dog-fox, with thy long lurching stride!
'Yoicks—forward!' my beauties, swoop swift as a swallow;
Hark! the thunder of horse-hoofs; sit down, man, and ride.

See Gaylad and Rector are climbing the heather,
The first flight skim over the wall with a rush;
'Hold hard, sir—a check!' by the hedgerow they feather,
Red Reynard will make a good fight for his brush!

Enchanter has hit it, with musical whimper,
O silver-tongued chime swelling into a peal;
Adonis' lips lose their exquisite simper,
'Mid the crash of the timber, his nerves are as steel.

Gallant horse, gentle-eyed, all thy silky mane flying,
Each touch on thy bit is a lover's caress;
Never fear, his fine ear is not deaf to thy sighing,
He will watch in each stride any note of distress.

You may rave as you like of the wild thrill of pleasure,
When 'neath balloon mainsail the yacht swings along;
When white-satined feet glide in rhythmical measure,
Praise the glow of the wine-flask, the glamour of song.

I know the mad pulse of the Racing Eights' oarblades,
The roar from the bank as she forges ahead;
The clang of the squadron, the play of the swordblades,
And 'neath the red hoofs, the pale face of our dead.

'Killed in action, and leading his men,' he is lying,
  Fearless soldier and horseman, true brother and friend;
Where the Dervish, white-cloaked, o'er the desert is flying;
  Such a poor petty skirmish! Was *this* thy life's end?

Not so! When the Duke calls us out in November,
  And we meet on the Lawn, we shall miss thy frank face;
Full many a comrade with grief will remember
  Thy riderless horse, the bright smile of thy race.

Lovely eyes will be dim as we tell thy proud story,
  When we race o'er the pastures and charge the stiff rail;
We shall wish we'd been there, but to share in thy glory;
  When they breathe thy dear name, brave men's lips will be pale.

'Hark forward!'—ride straight, Manhood, think not of craning;
  Take life as you find it—'tis better to die
With the hounds in full cry, while the horses are straining,
  And on, to life's finish, the scent lies breast-high.

A LIFE'S MORNING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'DEMOS,' 'THYRZA,' ETC.

CHAPTER IX.

CIRCUMSTANCE.

DAGWORTHY was absent not quite a fortnight, and he returned looking anything but the better for his holiday. The wholesome colour of his cheeks had changed almost to sallowness; those who met him in Dunfield looked at him with surprise and asked what illness he had been suffering. At the mill, they did not welcome his re-appearance; his temper was worse than it had been since the ever-memorable week which witnessed his prosecution for assault and battery. At home, the servants did their best to keep out of his way, warned by Mrs. Jenkins. She, good woman, had been rash enough to bring the child into the dining-room whilst Dagworthy was refreshing himself with a biscuit and a glass of wine upon his arrival; in a minute or two she retreated in high wrath.

'Let him dom me, if he loikes,' she went away exclaiming; 'ah'm ovver auld to care much abaht such fond tantrums; but when he gets agaate o' dommin his awn barn, it fair maaks my teeth dither ageean. The lad's aht on his 'eead.'

That was seven o'clock in the evening. He dined an hour later, and when it was dark left the house. Between then and midnight he was constantly in and out, and Mrs. Jenkins, who was kept up by her fears that 't' master' was seriously unwell, made at length another attempt to face him. She knocked at the door of the sitting-room, having heard him enter a minute or two before; no answer was vouchsafed, so she made bold to open the door. Dagworthy was sitting with his head upon the table, his arms stretched out; he appeared to be asleep.

'Mr. Richard!' she said softly. 'Mr. Richard!'

He looked up. 'Well? What is it?'

'Yo' scahr'd me; ah thowt summat 'ad come to yo'. What's wrong wi' yo', Mr. Richard? You look as if you could hardly hod your heead up.'

To her surprise he spoke quite calmly.

'Yes, I've got a bit of a headache. Get me some hot water, will you? I'll have some brandy and go to bed.'

She began to advise other remedies, but Dagworthy speedily checked her.

'Get me some hot water, I tell you, and go to bed yourself. What are you doing up at this hour?'

He went to business at the usual time next morning, and it seemed as if the worst had blown over; at home he was sullen, but not violent.

The third day after his return, on entering his office at the mill, he found Hood taking down one of a row of old ledgers which stood there upon a shelf.

'What are you doing?' he asked, abruptly, at the same time turning his back upon the clerk.

Hood explained that he was under the necessity of searching through the accounts for several years, to throw light upon a certain transaction which was giving trouble.

'All right,' was the reply, as Dagworthy took his keys out to open his desk.

A quarter of an hour later, he entered the room where Hood was busy over the ledger. A second clerk was seated there, and him Dagworthy summoned to the office, where he had need of him. Presently Hood came to replace the ledger he had examined, and took away the succeeding volume. A few minutes later Dagworthy said to the clerk who sat with him—

'I shall have to go away for an hour or so. I'm expecting a telegram from Legge Brothers; if it doesn't come before twelve o'clock, you or Hood must go to Hebsworth. It had better be Hood; you finish what you're at. If there's no telegram, he must take the twelve-thirteen, and give this note here to Mr. Andrew Legge; there'll be an answer. Mind you see to this.'

At the moment when Dagworthy's tread sounded on the stairs, Mr. Hood was on the point of making a singular discovery. In turning a page of the ledger, he came upon an envelope, old and yellow, which had evidently been shut up in the book for several years; it was without address and unsealed. He was going to lay it aside, when his fingers told him that it contained something; the enclosure proved to be a ten-pound note, also old and patched together in the manner of notes that have been sent half at a time.

'Now I wonder how that got left there?' Hood mused. 'There's been rare searching for that, I'll be bound. Here's something to put our friend into a better temper.'

He turned the note over once or twice, tried in vain to decipher a scribbled endorsement, then restored it to the envelope. With the letter in his hand, he went to the office.

'Mr. Dagworthy out?' he asked of his fellow-clerk on looking round.

The clerk was a facetious youth. He rose from his seat, seized a ruler, and began a species of sword-play about Hood's head, keeping up a grotesque dance the while. Hood bore it with his wonted patience, smiling faintly.

'Mr. Dagworthy out?' he repeated, as soon as he was free from apprehension of a chance crack on the crown.

'He is, my boy. And what's more, there's a chance of your having a spree in Hebsworth. Go down on your knees and pray that no telegram from Foot Brothers—I mean, Legge—arrives during the next five-and-twenty minutes.'

'Why?'

'If not, you're to takee this notee to Brother Andrew Leggee,—comprenez? The boss was going to send me, but he altered his mind, worse luck.'

'Twelve-thirteen?' asked Hood.

'Yes. And now if you're in the mind, I'll box you for half a dollar—what say?'

He squared himself in pugilistic attitude, and found amusement in delivering terrific blows which just stopped short of Hood's prominent features. The latter beat a retreat.

Twelve o'clock struck, and no telegram had arrived; neither had Dagworthy returned to the mill. Hood was indisposed to leave the envelope to be given by other hands; he might as well have the advantage of such pleasure as the discovery would no doubt excite. So he put it safely in his pocket-book, and hastened to catch the train, taking with him the paper of sandwiches which represented his dinner. These he would eat on the way to Hebsworth.

It was a journey of ten miles, lying at first over green fields, with a colliery vomiting blackness here and there, then through a region of blight and squalor, finally over acres of smoke-fouled streets, amid the roar of machinery; a journey that would have crushed the heart in one fresh from the breath of heaven on

sunny pastures. It was a slow train, and there were half a dozen stoppages. Hood began to eat his sandwiches at a point where the train was delayed for a few minutes by an adverse signal; a coal-pit was close by, and the smoke from the chimney blew in at the carriage windows, giving a special flavour to the bread and meat. There was a drunken soldier in the same compartment, who was being baited by a couple of cattle-drovers with racy vernacular not to be rendered by the pen. Hood munched his smoky sandwich, and with his sad eyes watched the great wheel of the colliery revolve, and the trucks rise and descend. The train moved on again. The banter between the other three passengers was taking an angry turn; to escape the foul language as far as possible, Hood kept his head at the window. Of a sudden the drunken soldier was pushed against him, and before he could raise his hands, his hat had flown off on the breeze.

He turned round with angry remonstrance. The soldier had fallen back on to the seat, and was grinning inanely; the drovers were enjoying the joke beyond measure.

'Theer, lad!' one of them cried. 'Tha's doon it nah! Tha'll a' to buy him a new 'at for his 'eead, soon as we get i'to Hebs'orth.'

''Appen he's got no brass,' suggested the other, guffawing.

It was the case; the soldier had a copper or two at most. The drovers of course held themselves free of responsibility. Hood felt in his own pocket; but he was well aware that a shilling and three half-pence was all he carried with him—save the banknote in his pocket-book. Yet it was impossible to go through Hebsworth with uncovered head, or to present himself hatless at the office of Legge Brothers. Already the train was slackening speed to enter the station. Would any hatter trust him, on his representing whence he came? He feared not. Not the least part of his trouble was the thought of having to buy a new hat at all; such an expense was ill to be borne just now. Of course—he said to himself, with dreary fatalism—a mishap is sure to come at the worst time. It was the experience of his life.

Hood was a shy man; it was misery to have attention drawn to himself as it naturally would be as soon as he stepped out on to the platform. But there was no help; with a last angry look at the drunken soldier, he nerved himself to face the ordeal. As he walked hurriedly out of the crowd, the cry 'Cab, sir?' fell upon his ears. Impossible to say how he brought himself to such a

pitch of recklessness, but in a moment he was seated in a hansom, having bidden the driver take him to the nearest hatter's. The agony of embarrassment has driven shy men to strange audacities, but who ever dared more than this? *He would be compelled to change the note!*

Whatever might be the cause, whether it was the sudden sense of refuge from observation, or the long unknown pleasure of riding in a cab, as he sped along the streets he grew almost merry; at length he positively laughed at the adventure which had befallen him. It mattered nothing whether he gave Dagworthy the money in a note or in change, and, on being told the story, his employer might even feel disposed to pay for the hat. He *would* pay for the hat! By the time the cab drew up, Hood had convinced himself of this. He was in better spirits than he had been for many a day.

'Can you change me a ten-pound note?' were his first words to the hatter. 'If you can't, I must go elsewhere; I have nothing smaller.'

The salesman hesitated.

'You want a silk hat?'

'Yes, but not an expensive one.'

A pen was brought, and Hood was requested to endorse the note. What security—under the circumstances—such a proceeding could give, the hatter best knew; he appeared satisfied, and counted out his sovereigns. Hood paid the cabman, and walked off briskly towards the office of Legge Brothers.

He stopped, in the middle of the pavement, as if a shot had struck him. Supposing Dagworthy had no recollection of a ten-pound note having been lost, nor of any note having been lost; and supposing it occurred to him that he, Hood, had in reality found a larger sum, had invented the story of the lost hat, and was returning a portion only of his discovery, to gain the credit of honesty? Such an idea could only possess the brain of a man whose life had been a struggle amid the chicaneries and despicabilities of commerce; who knew that a man's word was never trusted where there could enter the slightest suspicion of an advantage to himself in lying; whose daily terror had been lest some error, some luckless chance, should put him within the nets of criminality. It is the deepest curse of such a life as his that it directs the imagination in channels of meanness, and preoccupies the thought with sordid fears. What would it avail him,

in the present instance, to call the shopman to witness? The note, ten to one, would be paid away, and here also a man's word was worth nothing. But Dagworthy might merely think such an accusation: aye, that would be the worst. To lie henceforth under suspicion of dishonesty: that meant, to lose his place before long, on some pretence.

And he felt that, in spite of absolute sincerity, he could not stand before Dagworthy and tell his tale with the face and voice of an honest man,—felt it with a horrible certainty. In a man of Hood's character, this state of mind was perfectly natural. Not only was he weakly constructed, but his incessant ill-fortune had done him that last wrong which social hardship can inflict upon the individual, it had undermined his self-respect. Having been so often treated like a dog, he had come to expect such treatment, and, what was worse, but feebly to resent it. He had lost the conscious dignity of manhood; nay, had perhaps never possessed it, for his battle had begun at so early an age. The sense that he was wretchedly poor, and the knowledge that poverty is the mother of degradation, made him at any moment a self-convicted criminal; accused, however wrongly, it was inevitable that his face should be against him. To go to Dagworthy with sovereigns in his hand, and this story upon his lips, would be to invite suspicion by every strongest sign of guilt.

I am representing the poor fellow's thoughts and feelings. Whether or not Dagworthy would really entertain such a suspicion is quite another matter. For the first time in his life, Hood had used for his own purposes money which did not belong to him; he did it under the pressure of circumstances, and had not time to reflect till the act was irrevocable. Then this horror came upon him. Forgetting his errand, he drew aside into a quieter street, and struggled with his anguish. Do you laugh at him for his imbecility? Try first to understand him.

But his business must be performed; with trembling limbs he hurried onwards, and at length reached the office of Legge Brothers. The member of the firm to whom the note which he bore was addressed had but a few minutes ago left the place; he would return within an hour. How could the time be spent? He began to wander aimlessly about the streets. In passing a spot where scaffolding was erected before new buildings, the wish entered his mind that something might fall and crush him. He thought of such an end as a blessed relief.

A hand was laid upon his shoulder, and at the touch his heart leaped as though it would burst his side. He turned and, with starting eyes, glared at the man before him, a perfect stranger, he thought.

'Is it? Or isn't it? Hood, or his ghost?'

The man who spoke was of the shabbiest appearance, wearing an almost napless high hat, a coloured linen shirt which should have been at the laundress's, no neck-tie, a frock-coat with only one button, low shoes terribly down at heel; for all that, the most jovial-looking man, red-nosed, laughing. At length Hood was capable of recognising him.

'Cheeseman! Well, who on earth would have expected to meet you!'

'I've followed you half along the street; couldn't be sure. Afraid I startled you at last, old friend.'

They had known each other as young men, and it was now ten years at least since they had met. They were companions in ill-hap, the difference between them being that Cheeseman bore the buffets of the world with imperturbable good humour; but then he had neither wife nor child, kith nor kin. He had tried his luck in all parts of England and in several other countries; casual wards had known him, and he had gained a supper by fiddling in the streets. Many a beginning had he made, but none led to anything; he seemed, in truth, to enjoy a haphazard existence. If Cheeseman had possessed literary skill, the story of his life from his own hand would have been invaluable; it is a misfortune that the men who are richest in 'material' are those who would never dream of using it.

They were passing a public-house; Cheeseman caught his friend by the arm and, in spite of resistance, drew him in.

'Two threes of gin hot,' was his order. 'The old drink, Hood, my boy; the drink that has saved me from despair a thousand times.' How many times have you and I kept up each other's pecker over a three of gin! You don't look well; you've wanted old Cheeseman to cheer you up. Things bad? Why, damn it, of course things are bad; when were they anything else with you and me, eh? Your wife, how is she? Remember me to her, will you? She never took to me, but never mind that. And the little girl? How's the little girl? Alive and well, please God?'

'Rather more than a little girl now,' returned Hood. 'And

doing well, I'm glad to say. She's a governess; has an excellent place in London.'

'You don't say so? I never was so glad to hear anything in my life! Ah, but, Hood, you're leaving me behind, old friend; with the little girl doing so well you can't call yourself a poor devil; you can't, upon my soul. I ought to have married; yes, I should ha' married long ago; it 'ud a' been the making of me. It's the sole speculation, I do believe, that I haven't tried. Ah, but I've got something before me now! What say you to a patent fire-escape that any man can carry round his waist? Upon my soul, I've got it! I'm going to London about it as soon as I can get my fare; and that I shall have to-morrow, please God.'

'What brings you to Hebsworth?'

'I don't care much to talk about it in a public place,' replied Cheeseman, with caution which contrasted comically with his loud tone hitherto. 'Only a little matter, but—— Well, we'll say nothing about it; I may communicate with you some day. And you? Do you live here?'

Hood gave an account of his position. Under the influence of the glass of spirits, and of the real pleasure it gave him to see one of the very few men he had ever called friend, he had cast aside his cares for the moment. They went forth presently from the bar, and, after a few paces, Cheeseman took his friend by the coat collar and drew him aside, as if to impart a matter of consequence.

'Two threes of gin!' he said, with a roll of the eye which gave his face a singularly humorous expression. 'That's sixpence. A tanner, Hood, was the last coin I possessed. It was to have purchased dinner, a beefsteak pudding, with cabbage and potatoes; but what o' that? When you and I meet, we drink to old times; there's no getting out of that.'

Hood laughed, for once in a really natural way. His usual abstemiousness made the gin potent.

'Why,' he said, 'I confess to feeling hungry myself; I've only had a sandwich. Come along; we'll have dinner together.'

'You mean it, old friend?' cried the other, with irrepressible delight.

'Of course I mean it. You don't think I'll let you spend your last coin, and send you off dinnerless? Things are bad, but not quite as bad as that. I'm as hungry as a hunter; where is there an eating-house?'

They found one at a little distance.

'It must be beefsteak pudding, Hood,' whispered Cheeseman, as they entered. 'I've set my heart on that. Whatever else you like, but a beefsteak pudding to start with.'

The article was procurable, smoking, juicy. Cheeseman made an incision, then laid down his knife and gloated over his plate.

'Hood,' he said, with much solemnity, 'you've done me many a kindness, old friend, but this caps all. I'm bound to you for life and death. I should have wandered about these streets a starving man.'

The other laughed still; he had a fit of laughter on him; he had not laughed so since he was young.

'Stout and mild is my drink, Hood,' remarked Cheeseman, suggestively. 'It has body, and I need the support.'

They each had a pint, served in the native pewter. When Cheeseman had taken a deep draught he leaned forward across the table.

'Hood, I don't forget it; never you believe that I forget it, however appearances may be against me?'

'Forget what?—give me the mustard, as soon as you can spare it; ha, ha!'

'That ten-pound note!'

Hood dropped his knife and fork.

'What on earth's up? You look just like you did when I clapped you o' the shoulder. Your nerves are out of order, old friend.'

'Why, so they are. I know now what you mean; I couldn't for the life of me think what you were talking about.'

'Don't think I forget it,' pursued the other, after a mouthful. 'It's twelve years last Easter since you lent me that ten-pound note, and it's been on my conscience ever since. But I shall repay it; never you fear but I'll repay it. Did I mention a fire-escape that any man can wear round his waist? Hush! wait a month or two. Let me make a note of your address whilst I think of it. This pudding's hot, but it's a fault on the right side, and time'll mend it. You wouldn't mind, I daresay, being my agent for Dunfield—for the fire-escape, you know? I'll communicate with you, don't fear.'

A hot meal in the middle of the day was a luxury long unknown to Hood. Now and again the thought of what he was doing flashed across him, but mere bodily solace made his con-

science dull. As the meal proceeded he even began to justify himself. Was he never to know an hour's enjoyment? Was his life to be unbroken hardship? What if he had borrowed a few shillings without leave; somehow difficulties would be got over; why, at the very worst, Emily would gladly lend him a pound. He began to talk of Emily, to praise her, to wax warm in the recounting of her goodness, her affection. What man living had so clever and so loving a daughter!

'It's what I said, Hood,' put in Cheeseman, with a shake of the head. 'You've left me behind. You've got into smooth water. The old partnership of ill-luck is broken up. Well, well! I ought to have married. It's been my one mistake in life.'

'Why, it's none too late yet,' cried Hood, merrily.

'None too late! Powers defend us! What have I got to marry on?'

'But the fire-escape?'

'Yes, yes, to be sure; the fire escape! Well, we'll see; wait till things are set going. Perhaps you're right; perhaps it isn't too late. And, Hood——'

'Well?'

'You couldn't manage one single half-crown piece, could you? To be sure there's always an archway to be found, when night comes on, but I can't pretend to like it. I always try to manage a bed at least once a week—no, no, not if there's the least difficulty. Times are hard, I know. I'd rather say not another word about it.'

'Nonsense; take the half-crown and have done with it. Why, you've cheered me up many a half-crownsworth; I feel better than I did. Don't I look it? I feel as if I'd some warmth in my body. What say you, Cheeseman? *One* half-pint more?'

'Come, come, old friend; that's speaking feelingly. You shouldn't try me in that way, you know. I shouldn't like to suggest a pint, with a scrap of cheese. Eh? No, no; follow your own counsel, boy; half a pint be it.'

But the suggestion was accepted. Then at length it occurred to Hood that time must be wearing away; he spoke of the obligation he was under to finish his business and return to Dunfield as soon as possible. Cheeseman declared himself the last man to stand in the way of business. They left the eating-house and walked together part of the way to the office of Legge Brothers.

'Old friend, I'm grateful to you,' said Cheeseman, when at length they parted. 'I've got your address, and you shall hear from me; I've a notion it won't be so long before we meet again. In any case it's another day to look back upon; I little thought of it when I spent twopence-halfpenny on my breakfast this morning, and left sixpence for dinner. It's a rum world, eh, Hood? Good-bye, and God bless you!'

Hood hurried on to the office, received his reply, and proceeded to the station. He had more than half an hour to wait for a train. He took a seat in the waiting-room, and began to examine the money in his pocket, to ascertain exactly the sum he would have to replace. The deficit amounted to a little less than eighteen shillings. After all, it was very unlikely that Dagworthy would offer to bear the expense of the lost hat. Say that a pound had to be restored.

He was in the comfortable mood, following upon unusual indulgence of the appetite, in which the mind handles in a free and easy way the thoughts it is wont to entertain with unquestioning gravity; when it has, as it were, a slippery hold on the facts of life, and constructs a subjective world of genial accommodations. A pound to restore; on the other hand, nine pounds in pocket. The sight of the sovereigns was working upon his imagination, already touched to a warmer life than was its habit. Nine pounds would go a long way towards solving the financial difficulties of the year; it would considerably more than replace the lacking rent of the house in Barnhill; would replace it, and pay as well the increased rent of the house at Banbrigg for twelve months to come. Looked at in this way, the money became a great temptation.

His wife—how explain to her such a windfall? For it was of course impossible to use it secretly. There was a way, seemingly of fate's providing. If only he could bring himself to the lie direct and shameless.

After all, a lie that would injure no mortal. As far as Dagworthy was concerned, the money had long since become the property of nobody; Dagworthy did not even know that this sum existed; if ever missed, it must have been put out of mind long ago. And very possibly it had never belonged to Dagworthy; some cashier or other clerk might just as well have lost it. Hood played with these speculations. He did not put to himself the plain alternative: Shall I keep the money, or shall I give it up?

He merely let a series of reflections pass over his mind, as he lay back on the cushioned seat, experiencing an agreeable drowsiness. At the moment of finding the note, he would have handed it over to his employer without a thought; it would perhaps not even have occurred to him to regret that it was not his own. But during the last three hours a singular chain of circumstances had led to this result: it was just as possible as not that Hood would keep the coins in his pocket and say nothing about them.

It was time to go to the train. Almost with the first moving of the carriages, he fell into a doze. A sense of mental uneasiness roused him now and then, but only for a few moments together; he slumbered on till Dunfield was reached.

At the entrance to the mill, he was in fierce conflict with himself. As is usually the case in like circumstances, the sleepy journey had resulted in bodily uneasiness; he had a slight headache, was thirsty, felt indisposed to return to work. When he had all but crossed the threshold, he turned sharply back, and entered a little public-house a few yards away; an extraordinary thing for him to do, but he felt that a small glass of spirits would help him to quieter nerves, or at all events would sustain his unusual exhilaration till the interview with Dagworthy was over. At the very door of the office he had not decided whether it should be silence or restitution.

'That you, Hood?' Dagworthy asked, looking up from a letter he was writing. 'Been rather a long time, haven't you?'

The tone was unusually indulgent. Hood felt an accession of confidence; he explained naturally the cause of his delay.

'All right,' was the reply, as Dagworthy took the note which his correspondent had sent.

Hood was in his own room, and—the money was still in his pocket. . . . .

He did not set out to walk home with his usual cheerfulness that evening. His headache had grown worse, and he wished, wished at every step he took, that the lie he had to tell to his wife was over and done with. There was no repentance of the decision which, it seemed on looking back, he had arrived at involuntarily. The coin which made his pocket heavy meant joy to those at home, and, if he got it wrongfully, the wrong was so dubious, so shadowy, that it vanished in comparison with the good that would be done. It was not—he said to himself—as if he

had committed a theft to dissipate the proceeds, like that young fellow who ran away from the Dunfield and County Bank some months ago, and was caught in London with disreputable associates. Here was a ten-pound note lying, one might say, by the very roadside, and it would save a family from privation. Abstractly, it was wrong; yes, it was wrong; but would abstract right feed him and pay his rent for the year to come? Hood had reached this stage in his self-examination; he strengthened himself by protest against the order of things. His headache nursed the tendency to an active discontent, to which, as a rule, his temperament did not lend itself.

But there remained the telling of the lie. How he wished that Emily were not at home! To lie before Emily, that was the hardest part of his self-imposed task. He could not respect his wife, but before Emily, since her earliest companionship with him, he had watched his words scrupulously; as a little girl she had so impressed him with the purity of her heart that his love for her had been the nearest approach he ever knew to the spirit of worship; and since her attainment of mental and moral independence, his reverence for her had not been unmixed with awe. When her eyes met his, he felt the presence of a nature indefinitely nobler than his own; not seldom he marvelled in his dim way that such a one called him father. Could he ever after this day approach her with the old confidence? Nay, he feared her. His belief in her insight was almost a superstition. Would she not read the falsehood upon his face?

Strange state of mind; at one and the same time he wished that he had thought of Emily sooner, and was glad that he had not. That weight in his pocket was after all a joyous one, and to have been conscious of Emily as he now was, might—would—have made him by so much a poorer man.

She, as usual, was at the door to meet him, her face even gladder than its wont, for this morning there had been at the post-office a letter from Switzerland. How she loved that old name of Helvetia, printed on the stamps! Wilfrid wrote with ever fuller assurance that his father's mind was growing well-disposed, and Emily knew that he would not tell her other than the honest truth. For Wilfrid's scrupulous honesty she would have vouched as—for her father's.

'You look dreadfully worn-out,' she said, as Hood bent his head in entering.

'I am, dear. I have been to Hebsworth, among other things.'

'Then I hope you had dinner there?'

He laughed.

'I should think I had!'

It was one of Mrs. Hood's bad days; she refused to leave the kitchen. Emily had tried to cheer her during the afternoon, but in vain. There had been a misunderstanding with the next-door neighbour, that lady having expressed herself rather decidedly with regard to an incursion made into her premises by the Hoods' cat.

'She speaks to me as if I was a mere working-woman,' Mrs. Hood exclaimed, when Emily endeavoured to soothe her. 'Well, and what else am I, indeed? There was a time when no one would have ventured to speak so.'

'Mother, how can you be troubled by what such a woman says?'

'Yes, I know I am in the wrong, Emily; you always make me see that.'

So Emily had retreated to the upper room, and Mrs. Hood, resenting neglect more even than contradiction, was resolved to sit in the kitchen till bed-time.

Hood was glad when he heard of this.

'If you'll pour out my tea, Emily,' he said in an under tone, 'I'll go and speak to mother for a few moments. I have news that will please her.'

He went into the kitchen and, in silence, began to count sovereigns down upon the table, just behind his wife, who sat over some sewing and had not yet spoken. At the ring of each coin his heart throbbed painfully. He fully realised, for the first time, what he had done.

At the ring of the fifth sovereign Mrs. Hood turned her head.

'What's that?' she asked snappishly.

He went on counting till the nine were displayed.

'What is it?' she repeated. 'Why do you fidget me so?'

'You'd never guess,' Hood answered, laughing hoarsely. 'I had to go to Hebsworth to-day, and who ever do you think I met there? Why, old Cheeseman.'

He paused.

'And he—no, I'll never believe he paid his debt!' said his wife with bitter congratulation. For years the name of Cheeseman had been gall upon her tongue; even now she had not

entirely ceased to allude to him, when she wished to throw especial force of sarcasm into a reminiscence of her earlier days. A woman's powers in the direction of envenomed memory are terrible.

'You have said it,' was Hood's reply under his breath. 'It was providential. What did I do, but go and lose my hat out of the window of the train—had it knocked off by a drunken fellow, in fact. But for this money I should have gone about Hebsworth bare-headed, and come home so, too.'

'A new hat! There's a pretty penny gone! Well, it's too much to hope that any good luck should come without bad at the same time.'

'Well, now you won't fret so much about the rent, Jane?'

He laid his hand upon her shoulder. It was a movement of tenderness such as had not come to him for years; he felt the need of sympathy; he could have begged her to give him a kind look. But she had resumed her sewing; her fingers were not quite steady, that was all.

He left the money on the table and went to Emily in the sitting-room. She was sitting at the table waiting for him with her kindly eyes.

'And what has the wise woman been doing all day?' he asked, trying in vain to overcome that terrible fluttering at his side which caught his breath and made him feel weak.

They talked for some minutes, then footsteps were heard approaching from the kitchen. Mrs. Hood entered with her sewing—she always took the very coarsest for such days as this—and sat at a little distance from the table. As the conversation had nothing to do with Cheeseman's debt, she grew impatient.

'Have you told Emily?' she asked.

'No, I haven't. You shall do that.'

Hood tried to eat the while; the morsels became like saw-dust in his mouth, and all but choked him. He tried to laugh; the silence which followed his effort was ghastly to him.

'You see, it never does to believe too ill of a man,' he said, when he found Emily's look upon him.

Mrs. Hood grew more at her ease, and, to his relief, began to talk freely. Emily tortured him by observing that he had no appetite. He excused himself by telling of his dinner in Hebsworth, and, as soon as possible, left the table. He went upstairs and hoped to find solitude for a time in the garret.

a sort of undeveloped genius, was another source of suffering beyond that which ordinary men endure. He was a fine creature in these hours, colossal, tragic; it needed this experience to bring out all there was of great and exceptional in his character. He was not of those who can quit the scene of their fruitless misery and find forgetfulness at a distance. Every searing stroke drove him more desperately in pursuit of his end. He was further from abandoning it, now that he knew another stood in his way, than he would have been if Emily had merely rejected him. He would not yield her to another man; he swore to himself that he would not, let it cost him and her what it might.

He had seen her again, with his glass, from the windows of the mill, had scarcely moved his eyes from her for an hour. A hope came to him that she might by chance walk at evening on the Heath, but he was disappointed; Emily, indeed, had long shunned walks in that direction. He had no other means of meeting her, yet he anguished for a moment's glimpse of her face.

To-day he knew a cruel assuagement of his torture. He had returned from his short absence with a resolve to risk an attempt which was only not entirely base by virtue of the passion which inspired it, and it appeared to him that his stratagem had succeeded. Scruples he had indeed known, but not at all of the weight they would have possessed for most men, and this not only because of his reckless determination to win by any means; his birth and breeding enabled him to accept meanness as almost a virtue in many of the relations and transactions of life. The trickery and low cunning of the mercantile world was in his blood; it would come out when great occasion saw use for it, even in the service of love. He believed it was leading him to success. Certainly the first result that he aimed at was assured, and he could not imagine a subsequent obstacle. He would not have admitted that he was wronging the man whom he made his tool; if honesty failed under temptation it was honesty's own look out. Ten to one he himself would have fallen into such a trap, in similar circumstances; he was quite free from pharisaical prejudice; had he not reckoned on mere human nature in devising his plan? Nor would the result be cruel, for he had it in his power to repay a hundredfold all temporary pain. There were no limits to the kindness he was capable of, when once he had Emily for his wife; she and hers should be overwhelmed with the

fruits of his devotion. It was to no gross or commonplace future that the mill-owner looked forward. There were things in him of which he was beginning to be conscious, which would lead him he could not yet see whither. Dunfield was no home for Emily; he knew it, and felt that he, too, would henceforth have need of a larger circle of life. He was rich enough, and by transferring his business to other hands he could become yet richer, gaining freedom at the same time. No disappointment would be in store for him as in his former marriage; looking back on that he saw now how boyish he had been, how easily duped. There was not even the excuse of love.

He held her gained. What choice would she have, with the alternative to be put before her? It was strange that, in spite of what should have been sympathetic intelligence, he made a slight account of that love which, as she told him, she had already bestowed. In fact he refused to dwell upon the thought of it; it would have maddened him in earnest. Who could say? It was very possible she had told him a falsehood; it was quite allowable in any woman, to escape from a difficult position. In his heart he did not believe this, knowing her better, though his practical knowledge of her was so slight; but it was one of the devices by which he mitigated his suffering now and then. If the engagement existed, it was probably one of those which contemplated years of waiting, otherwise why should she have kept silence about it at home? In any case he held her; how could she escape him? He did not fear appeals to his compassion; against such assaults he was well armed. Emily pleading at his feet would not be a picture likely to induce him to relax his purpose. She could not take to flight, the very terms of his control restrained her. There might be flaws in his case, legally speaking, but the Hoods were in no position to profit by these, seeing that, in order to do so, they must begin by facing ruin. Emily was assuredly his.

To-day was Friday. He knew, from talk with the Cartwrights, that Jessie's lessons were on alternate days, and as he had seen the two in the garden this morning, there would be no lesson on the morrow. It was not easy to devise a plot for a private interview with Emily, yet he must see her to-morrow, and of course alone. A few words with her would suffice. To call upon her at the house would be only his last resource. He felt assured that she had not spoken to her parents of the

him, and could no longer be taken by surprise. She was self-possessed, too, in the strength of the thoughts which he had disturbed.

He fed his eyes upon her, and kept so long silent that Emily's cheek coloured and she half turned away. Then he spoke abruptly, yet with humility which the consciousness of his purpose could not overcome.

'You know that I have been away since I saw you last. I tried to put you out of my mind. I couldn't do it and I am driven back to you.'

'I hoped we should not meet again like this, Mr. Dagworthy,' Emily replied, in a low voice, but firmly. She felt that her self-respect was to be tested to the uttermost, but she was better able to control herself than at the last interview. The sense of being passionately sought cannot but enhance a woman's dignity in her own eyes, and Emily was not without perception of the features in Dagworthy's character which made him anything but a lover to be contemned. She dreaded him, and could not turn away as from one who tormented her out of mere ill-breeding.

'I cannot ask you to pardon me,' he returned, 'for however often you asked me to leave you, I should pay no heed. I am here because I can't help myself; I mean what I say—I can't, I can't help it! Since you told me there was no hope, I seem to have been in hell. These are not words to use to you—I know it. It isn't that I don't respect you, but because I must speak what I feel. Look—I am worn out with suffering; I feel as if it would take but a little more to kill me, strong man as I am. You don't think I find a pleasure in coming and facing that look you have? I don't know that I ever saw the man I couldn't meet, but before you I feel—I can't put it into words, but I feel I should like to hide my face. Still I have come, I have followed you here. It's more than I can do to give you up.'

At the last words he half sobbed. Her fear of him would not allow Emily to feel deep distress, but she was awed by the terrible evidence of what he endured. She could not at once find words for reply.

'Will you sit down?' he said. 'I will stand here, but I have more to say to you before I go.'

'Why should you say more?' Emily urged. 'Can you not think how very painful it is to hear you speak in this way? What purpose can it serve to speak to me when I may not listen?'

'You must listen. I can't be sent away as you would another man; no other on earth can love you as I do, no one. No one would do for you all that I would do. My love gives me a claim upon you. It is you that have brought me to this state; a woman owes a man something who is driven mad by her. I have a right to be here and to say all I feel.'

He was struggling with a dread of the words he had come to utter; a wild hope sprang in him that he might yet win her in other ways; he used language recklessly, half believing that his arguments would seem of force. His passion was in the death-grapple with reason and humanity.

'If your regard for me is so strong,' Emily replied, 'should you not shrink from causing me pain? And indeed you have no such right as you claim. Have I in any way sought to win your affection? Is it manly to press upon me a suit which you know it is out of my power to favour? You say you respect me; your words are not consistent with respect. I owe you nothing, Mr. Dagworthy, and it is certainly my right to demand that you will cease to distress and trouble me.'

He stood with his eyes on the ground.

'That is all you have to say?' he asked, almost sullenly.

'What more can I say? Surely you should not have compelled me to say even so much. I appeal to your kindness, to your sense of what is due from a man to a woman, to let me leave you now, and to make no further attempt to see me. If you refuse, you take advantage of my powerlessness. I am sure you are not capable of that.'

'Yes, I am capable of more than you think,' he replied, the words coming between his teeth. His evil demon, not himself, was speaking; in finding utterance at length, it made him deadly pale, and brought a cold sweat to his brow. 'When you think afterwards of what I say now, remember that it was love of you that made me desperate. A chance you little dream of has put power into my hands, and I am going to use it. I care for nothing on this earth but to make you my wife—and I can do so.'

Terror weighed upon her heart. His tone was that of a man who would stick at nothing, and his words would bear no futile meaning. Her thoughts were at once of her father; through him alone could he have power over her. She waited, sick with agonised anticipation, for what would follow.

'Your father——'

The gulf between purpose and execution once passed, he had become cruel; human nature has often enough exemplified the law in prominent instances. As he pronounced the words, he eyed her deliberately, and, before proceeding, paused just long enough to see the anguish flutter in her breast.

'Your father has been guilty of dishonesty; he has taken money from the mill. Any day that I choose I can convict him.'

She half closed her eyes and shook, as if under a blow. Then the blood rushed to her face, and, to his astonishment, she uttered a strange laugh.

'*That* is your power over me!' she exclaimed, with all the scorn her voice could express. 'Now I know that you are indeed capable of shameful things. You think I shall believe that of my father?'

Dagworthy knew what it was to feel despicable. He would, in this moment, have relinquished all his hope to be able to retract those words. He was like a beaten dog before her; and the excess of his degradation made him brutal.

'Believe it or not, as you choose. All I have to say is that your father put into his pocket yesterday morning a ten-pound note of mine, which he found in a ledger he took out of my room. He had to go to Hebsworth on business, and there he changed the note, to buy himself a new hat; I have a witness of it. When he came back he of course had nothing to say about the money; in fact, he had stolen it.'

She heard, and there came into her mind the story of Cheeseman's debt. That was of ten pounds. The purchase her father had been obliged to make, of that also she had heard. Last night and again this morning, her mother had incessantly marvelled at this money having been at length returned; it was an incredible thing, she had said; only the sight of the coins could convince her of its truth. Emily's mind worked over the details of the previous evening with terrible rapidity and insight. To her directly her father had spoken not a word of the repayment; he had bidden her keep in another room whilst he informed her mother of it; he had shown disinclination to return to the subject when, later, they all sat together. 'Well, here it is,' he had said, 'and we'll talk no more about it.' She heard those words exactly as they were spoken, and she knew their tone was not natural;

even at the time that had struck her, but her thought had not dwelt upon it.

She almost forgot Dagworthy's presence; he and his threats were of small account in this shaking of the depths of her nature. She was awakened by his voice.

'Do you think I am lying to you for my own purposes?'

'I cannot say,' she answered, with unnatural calm. 'It is more likely than that what you say is true.'

He, by now, had attained a self-control which would not desert him. So far in crime, there was no turning back; he could even enjoy the anticipation of each new move in the game, certain of winning. He could be cruel now for cruelty's sake; it was a form of fruition.

'Well,' he said, 'it is your own concern whether you believe me or not. If you wish for evidence, you shall have it, the completest. What I have to say is this. From now till Monday morning your father is free. Whether I have him arrested then or not depends upon yourself. If you consent to become my wife as soon as it is possible for us to be married, neither you nor he will ever hear another word of the matter. What's more, I will at once put him in a position of comfort. If you refuse, there will be a policeman ready to arrest him as soon as he comes to the mill; if he tries to escape, a warrant will be issued. In any case he will be ruined.'

Then, after a pause—

'So you have till to-morrow night to make up your mind. You can either send me a note or come and see me; I shall be at home whenever you come.'

Emily stood in silence.

'I hope you quite understand what I mean,' Dagworthy continued, as if discussing an ordinary matter of business. 'No one will ever dream that your father has done anything to be ashamed of. After all, it is not so impossible that you should marry me for my own sake;'—he said it with bitterness. 'People will see nothing to wonder at. Fortunately, no one knows of that—of what you told me. Your father and mother will be easy for the rest of their lives, and without a suspicion that there has been anything but what appears on the surface. I needn't say how things are likely to look in the other event.'

Still she stood silent.

'I don't expect an answer now——'

Emily shook her head.

'But,' he continued, 'you mustn't leave it after to-morrow night. It will be too late.'

She began to move away from him. With a step or two he followed her; she turned, with a passionate movement of repulsion, terror, and hate transfiguring her countenance, made for the expression of all sweet and tender and noble things.

Dagworthy checked himself, turned about, and walked quickly from the place.

(*To be continued.*)

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THE EAVESDROPPER.

AN UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

A DOMESTIC IDYLL.

UPON the whole, everything had gone well for the amusement I had promised myself, not indeed of 'seeing ourselves as others see us' (for nobody *could* see me), but of hearing myself spoken of as others heard. The two doctors, it was true, had hardly spoken of me at all, confound them; but my personal friends would of course express themselves on that interesting subject with candour and *abandon*. What fun it would be! What a touchstone it would afford of the genuineness of their regard, of which, however, I had no reason to entertain a doubt. Upon looking back on a long and well spent life, I had really nothing, to speak of, to be ashamed of. (There were things here and there, it is true, but as I have just observed, *not* things to speak of.) I was become a sort of Asmodeus, though of course I could not take the roofs of people's houses off, which would, moreover, have been an invasion of the sanctities of domestic life. I was not, I flattered myself, a person to abuse my position as he did. My friends could trust me, though the usual addition, 'as far as they could see me,' was in my case superfluous.

I say everything had gone well for my little scheme, for the nurse had been warned not to put herself in a state of anxiety

about any disappearances on my part, and could comfort herself with the conviction that I should presently turn up somewhere, though it might be in a very unexpected place. She had had, however, enough, poor thing, as I reflected with my usual consideration, of hide-and-seek for that day, and moreover I was rather exhausted. Light as I was, I had had to hop about with a great deal of agility, and after nine weeks of illness (including moreover some 'wandering') I was a little tired with my exertions. However, Mr. Scratchwig would have been right *now* in saying 'You are better, sir,' for the doctors' visit had (as indeed it ought to have done at six pounds six) done me a great deal of good. It had given me 'tone,' a thing very highly valued by all educated persons, or at all events by all persons in the educational line of business. A healthy glow, with a little moisture in it, suffused me. As for those 'ten days' Mr. Scratchwig had given me, I, so to speak, threw the gift in his face, like a too cheap present. I felt I was going to be a blessing to mankind for a protracted period.

My mind was full of kindly thoughts. I even wondered how Cousin Dick and the rest of them were getting on, and forgave (or at least forgot) his desperate though futile attempt to deprive me of Uncle Theodore's legacy. He was living in some unfashionable part of town, doubtless a prey to remorse.

Then my mind reverted to Angelina Spiffkins, a ridiculous name, which I had generously entertained the notion of changing for her. Old Spiffkins—dear me, why did I say old? Like most convalescents, I had obviously thought myself better than I really was, or I should never have used such an adjective. My brain was not in its normal state. Old Spiffkins was no older than myself, and perhaps even a little younger. He had called and left his card at the beginning of my illness, 'with kind inquiries from self and daughter.' It was rather a commercial phrase, no doubt, but then he *was* commercial. A great traveller, though he didn't belong to the Travellers' Club. People had warned me against marrying beneath me. Pooh, pooh! Angelina was very young, and still growing. Take fifteen from fifty-five, and what remains? The difference was not worth thinking about.

What did the divine Shakespeare, to whom I had just become indebted for the Great Secret, say about that?

'Let still the woman take an elder than herself.' He doesn't say how much, but presumably the elder the better. (He had

ied the other way himself, as we know, and found it a complete
ilure.) If merely to have a husband to love is a satisfaction to
young person, to be able to look up to him as a father (or even
grandfather), also, must be her ideal indeed. There was, it
as true, some young man in the War Office—the nearest
pproach to the military she could get—on whom Angelina was
pposed to be sweet, and who on one occasion had been exceed-
gly rude to me; but I would not think of him now. I would
ly think of Angelina by herself—or with *my*self.

Then there were my friends at the Club—Rawlings, Dash-
ood, Seymour, and the rest; how amusing it would be to be
ith them, as it were, and yet not *of* them. How often we write
friends in foreign parts (to whom one never knows what to say,
ey are so completely 'out of it'), 'I am always with you in
e spirit.' Well, now this was really going to happen. We four
enerally used to lunch together at the Club, and I made up my
ind to make one of the party, to-morrow.

Accordingly, as soon as I had had my beef tea and so on, next
orning, I felt pretty fit, and said to the nurse, 'If you'll leave
e alone till I ring the bell, I think I could get a nice long
eep.'

She shook her head and murmured something about 'once
it, twice shy.'

'No, nurse,' I said (for I hate hypocrisy), '*you're* not shy.
Nor, I believe—not to speak of 'twice'—had she ever been.)
ou needn't be nervous about me, or, if you are, you can just take
little stimulant. Doctor's orders, you know, and you do some-
mes, don't you? Let me have my way and you have yours, and
t us say nothing about either of them to anybody. Come, be off.'

I was sorry to have to speak in such a menacing manner to a
male, but it was absolutely necessary, because I was going to
et up.

She trotted off like a lamb, taking her sherry with her. I
ok a dose of my magic mixture, dressed myself, put a lump of
gar in my pocket, for emergencies, and shimmered downstairs.
s I stopped in the hall for my hat and umbrella, I heard voices
the study. Was it possible more doctors had come? The
oor was ajar, and I pushed it open and slipped in. In my
vourite chair was sitting my confidential servant Welsford (the
ost respectable *looking* man I ever saw), and on the footstool
eside him sat the housemaid. With one hand he held my

morning paper, which he was reading aloud to her, and with the other he 'toyed with the tangles of Jemima's hair.' They were engaged, I knew, but I had never seen them so particularly so. It was quite an idyll—and they would probably have justified it, on the ground that during their master's illness they had nothing else to do. Still they should not have done it in the study.

'This I think, Jemima my own,' he was just saying, 'will suit us to a T.' Then he read out of the paper, in a voice broken with emotion, or other causes, '*Pretty Village Public, with Fly business attached; genuine home; neat garden, piggeries, stabling; sound living; spirits free; sacrifice through domestic affairs. Only* 100*l. cash down. Same hands thirteen years. Rare chance. Apply early.*'

'What do you think of that, eh, my darling?'

'It sounds beautiful, Thomas, especially the "genuine home." But I don't understand it quite all. What do they mean by "sound living"?'

What indeed? If Thomas could explain that to her—and me—I made up my mind to forgive him everything.

'Well, a sound living, Jemima my own,' he answered, 'is of course a sound living; they could not say a living sound, you know, that would be nonsense. Here it is again, in another publican's advertisement, and here again.'

'But what does it *mean*, Thomas?'

She was resolute as well as importunate. The poor man knew, as well as I did, that to confess his ignorance would be fatal to his future prospects. She would no longer look up to him as she was certainly doing now. She would say to herself 'What's the use of askin' Thomas anythink?' The perspiration stood upon his manly brow.

'It's a term used in the trade, my darlin',' he answered desperately. 'When you're a landlady—and a very pretty one you'll make—you will know all about it. But I can't tell you till we're married. It wouldn't be proper.'

'Lawk a mercy!' said Jemima.

He had accomplished his object; it was impossible that she could question him on that point any further; but the effort had been almost beyond his powers. I felt that it would have been quite beyond mine, and forgave him everything.

'Then there's "spirits free,"' she continued; 'what does that

nean? It does not mean, surely, that you will get your gin and brandy for nothing, *as you do now*?'

I didn't like those last words, which her tone seemed to put n italics, at all. What *did* she mean? I wondered.

'No, no, lovey. "Spirits free" means—well, the spirits in uch an eligible public cannot of course help being free. It is 'the Fly business attached" that does it. Then think of the 'piggeries and the stabling," he went on hurriedly, "and the acrifice through domestic affairs;" why that neat garden must be a perfect Heden, and oh! how 'appy me and my Heve will be in it! Won't us?'

Here ensued a love passage, not inappropriate as an illustration to those "spirits free" Mr. Welsford had so poetically explained.

'"Same hands thirteen years?"' continued the persevering Jemima. 'Why in the name of goodness should they expect otherwise? There's nothing to boast about in that! Why, I've had the same hands for thir—I mean for nearly five-and-twenty years.'

'No, no, Jemima. What they mean is that the country air about that inn is so clean and bright that there is not a speck of dirt about it. "Same hands for thirteen years" means that they have never had to wash their hands during all that time.'

'Nasty creatures; they ought to have washed 'em, whether they wanted it or whether they didn't,' exclaimed Jemima with just indignation.

He would fain have assuaged it as before, but at present she was evidently less bent upon blandishments than business.

'Then there's the "100*l*. cash down," Thomas, which I fear will prove the greatest puzzle of all to us.'

'Well, you see, we've got a little money of our own, Jemima dear.'

'I have got a little money of *my* own,' was the dry rejoinder; 'you lost yours over the last Derby.'

The reminder made the respectable Welsford's mouth twitch as though it were bridled with bit and curb, and he had been suddenly pulled up.

'But it will be all the same *then*, my dearest darlin',' he murmured persuasively.

'All the same *when*? A hundred years hence, of course it will, if that's what you mean. I don't understand you.'

'But surely, dear, when we're wedded—"With all my worldly goods"—no, I don't mean that exactly, but what is mine will then be yours, and what is yours will be mine. It's in the Service.'

'Then we'll be wedded at the Register,' was the calm reply. My admiration for Jemima, with her good sense and unswerving resolution (notwithstanding her shaky position on the footstool) exceeded even that I entertained for her beloved object. If she had told him she meant to take advantage of the Married Woman's Property Act I should not have been the least surprised. What an insight had my marvellous gift afforded me into the growing intelligence of the lower orders! What a master of fence (in dialectics) had the man proved himself to be! what a miracle of prudence the maid!

'Well, as it happens, it doesn't signify, Jemima my own,' he continued after a longish pause. 'I might as well let you into a little secret, which I had intended to be a pleasant surprise to you; but since all will then be bliss you will never miss it. Master is going to provide for me.'

Here was news indeed. I listened with as great curiosity as Jemima herself for what was coming.

'Master is not half a bad fellow notwithstanding what people say, and now that he is growing near his end he's softening.'

'That's what I heard the cook telling her policeman,' observed Jemima. 'I can't abide the woman, and wouldn't demean myself by asking questions of her, but I understood her to say as his brain was going.'

'Pooh, pooh, not a bit of it. Don't you believe a word about his being queer in his mind. It's only his heart as is softening. "Welsford," he says the other day, when I went up to ast after him, "I'm not long for this world, and I shall be 'appier, in leaving it, to feel as you are provided for. Wills are chancey things which people are sometimes wicked enough to disturb."'

'He was thinking of how he got his own money, I suppose,' remarked Jemima simply; 'I have heard cook say that it was touch and go with him because he inherited something from his uncle besides the property.'

How people talk even below stairs! The idea of Cousin Dick's abominable contention having permeated even to my own kitchen! Good Welsford, however, at once took up the cudgels for me.

'Never you mind so long as it wasn't "go," Jemima, and I

do beg that you will put away from your mind, for both our sakes, the notion of master having anything the matter with his. "Wills are chancey things," said he, "so when I am gone I authorise you to take out of my desk five twenty-pound notes you'll find there."'

They *were* there, though I didn't know he knew it; to that limited extent he was telling the truth.

'"You've been a good and faithful servant, Welsford," he says, "and you're going to marry a good girl as will be a credit to you. What with her money and yours you'll be able to take a nice little public-house together, and live happily every afterwards." And then, as if overcome with a picture that could never be realised in his own case, poor old bloke, he wept.'

'Lawk a mercy!' exclaimed Jemima. 'Then he's a good sort after all.'

This reflection so inclined this young person to tenderness and affection that I felt it would be treason to the best instincts of our nature to remain a witness to their exhibition. Moreover, if I was to meet my friends at the Club there was now little time to lose. In the hall, however, I was attracted by strange sounds coming up the kitchen stairs, something like the chirruping of birds. There was also a man's voice, though speaking in muffled tones. Was it possible at so early an hour that thieves—But here I caught sight of a blue uniform. It was not thieves, but quite the contrary: it was cook's policeman. I could now leave the house with confidence, and, to judge by what I had heard from Jemima and Welsford, with the comforting reflection that the improvidence of the lower classes had been very much exaggerated.

CHAPTER II.

TRAVELLING UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

THERE is nothing easier, one would say, than for a gentleman who has money in his pocket to go from Bayswater to Pall Mall any summer day on wheels, but then no one has tried it, except myself, who has been invisible. I might *call* a cab of course, but that would only provoke anger from the driver, and perhaps get innocent persons, falsely suspected of a practical joke, into serious trouble. Walking, in my feeble state, was of course out of the

question, and nothing remained for me but an omnibus. I have known people to wish themselves invisible when making use of this humble mode of conveyance, but my case was precisely the opposite; I wanted the conductor to see me and stop. However, he stopped for a fat old lady, and stepping lightly up before her I seated myself on the knifeboard. Of course I couldn't go inside. It might have filled up, and the man have let in a thirteenth passenger to sit on *me*.

There were two very young men on my left, who conversed in a low voice together, but of course I could hear everything they said. They looked grave and respectable beyond their years. One was evidently a curate of the Church of England, and the other I took to be connected with missionary enterprise.

Amusement was clearly out of their line, and indeed they were going to an oratorio at the Crystal Palace. It was very strange that though they were Englishmen, I could scarcely understand one word they said. They used such funny terms: 'brads,' and 'dibbs,' and 'mopuses,' and 'posh,' and 'stumpy.' At first I thought they were musical expressions, the notes of the gamut for all I knew. But at last it was borne in upon me that they were talking about money. 'Can you smash a thick un for me?' inquired one, handing his friend a sovereign. 'You're sure it ain't sheen?' returned the other, with a diabolical grin, and then produced from his coat pocket (mixed with some things that certainly ought not to have been there, including a false nose) the change for the coin.

It is dreadful to write it, but I had been listening for the last quarter of an hour to thieves' slang. It was only now and then that it became intelligible. Presently we passed a most respectable and very stout old lady carrying a fur bag, with no doubt her purse in it, as is the artless custom of old ladies. The eyes of both my young friends were attracted to her at once; for youth and beauty they cared nothing, but only for solid worth.

'Do you think there's any flimsies in that old gal's bag, Jack? I fancy she'd run to a quid or two!'

He must have had a very lively fancy to imagine her running to anything, or even away from it.

The other consulted his watch, or, as was more probable, somebody else's watch, and shook his head. 'It's ten to one there's nothing but wedge (silver) in her bag and a laced wipe, and we should miss the blooming oratorio.'

It was only too clear that I was sitting cheek by jowl with a couple of pickpockets! I was greatly shocked of course by this discovery, but it is curious how one's indignation at crime is mitigated by the reflection that the criminals cannot injure oneself. The absentee landlord is furious at his tenantry not paying their rents, but less moved than his agent by their habit of shooting from behind hedges at persons obnoxious to them. I knew these gentlemanly young men could not pick my pockets, nor even dream of such a thing, and I should have quietly sat by their side, notwithstanding what is said at the police courts about 'a companion of thieves,' all the way to Waterloo Place but for a most frightful incident. Another passenger was coming up the stairs, and would infallibly take my place!

If I had been well and agile, I might have dodged him, as Punch eludes his persecutors in the show, and he have been never the wiser, but I really didn't feel up to it. Moreover the shock of his approach had demoralised me (much more than the other), and I could only think of getting off that infernal omnibus as quietly as possible. I scrambled over the knifeboard on to the other side, laying my hand mechanically on the shoulder of the nearest thief as I did so. I never shall forget his look of shrinking horror. The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth. He doubtless thought he was 'wanted' for something or other.

Then I ran down the other steps with a threepenny piece in my hand. Integrity (whatever my cousins may say) is one of my leading characteristics, and besides I quite forgot how easily I could have got off—literally got off—without paying my fare; but honesty was certainly not the best policy in my case. 'Here's your money, my man,' I said, as I pressed it into his palm and left the bus. He dropped clean off his perch, like a parrot in a fit, but fell into the muddy road. I had no time to wait to see what happened, but it is probable that his story was not believed; and yet when that poor man said 'When that threepenny piece was put into my hand by nobody, I'm blest if you mightn't have knocked me down with a feather,' he was speaking the literal truth, for that was just my weight, and I had done it.

CHAPTER III.

THE CLUB.

I COULD hardly push the heavy swing door of the club open, and of course the commissionaire did not offer to do it for me. 'What a wind there must be outside!' growled the hall porter, who, sitting in his glass case all day—a mere exhausted receiver of letters and visiting cards—knows nothing whatever concerning the world without, not even its weather. I sat down on the bench reserved for messengers, to recover myself a little. A lady entered the hall, young but not very pretty, and with a tightness about her mouth, like a purse with the snap closed, that seemed to bespeak a resolute purpose.

'Are there any letters for Mr. Jones to-day, porter?' she inquired, with laboured sweetness.

'Which Mr. Jones, ma'am? There's a dozen on 'em.'

'Mr. Valentine Jones.'

Over the impassive face of that stately porter there crept a dry, wise smile, cynical and yet kindly; the smile of a man who knows the weaknesses of his fellow-creatures, but also shares them.

'There are several business letters, ma'am, for Mr. Valentine Jones.'

That word 'business' was, I felt, dictated by a generous nature, or at least by the recollection of some generosity (of Jones's); but if he had even said 'circulars' it would not have appeased that determined female.

'Give them to me, please,' she answered quietly, at the same time opening a little bag for their reception. 'He has sent me for them.'

'Quite impossible,' said the porter.

'But I am Mr. Valentine Jones's *wife*;' the stress she laid upon that last word cannot be reproduced in words.

'*Absolutely* impossible,' returned the official; and the stress he laid upon the first word was quite as intense.

She retired without a syllable, but looking volumes—and by no means of light literature.

The next incomer had a Milesian brogue, sweet and strong as rum punch, of which it also somehow reminded one; but yet he looked artful.

'Is Mr. O'Milligan, of Milligan Castle, county Blarney, and Mimber of Parliament, within?' he inquired.

'No, sir.'

'Then kindly favour me with his private address in town.'

'Hasn't got one, sir.'

The stranger scratched his head, whistled, winked, and softly withdrew.

A smile broadened on that stately porter's face; I wondered what he was laughing at. Some people (though rarely those who live in glass houses) see jokes in everything, which is a very deplorable state of mind.

I entered the ground floor reading-room, just to see how things were going in one's absence, and how it was borne by one's acquaintance. It seemed to be borne admirably well; I could not suspect them of indifference, but attributed their apparent stoicism to resignation—their not saying a word about me to an unwillingness to lacerate each other's bosoms by alluding to so painful a subject. Midas was asleep on the sofa, as usual, and little Mole patiently waiting for his waking that he might get one of the many newspapers with which the other had made his bed. Simpkins was standing with his back to the fireplace (from which in winter he keeps the glow from many a shivering fellow-creature), playing with his heavy gold watchchain, and reading a morning paper. It was a paragraph about himself, I knew, and, as some would think, a highly complimentary one; yet it had been written by the man who knew most about him in all the world.

The sporting men were whispering their dark secrets to one another in their customary corner. I bet myself, occasionally, and had won money of them; they would surely speak of me with respectful tenderness. I shimmered up to them in hopes to catch a word of sympathy. They were talking, not about 'men and books,' but about horses and books. One of them asked 'How about the Cork? I hear he's gone back in the betting.' 'Yes,' said another; 'I've bet two to one against his recovery. If he's "scratched" it will not be the first time I have lost money by him;' and then they all laughed; not one word about *me*. So vanish friendships made on the race-course. However, these were not my own familiar friends, such as I was about to meet at luncheon.

I shimmered into the great dining-room; at our favourite

table Rawlings was already seated—first, as usual; if there is any delicacy on the bill, and only a little of it, he likes to make sure of it. He has not much appetite, poor fellow—'coats of the stomach not what they should be,' he tells us, confidentially; but, as Seymour says (who is a joker, and rather unfeeling), he makes up for it by his drinketite. He has his bottle of champagne before him. Immediately opposite is *my* chair, turned back to show the place is reserved. This touches me; these are friends indeed; they don't know when I may be coming back (if ever), but they are always prepared, it seems, for my reception. Emotion so overpowered me that, forgetting my peculiar position, I turned back the chair and sat down on it. Rawlings' cheerful face at once became livid. He stared at me so earnestly that I almost thought he could see something—an idea which, as it happened, also occurred to him. He murmured something to himself—some orison learnt in infancy, and in disuse for fifty years. Then, 'Waiter,' he exclaimed, 'take away this champagne!'

'Is it corked, sir?'

'Hush! don't say that,' he cried, in tones of inexplicable alarm. 'Never mention that word to me again.'

I had never seen Rawlings so bad as this—in the middle of the day—and I was anxious to see what our friends would think of it. Dashwood and Seymour came in together, and took their seats, the one with severe complacency, as usual, as though the whole world belonged to him, and its inhabitants were his slaves, the other with a careless indifference (also as usual), as though he didn't care one halfpenny whom it belonged to.

'Hullo, old man! off your feed?' exclaimed Dashwood, pointing to the knife and fork, which my *vis-à-vis* had flung down upon his cutlet.

'And, what is much worse, off his drink,' observed Seymour. 'Where's your champagne, old fellow?'

'Something has just happened,' said Rawlings, in awe-struck tones. 'The most curious and dreadful thing. Heaven knows what it means. I wish you would give me your attention, Dashwood,' he murmured, imploringly.

'All right; but a man must have his lunch, you know. (Yes, a slice of ham from the thick end.) Well, what was it?—(and some fat, mind I have some *fat*)—Well?'

'Not five minutes ago, as I was sitting here alone, opposite to Banquo's chair, as Seymour calls it, which was then *turned*

back—upon my life and honour I am telling you the exact truth——'

'Stop a minute,' interrupted Dashwood; 'this is from the knuckle, waiter; I said the *thick* end—a thousand pardons; you were going to tell us the exact truth about something.'

'It will have all the charm of novelty,' said Seymour.

'Don't laugh at me,' exclaimed Rawlings, earnestly; 'if it had happened to either of *you*, you wouldn't have laughed. I believe Dashwood would have gone off in a fit.'

'Don't talk like that even in jest, Rawlings,' said Dashwood, who is of full habit and very nervous; 'don't *tell* it me if it's dangerous, I beg.'

'It will not be so dangerous as the fat of that ham, I'll bet a shilling,' said Seymour, pointing to the plate arrived for the second time.

'Quite true,' replied Dashwood; 'many thanks to you for calling my attention to it. When I said "fat," waiter, I did not mean a pound of fat.'

'Upon my life,' cried Rawlings, with tears in his eyes, 'this is most *shocking*. I wish to relate the most painful, the most terrible experience that ever occurred to any human being—an intimation, it may be, from the other world—and you keep talking of ham.'

'One must lunch,' pleaded Dashwood, mournfully; '*this* world, which has at least the advantage of priority, demands it. I should like some fried potatoes; but that, of course, is out of the question till you have done your story—Pray go on.'

'I tell you that Banquo's chair yonder was turned back when I sat down here, and all of a sudden—in broad daylight, and with nobody touching it—it assumed its present position.'

'You must have been kicking your legs about,' said Dashwood, unsympathetically.

'Or, more likely, "lifting your elbow,"' put in Seymour; 'you do take too much wine, my dear Rawlings, you know you do.'

'I had only had one glass of champagne.'

'That was just it; you felt the want of it, my good fellow. Take a hair of the dog that bit you,' said Dashwood, with the air of an expert giving professional advice. 'Toss off a glass of brandy.'

'He's had enough of spirits,' murmured Seymour.

'Why, you don't mean to tell me,' continued Dashwood imperiously, 'that poor old Browne pulled back his own chair?'

'I don't know, I'm sure, but I can't help thinking that something has happened to Browne.'

'But we all know that something *has* happened to him,' urged Dashwood.

'Which we all knew, moreover, was *very likely* to happen to him,' remarked Seymour. (What *did* he mean?)

'Yes,' said Rawlings solemnly, 'but going off your nut is one thing, and going off the hooks is another.'

'Still, when the mind is gone what matters the body?' sighed Dashwood—'just give me those fried potatoes, waiter, and order me some toast for the caviar—depend upon it, it will be a happy release. His temper was getting unbearable.'

'Don't say that, please don't,' said Rawlings earnestly. 'Or at least not now. For all we know he may be sitting in that chair.'

'Exceedingly improbable,' remarked Seymour. He was a successful barrister, and very sceptical. 'There is no evidence of it to go to a jury.'

'If Seymour had you in the box about it, my dear Rawlings, he would turn you inside out in five minutes,' said Dashwood confidently.

'If it was not so superfluous,' remarked the advocate dryly.

Rawlings, deprived of his liquor, and staring suspiciously at the empty chair, had certainly rather an eviscerated appearance. 'Still, he *may* be here,' he murmured.

'And a very good thing if he was,' said Dashwood, philosophically, 'and could hear the truth about himself. He always shrank from that.'

'Well, I confess I liked him,' said Seymour, with the air of a man who expects to meet with opposition, and without being altogether prepared to resist it.

'Why?' inquired Dashwood.

'Well, perhaps one doesn't know exactly why,' admitted the other. 'One had to dive for it, of course, but I do really think he was a good-natured fellow, under the mud.'

'He was pleasant enough when he was pleased, if you mean *that*,' said Dashwood. 'There was a certain agreeable insolence about him, I don't deny; but a more conceited fellow under the pretence of simplicity, or a more cunning one under the veil of frankness——'

'He was a little mad,' put in Rawlings apologetically; 'every one knows that now.'

'Yes, but there was a deal of method in his madness. He managed somehow, notwithstanding that engaging eccentricity, to get his own way through life, and never lose sight of the main chance.'

'That was a sad trait in him indeed,' said Seymour with a twinkle in his left eye, 'and quite peculiar to himself.'

'Don't say "through life," Dashwood,' cried Rawlings imploringly, 'until we are quite sure; it isn't decent.'

'Very well, if you object to the phrase, let us say "for the last twenty years," or "as long as we've known him."'

If the 'Lancet' supposes that it is impossible for a disembodied spirit to get into a perspiration the 'Lancet' is wrong; I hadn't a dry thread on me. I had read, of course, that listeners never hear any good of themselves, but I had never imagined that a respectable proverb could be pushed to such an extremity as this, and yet there was more and worse—to come.

'How did old Browne, by-the-bye, get his money, to *begin with*?' inquired Dashwood. 'There was something queer about it, was there not?'

'I should think there *was*,' said Seymour, in his soft subacid way. 'It was one of the first cases in which I was ever concerned. He made a capital witness, capital—stuck at nothing, that I will say for him.'

'What do you mean; perjury?' said Dashwood, much excited, and squeezing more lemon over his caviar than he had intended. Seymour nodded with great significance.

'I must say nothing about that,' he said with professional gravity; 'the fact is, I was his counsel, so my mouth is sealed.'

'Oh, *do* tell us!'

'Not now,' cried Rawlings; 'I insist upon its not being told now; not till we have seen the paper to-morrow morning. I cannot help thinking that something dreadful has happened to the Cork.'

The Cork! Then *I* was the Cork! Those sporting wretches in the next room had been talking of *me* after all, though only to make an inhuman bet about my chances of recovery. I rose from my chair in disgust, and only just in time.

'You have kept my place, I hope,' said a voice I knew, though I didn't know the man it belonged to. He was an old member of the Club, but not of our set, who had been lately made the editor of a great weekly paper.

'We always keep *your* place, Mr. Magnus,' said Dashwood, with courteous deference.

It was for *him*, then, that chair had been turned back, and not for me! I'd a great mind to pull it from under him as he sat down, and break his neck.

'I'm afraid, Mr. Magnus, you will now have that chair in perpetuity,' said Rawlings mournfully.

'Afraid? Well, really that is one of the things one would rather not have said,' said Dashwood, with indignation. 'Old Browne was all very well in his way—but Mr. Magnus!'

'Is your friend worse?' said the great man placidly as he peppered his lobster.

'I fear so.'

'Poor fellow! Well, I'll send round to his house the last thing to-night, and if anything has happened—for your sakes, gentlemen—he shall have a paragraph.'

'An immortality indeed,' observed Dashwood courteously.

'And one for which he has been always yearning,' added Seymour sweetly. 'I wonder whether he will be permitted to hear it. But of course that *depends*.'

I suppose nobody ever left a Club—who had not been expelled from it by a general meeting—in a more depressed condition than I did.

As to walking home, that was not to be thought of; and I had had quite enough of omnibuses. Fortunately at the door stood an open and roomy carriage, which I knew was about to convey a wicked and invalid old financier of my acquaintance to his house in my quarter of the town. I climbed in over the door, and modestly took a back seat. Presently he appeared, a mass of capes and cloaks, and was assisted into the vehicle by his footman (whom he swore at). It had C springs, but that of course did not help him to discern *me*, and was very comfortable. He lay back thinking of many things not to his credit (though it was almost unlimited); Black Care, he knew, was sitting behind him (in the fold of the head), but he little guessed who was sitting in front of him. However, he brought me within a hundred yards of my door, so I will say nothing against him. The service he was rendering me was not a great one, but, even when the beer is small, 'one should not look a gift cask in the bunghole.'

I let myself in with my latchkey and shimmered up to my room, as noiseless on the stairs as when a boy I used to slide

down the banisters after jam at night, and with the same (faint) consciousness of misdoing. I felt that eavesdropping was not quite an honourable practice (nor nearly so amusing as I had expected it to be); but when one has once taken to it—like money that ought to have been left to somebody else—it is somehow very difficult to give it up. There is an attraction about it which it is impossible to explain, but once experienced one is always wanting—like a seat in Parliament, with all its inconveniences and degradations—to try it again.

Though what I had heard about myself from my Club friends could hardly be considered satisfactory—and indeed their observations had been much more familiar than welcome—I yearned to learn what was my Angelina's private opinion of me. My very want of success at the Club even increased this longing. Friendship had failed me, but Love, Love, Love, that makes the world go round (and doubtless on that account makes one so dizzy to think of), would surely make amends for it. My good nurse, all alone with her sherry—for as we know she had no other companion, the servants being all engaged—had waited (with fits and starts) for my bell, and congratulated me on my long and refreshing rest, whereas I had had hardly strength enough to swallow my lump of sugar. As I dropped at once into a wholesome slumber (produced by so much healthy exercise in the open air) she wrote down 'lethargy' on her little slate—the last effort of the faithful creature in the cause of duty—and fell into an alcoholic sleep herself in the armchair.

CHAPTER IV.

ANGELINA.

Mr. Nathaniel Spiffkins lived in a small and unambitious street in Bloomsbury. And why not? That is the unanswerable question—not unmingled with ferocity—I have always put to meddling friends who have been hostile to my matrimonial projects. If I had said 'And why?' they would have given me fifty reasons, each more unpleasant than the other. At one time he had been prosperous, and lived in the neighbouring square. Angelina had been brought up in marble halls, or halls that had at least been painted in imitation of marble. She had been born in the purple—though, indeed, all babes are much of that colour—and with a silver spoon

in her mouth, which had not, however, in any way interfered with its exquisite shape. Those lovely eyes had in early girlhood blinked beneath five large gas chandeliers (counting the two in the back drawing-room), and had (generally) seen better days. But you would never have guessed it from her behaviour. She was wont to say, in her artless way—and drawing her very metaphors from the simplest and most innocent source—that it was no use crying over spilt milk. Some girls would have abused their father up hill and down dale, for having lost his money in speculation; but her intelligence suggested to her that he did not lose it by design, and no doubt it was a consolation to her to feel that where he had lost thousands, others, who had a high opinion of his sagacity and advice, had lost tens of thousands, and had not saved so much out of the fire even as he had. She had common sense far beyond her years, except on one point. She still stuck to Jack Atkins, the War Office clerk. (I always remembered his name, because it was that of the mutineer in 'Robinson Crusoe,' whom he also resembled in character; a very disagreeable, insolent, courageous fellow.) He had loved her when she was rich, and he pretended to do so—or even, perhaps, really did it, for he was anything but sensible—now she was poor. She called it fidelity, and her father (very properly) fiddle-de-dee.

The good old man had done his best for her—not, it was whispered, without very serious risk to himself; (but *that* was all over, thank goodness; there was nothing, as Seymour would have said, to go to a jury, or, at all events, it hadn't gone there;) and now it was surely her turn to do her best for *him*. It would be egotistic and conceited in me to indicate the man who, in her father's opinion (and mine) had become her best; moreover, it was not as best man—but I am 'wandering'—the very thing of which the doctor and the nurse complain of me, though, I protest, without the slightest cause.

In the days of her prosperity Angelina had favoured Jack, notwithstanding the disproportion between their fortunes, and even made it the ground of her favour; how delightful, she averred, it would be to dower him with her wealth, though it would be a poor return, indeed, for his unselfish devotion. 'How satisfactory it is,' she would say, 'to reflect that I have got enough for two, or even more' (for she was not one to shut her eyes to the future), 'and that his having nothing but his salary (and his debts) is of no sort of consequence.' And now she had gone right

round, and contended that, in making her poor, fate had only been fitting them for one another.

'And how about *me*?' would here put in Spiffkins, not unnaturally; when she would burst into tears, which he justly thought a good symptom. The kind old fellow was doing what he could for me (and himself) I knew; but I was anxious to know *what* he was doing.

The next afternoon, matters were all arranged at home as before, and I left it, lighter than ever, buoyed up by tender expectation, and on the wings of love. Now, the best way of getting to Midge Street, Bloomsbury (under my rather peculiar circumstances), was by the Metropolitan Railway, and though a man who has been given up by the doctors naturally shrinks from 'the Underground,' I took it. In the morning and the evening there are five-and-twenty passengers or so in every carriage of the Metropolitan, but in the afternoon there is plenty of room. In my carriage there was nobody; from the point of view of a traffic manager, not even me. I had given honesty a fair trial, and was not going to try it again. How absurd it sounded to hear the gate collector ask one to show one's ticket, when I could not even show myself.

It had been said of me, by one who envied me my Angelina, that I went to Midge Street so often that it was a pity there was not a hole cut for me in the door, that I might go in and out like the cat. A brutal jest enough; but, as it happened, I now wished that some such accommodation had been provided for me. As matters stood, there was nothing for it but to ring the bell, and slip in the best way I could. As I had hoped, the slavey came out on the doorstep, looked to left and right, with a 'Drat them boys!' (thinking it was a runaway ring), and gave me the desired opportunity.

The drawing-room door was on the jar, and so far typified what was going on within; a domestic fracas was taking place there between old Spiffkins and his daughter, and from the fact of my Angelina being in tears, I guessed at once (and rightly) that I was the subject of their disagreement. The lovely girl was standing in a defiant attitude, with her beautiful arms a-kimbo; a flush on her cheek, and a flash in her eye. The old gentleman was huddled up in his armchair, with his hands before his face, but keeping a sharp look out between his fingers. I am afraid (to use a phrase she would herself have scorned to employ) she had been 'letting him have it.'

'I don't care whether he is better or worse,' she was saying, with a touch of temper that became her admirably.

'Quite right, dear,' he answered blandly; 'you will have to *take* him for better or worse; what a comfort it is to think that it will not be for richer or poorer. You wouldn't like to see our little establishment, scaly as it is, bust up, I suppose?'

Spiffkins was certainly vulgar in his mode of expressing himself; but, on the other hand, he was not one of those 'sophisticated rhetoricians' who leave you in doubt of their meaning. The cruel shaft went home to that gentle heart; her arms dropped down to her side and she plumped down—and how charmingly plump she was!—upon the sofa.

'Would you have me marry a madman?' she pleaded indignantly.

Spiffkins kept his temper admirably; the infamous libel on his friend (and creditor) did not seem to move him in the least.

'My dear child, I don't want you to marry him *now*; it may be a week or two before he gets all right again——'

'*Again*!' she interrupted scornfully. 'He never was right, and he never will be right.'

'You mean in his mind?' he inquired gently.

'Of course I mean in his mind.'

It was curious to remark the difference of tone and manner in these two persons, otherwise so near akin. The one all peacefulness, wisdom, and common sense; full of 'reverence and the silver hair'—though not so well provided with the latter as he had been; the other hardly knowing what she said, and not much caring; young (who can blame her for that? not *me*), impetuous, and carried away by the merest froth of feeling, and yet looking so exceedingly pretty. (In that, and that only, she had a decided advantage over Spiffkins.)

'The question is, my dear,' he continued calmly, 'what *is* madness? "Great wits to madness are allied" we read, and certainly Browne is full of fun.'

'I hate his fun,' cried Angelina.

'Quite right. What we want is his earnest' (the way that Spiffkins had of agreeing with her whenever he could, was certainly most sagacious and judicious). 'That he is eccentric, there is no doubt; but nobody can deny his ability to make a settlement.'

'A settlement! What's a settlement?' she answered bitterly.

'Well, that crack in the wall yonder is a settlement, and I am sorry to say there are a good many of them,' he added, with a deep-drawn sigh; 'but the one I refer to is a provision for life.'

'It would be but a short life,' she murmured, despairingly.

'No doubt; that is what the doctors tell me; then when you've got rid of him you could marry Jack.'

This was a most abominable idea, but I forgave it Spiffkins on the spot for the sake of the excellent motive that I knew was actuating him; nor could I withhold my admiration for the sagacity that had so promptly caused him to affect to misunderstand her meaning. It was plain she was to be shaken (to quote from my medicine labels), and might possibly be taken, though she wasn't taken (at least with me) at present.

'After all,' he continued, as if ashamed of his last argument, 'what matters a little queerness in a man's character so long as it isn't his moral character,' put in Spiffkins, in the tone of one who makes an insurmountable proviso. 'Why, I knew a man in the House of Commons, who lived for years in a lunatic asylum, but who was always let out—under the influence of belladonna—to vote on great occasions. That was rather an extreme case, I admit—though he saved his country more than once—but what grounds have you for thinking our good friend Browne anything more than a little queer. He is well informed, fond of literature, and quotes from the poets like—like winking.'

Again I deplored the want of facility of expression in Spiffkins; if he had rounded that last sentence a little better, it would certainly have been more effective.

'Yes, he quotes enough, but it's never right,' urged Angelina. 'To give you an idea of what he is capable of in that way, we were talking together one day of that beautiful poem beginning "The windflower and the violet have perished long ago," by Bryant—is it not Bryant who writes so sweetly on spring time?'

'To be sure,' murmured Spiffkins, 'Bryant and May;' (but fortunately she didn't hear him).

'Well, how do you think he quoted *that*? He said, "The aster and the asterisk have perished long ago." If it had been *all* nonsense, I should have thought he was joking; but the aster *is* a flower, you know.'

'To be sure,' answered Spiffkins; 'the Jacob Aster; it's an American plant.'

'I did not know there was that particular variety of it,' said

Angelina, indifferently; 'but Mr. Browne's referring to it showed a method in his madness which seemed somehow worse than if there had been none.'

'I can't follow you there,' said Mr. Spiffkins. Nor more could I to save my life. Her logic seemed to me like that of the gallery god, who when the actor spoke the line, 'My wound is great, because it is so small,' exclaimed, 'Then 'twould be greater were it none at all.' The whole thing was too subtle for me; I got mixed.

'What I mean,' said Angelina, 'is that Mr. B. seems to have just enough sagacity to keep him out of a lunatic asylum, and that's all.'

All! and enough too, I thought. To call me Mr. B. too! Old Spiffkins was hurt, as well he might be.

'Don't say that,' he said pathetically, 'even to *me*. It has just been decided that what a man tells even his wife is "publication;" it may cause an action for libel. You are not "privileged" to say such things.'

'I am only speaking the truth,' said Angelina, tapping her pretty foot upon the floor. 'You know perfectly well he is as mad as a March hare, papa.'

'If it's only in March,' he began apologetically, but she wouldn't listen to him.

'How can you have the face to deny it? Do you not know for a fact that he knocked at his own door the other day and asked if Mr. Browne was at home?'

I remembered the unfortunate mistake, though I didn't know it had got abroad. The truth is I was a little absent at the time, which naturally caused me to inquire whether I was at home or not.

'My dear child,' said the ready Spiffkins, 'only consider what a common name Browne is. He probably forgot himself for a moment (you do it yourself, I regret to say, occasionally), and was thinking of another Browne.'

She shook her head. The explanation, unanswerable as it was, evidently did not satisfy her; womanlike, she declined to admit defeat, and flew off to another argument.

'Then he is so intensely selfish.'

'*That* isn't madness, at all events,' answered old Spiffkins cheerfully; 'quite the contrary.'

'Never shall I forget his conduct when we were out yachting

last summer. How, when we were all enjoying ourselves, and the vessel began to "lop" a little, he insisted on being put ashore immediately.'

'Very natural, my dear.'

'Yes, but what I objected to was his insisting on taking me with him! Then when we were crossing the gentleman's garden, and he came out swearing and with a stick, how meanly Mr. B. behaved! He cried "Don't strike her. She was in her father's yacht, and felt sea-sick; I knew it was a trespass, but I felt that in the case of illness and a lady you wouldn't mind." The poor gentleman almost fell on his knees with shame, and offered us sherry and biscuits.'

'But what a ready wit!' exclaimed old Spiffkins, admiringly.

'I hate such wit,' said Angelina.

'Still he *is* witty, you must allow; remember how he answered Professor Slowcoach who wanted to know when a *Te Deum* was first solemnised after a victory. "Probably," said Browne, "after the siege of Tyre."'

'Nobody saw the joke but myself till the next day,' said Angelina, depreciatingly.

'That was their fault, and shows that you and he were made for one another, my dear.'

'Stuff and nonsense. I don't believe that Mr. Browne even knew that he was making a joke.'

'That's genius,' said Spiffkins, confidently. He was certainly a sharp old man, and if he had been a lawyer, would have cut a figure at the Old Bailey (which indeed, even as it was, he very nearly did).

'Then, like that dreadful old Professor in "Middlemarch," Mr. Browne makes such noises over his soup.'

This was downright rude, and of course untrue; but the manner which Angelina had of saying *anything* was attractive. She gave a little imitation of the (supposed) noise, which sounded to *me* like the note of a bird.

'My dear child, if I was as rich as Browne,' said her father, reprovingly, '*I* should make noises.'

'Well, then, I'm glad you ain't,' cried Angelina, tartly—or rather jam-tartly, for, bless her, she could not help being sweet. That she should have expressed herself pleased with such a circumstance was a clear proof that the poor dear did not know what she was saying.

'However, it's no good talking any more about the matter, papa, for Dr. Jones himself assured me that even if Mr. Browne should get over his present illness, he will never be himself again.'

'Very good; what *can* be better news, my dear?' said Spiffkins pleasantly. 'You say you don't like him as he is, and if he isn't going to be himself any more—— By Jingo, there's that fellow Atkins.'

There was a ring at the front door. There seemed something ominous in Atkins coming with *that*, though he couldn't have well got in without it. To witness his meeting with my Angelina was not to be endured. There was, however, still a moment or two of happiness for me (such as it was), for the slavey, thinking it might be another 'runaway,' was not in a hurry to answer the door. Who can resist an opportunity that may never occur again? With that beautiful and accomplished young creature before my eyes I forgot that I was myself invisible.

Angelina gave a piercing scream. 'Papa,' she cried, 'somebody's kissed me!'

'What, already!' he said contemptuously; and alas, I knew only too well what he meant.

'I tell you it is so!' she exclaimed; 'a horrid *scrubby* kiss.'

The poor dear only spoke the truth; I had not shaved for six weeks. They would not even trust me with a pair of scissors.

'Scrubby!' echoed Spiffkins; 'a girl of your age ought not to know the difference.'

It was very true, but very dreadful. Carried away by my feelings, I fled the room like a feather. I met my hated rival—I need not say he had no moustache—on the stairs; I was obliged to give him the wall, and gladly indeed would I have heaved a brick at him. He looked disgustingly young, and handsome, and happy. Thank heaven he was in debt; that was *something*, but it was all (except old Spiffkins) I had to trust to. However, he would have to wait for the banns to be put up, at all events, for his ready money, I knew, didn't 'run to' a licence.

My blood boiled in my veins, so that people turned round in the street to listen to it, then thought it a singing in their own ears, and made a mem to take a pill. But what did *I* care about their trifling with their constitutions? When I got home and took my sugar, I could have almost wished it was sugar of lead. 'Henceforth,' cried I, with a person of greater eminence, but who

could not have felt more wickedly disposed, 'Evil be thou my good.'

I would haunt Angelina at the very altar and beyond it; no considerations of propriety should restrain me. I had had enough of propriety, and of everything else. No, not of everything; there was not enough of that preparation of fernseed left for the revenge of a lifetime. I must make some more. Great heaven, the jar was empty! 'Nurse,' I cried, frantic with this discovery; 'nurse, where is my fernseed?'

She answered from the dressing-room, where she was rinsing out (she called it 'wrenching out') something or other:

'Your what, sir? Do you mean your linseed meal? Why, I've just been washing on it away; it was getting hard and bad.'

It was not so hard and bad as *I* felt. My magic power was gone, and I had no means of recovering it. The jar had held only a specimen; sufficient indeed for my simple needs at present; but how was I to procure the receipt for future use? How little, when one can be invisible at pleasure, do we poor mortals think of the future!

'Nurse,' cried I, 'you're drunk.'

I knew she was not, but it was a relief to my feelings.

Here something seemed to give me a violent box on the ear—most likely a snapping of some rather largish vessel in the brain—and I became insensible. When I came to myself again, it was to-morrow.

Deprived of my magic mixture, of course I could not take it 'as before.' The scheme of life I had mapped out for myself was nipped in the bud, like a flower in spring. The aster had, so to speak, become an asterisk. But the worst was yet to come. Almost every human being in this cold world has some sympathiser with his misfortunes. If one holds four by honours and fails to secure the odd trick, the ready tear starts at least from one's partner's eye; if one loses one's case before the judge, even one's solicitor (especially if one can't pay his costs) is moved, though he doesn't move for a new trial; if one drops a sovereign in the street, the passing stranger is sorry—if he doesn't find it.

But I—I who had been so marvellously endowed, and suddenly found myself deprived of Fortune's rarest gift—was sympathised with by nobody. The incredulous world actually *refuses to believe that I ever had it.* My own positive assertion, a gentleman's word, goes for nothing.

'I have no doubt, my dear sir, you *thought* you had it,' is the very best I can get out of even my own doctor. He admits, indeed, when I tell him of the consultation I overheard between Sir Lucas and Mr. Scratchwig, that no doubt they behaved very much as I described them to have done. *That*, he says, is only human nature.

'It is your extraordinary powers of intuition, my dear sir,' he contends, 'that have caused you to know what these men said, and your no less wonderful gift of imagination that leads you to think you heard it.'

I don't want compliments, however, but corroboration. I am collecting what facts I can to support my experience—for I am getting quite well and strong in the country air, at Hanwell in Middlesex—and no unprejudiced person will deny that they have considerable weight. Angelina is married to Jack, which it cannot be denied I foresaw; Welsford has married Jemima, and taken a public house, just as I heard him say he would do. The policeman, it is true, has not married the cook, but that was not her fault; he was married already. When I asked Dashwood what they had been saying of me at the luncheon table on the day when I paid them that memorable visit, he changed colour, and said it was impossible to recollect. They were always talking of me off and on. I hope I called on the 'off' day. It was quite true that Rawlings had had champagne on the date in question, and thought he saw something which nobody else could see. The editor had also sat in my chair. I think that pretty well, even if, as Seymour says (as usual), it is not enough for a jury. Upon the whole I think, if the case is tried, I should prefer a jury of matrons, for my nurse admits (though more particularly in connection with that absurd notion of hers about my 'cunning') that there were occasions 'when she could see through me.' If she could do that my case is proved.

OUR DISTRICT SCHOOLS.

DISTRICT Schools, which are of recent growth, are for the maintenance and proper education of our pauper children. By the Poor Law Amendment Act, passed in the year 1834, England was parcelled out into districts, each with its workhouse, its poor-law officers, and other paraphernalia pertaining to the administration of the said Act. Outdoor relief had been lavished on the labouring poor to make up their inadequate wages, and it was now decreed that able-bodied paupers should be relieved only by means of the workhouses, the weekly allowance in money or kind being restricted to the aged or infirm, who might or might not be able to augment it by some light employment. The rapid increase, however, of the population of our large towns made it necessary that something more should be done, if indoor accommodation was to be given to all able-bodied paupers and their families. Schools there were almost from the first, where pauper children were cared for and educated while in the workhouse with their parents; but when these places became flooded with the pauper overflow of large districts, it was found impossible to keep and educate the children there with any degree of satisfaction. The atmosphere, both moral and physical, was by no means conducive to healthy growth; and it was clearly an injury to the country generally that children should be reared either with doubtful principles or feeble constitutions. The State, standing *in loco parentis* to every pauper child, was in a great degree responsible for the manner in which these young lives were being developed. Why could not the children be sent away from the smoke and fog of the big cities and towns into fresh country air? Why could they not be nurtured and carefully educated at some place where the stamp of pauperism might be wiped out, and its evil influences eradicated, and whence they could in due time emerge and take their places as useful members of the community? An answer to these questions was given in the year 1844 by an Act of Parliament authorising the establishment of district schools. Unions, or parishes not in union, were to be combined for this purpose as occasion might require; and at least twelve large district schools, properly so called, have already sprung up, as well as many

other schools conducted on the same lines belonging to single unions. They are supported by the poor-rates of the districts to which they belong, and are under the management of boards selected from the guardians, these again being controlled by the Local Government Board. Whether this plan of education has been altogether unmixed with disappointment it is not intended to discuss. The boarding-out system, by which the pauper children of large towns are housed by the labouring poor of country villages, finds favour with some. But if the training in district schools is defective, owing to the somewhat mechanical method rendered necessary by their great size, there are evils connected with the other system also; as anyone can testify who has been officially connected with a country parish. At any rate, it would not be fair to give an opinion as to the respective merits of the two systems until the boarding-out system has received more experimental attention than it has hitherto had.

The usual title for admission to a district school is simply pauperism. A family, we will suppose, is reduced by one or other of the untoward circumstances so common amongst the lower ranks of life to seek the shelter of the workhouse. We will suppose this family to consist of father, mother, and several children. After a few days' stay, such of the children as may be over three and under sixteen years of age, having previously passed through the very necessary ordeal of a thorough cleansing, are despatched from the workhouse, in company with perhaps a dozen others in a similar predicament (or who may be foundlings or orphans), in a roomy wagonette or van. Each child wears a label on which its name is legibly written; the names so inscribed tallying with a descriptive list borne by one of the attendants. On arriving at the schools the children are taken at once to the probationary ward, which is usually a structure apart from the main building, and there they are again bathed and clad in the uniform of the school. The same day they are subjected to a medical examination, and if any be found with suspicions of infectious disease they are separated from the others, and the whole number remain in quarantine till all danger is over. This, however, rarely happens, because, having previously passed the medical scrutiny at the workhouse, they always arrive with a clean bill of health; yet occasions do arise when some disease is developed between the two examinations, and then the above-mentioned course has to be resorted to. The usual duration of their stay in the proba-

tionary ward is fourteen days—at some schools it is three weeks —and then they are drafted into the main building, to make room for the next batch. During the time of probation the children are visited daily by the medical officer. The boys and girls are separated, each sex having wards and a playground of its own. The boys are provided with bats and balls and such other luxuries as may help to make the fortnight pass pleasantly away, while the girls have toys and dolls, and both have books.

But before following these children into the schools proper, it may be well to give some description of the building itself, with its various offices, its surroundings, and its staff. The writer will describe the one best known to himself, for though they may vary considerably in size and in many of their details, yet as regards the main features they are all more or less alike. The schools stand on an elevation, in about a hundred and twenty acres of park-like ground. The frontage, which is three-storied and consists of centre and two wings, extends over a space of about six hundred feet and can be seen many miles away. The building has no pretensions to architectural beauty, but its great size and the uniformity of its frontage give it a handsome, and indeed imposing, appearance. In the centre of this first portion of the building are the superintendent's private apartments, the committee-room, clerks' office, board-room, chaplain's room, and others; while in the wings on either side are dormitories for the boys and girls respectively, and on the girls' side several needle-rooms. On the first floor, the chapel occupies the centre, and more dormitories are situated on either side; and on the floor above are dormitories again. On the top of this long building, outside, is a well-railed passage stretching from end to end, with approaches from the various dormitories, to provide an escape for the inmates in case of fire; and from the centre rises a handsome clock-tower, in which are two cisterns, stored with some six thousand gallons of water apiece. On each floor there is a spacious corridor from end to end, partitioned with gates. Behind this long frontage, in the centre and at each end, are more buildings joining it at right angles, and extending back some four or five hundred feet. On one side are the boys' class-rooms, swimming bath, and fire-engine room; on the other the girls' class-rooms, bath-room, and teachers' cottages; while the central appendage contains the dining-hall and kitchens. Beyond these, and below them also, are the stores, dairy, bakery, washhouses, laundries,

and the steam-engines. These engines are incessantly at work pumping water from a very deep well for the daily supply; but their usefulness is extended to other purposes also, such as wringing the clothes, turning the lathes, and sometimes mincing the meat. The tailors' and shoemakers' quarters are here too, and the blacksmiths'—a busy hive of industry and cheerful toil. At the end of these three rows of buildings are the infirmary in the centre, and the children's playrooms and other offices on either side, extending so as to enclose two large paved quadrangles; and these form the playgrounds for the boys and girls.

Outside this goodly pile are other buildings in the adjacent grounds, which are guarded by large gates and a porter's lodge. The medical officer's residence is here, nearest to the schools; farther on we see the gasworks and the farm; while in another direction are the probationary ward already mentioned, the band-room, the ophthalmia ward, and the fever hospital. The land is chiefly pasture, and on it some thirty cows, who yield a bountiful supply of excellent milk, may generally be seen enjoying the grass, but part of it is fenced off for cricket and other games, which the children are allowed to indulge in during the summer months. The ophthalmia ward, though partly here, runs also into a separated portion of the main building, and is in itself a school of considerable size. The number of its occupants of course varies; but there are generally from seventy to eighty little people there, afflicted with this insidious complaint. Their lessons, however, and other work go on so far as circumstances permit, and they have on Sunday a special service of their own, conducted by the chaplain. The fever hospital, which is well apart from all the other buildings, is for the reception of those who are seized with any infectious disease. It is divided into several wards, studiously disconnected from each other, each ward containing ten beds. It is well provided with all the modern requisites for the comfort of the patients, and of course with appliances for disinfection. The school staff numbers nearly a hundred workers, and consists of superintendent and matron, who are generally husband and wife, medical officer, chaplain, farm-bailiff, male and female teachers, needlewomen, engineer, storekeepers, workmen of nearly every craft, yardsmen, nurses, servants, and labourers. Most of the male teachers and nearly all the craftsmen and labourers are non-resident.

When the period of probation is over, and each child is pro-

nounced free from any infectious disease, they are admitted into the schools proper, and distributed in such quarters as their circumstances require. The stronger boys and girls are handed over to the drill master and drill mistress respectively, and by them to the teachers, who place them in standards according to their qualifications. It frequently happens that younger children find themselves placed higher than some of their older companions, for education in their class of life is often neglected, notwithstanding the vigilance of the School Boards. The sickly children go to the infirmary, and the 'infants'—that is, the children under seven—are placed in charge of nurses in such of the infant wards as may be able to make room for them.

The course of study, as ordered by the Local Government Board, comprises 'reading, writing, and arithmetic, the principles of the Christian religion, and such other instruction as may be calculated to produce in the children habits of industry and virtue, and to promote their future usefulness and welfare.' This minimum course, however, can be supplemented according to circumstances, by direction of the managers. In some cases drawing and class-singing are added to the regular curriculum; while the three 'R's' themselves include spelling and dictation. Incidentally, too, a good deal of geography and other useful information is imparted by the excellent reading-books now so generally used. Religious teaching again can be made to include such elements of physiological knowledge as may be helpful in giving an increased sense of the dignity of human life, and explaining the laws of health and the duty of self-respect. Still it is hoped that the legal standard may soon be raised; for, under the various social influences now at work, the old dull type of intellect is certainly less common than it used to be. Even in district schools many a bright intelligent face may be found, bespeaking a capacity for something higher than mere rudiments; besides, boys become better workmen and girls better servants when their Christian principles are fortified by the further refining influences of more extended knowledge.

In at least one district school there is a 'Kindergarten' for the 'infants,' where their calisthenic exercises are gone through with a nimbleness and spirit which would surprise many scholars of a much higher grade. But pauper children are just like other children after all, for the infant mind knows nothing of pauperism, nor of Bumbledom either, in these days; so on they jaunt and

sing, as pleasantly and as merrily as though each little child had been born to a coronet! And if, indeed, 'kind hearts are more than coronets,' the innocence and trust of these little hearts must be worth something; nor do they fail to evoke an echo of sympathy and compassion from their teachers. For the most part, these 'infants' feel quite at home; they remember no other, and their instinctive love finds its way to their teachers and attendants.

The older boys and girls are, of course, separated, their schoolrooms and their dormitories being very far apart, as has been already shown. Those who have passed the fourth standard become 'half-timers'—that is, half their time only is devoted to book-learning, their alternate days being occupied in assisting in the workshops, or in such other industries, a knowledge of which may be useful to them in after life. The boys learn trades, that of a carpenter being the favourite one, though some learn shoemending, tailoring, and other trades, while some are employed on the farm or at the gasworks, others in the band, and others for errands and letter-carrying. The half-time girls are occupied with more domestic work—washing, ironing, cooking, housecleaning, helping with the 'infants'; these and such as these are the industries which fall to the lot of the girls.

The punishments for misbehaviour, which are prescribed by the Local Government Board, are not by any means severe. For minor offences, change of diet is considered penalty enough. More serious misconduct is met by detention, and amongst the boys the cane is sometimes used. Corporal punishment, however, can only be inflicted by the superintendent or the head schoolmaster, and all punishments have to be reported in a book and laid before the managers every week. In extreme cases, where contamination of the other children is thought probable, expulsion is resorted to.

On Sundays the children attend the chapel both morning and afternoon, where the services are bright and cheerful, and the teaching is adapted to their own peculiar needs. The music is always previously rehearsed; and, if the singing lacks refinement, it is at any rate vigorous and hearty. The children assemble twice also in the various class-rooms for short religious instruction, and spend the rest of the day in reading or other suitable pursuits, and, when weather permits, enjoy a walk in the surrounding fields. Baptism is administered where it is found to have been neglected, and in doubtful cases also; and confirmation is conferred upon those whose age and qualifications admit of it.

Although sewing is taught in the girls' school as part of the regular course, there are needle-rooms which the 'half-timers' pass through also, where not only mending is done, but outfits are made for the girls who are going to service. Boys and girls who have reached the age of fourteen, if they are fairly forward in their lessons, are exempt from further study of the three 'R's,' and are daily employed with industrial work, like the working division of the 'half-timers.'

The band is a great feature at most of the district schools, and often attains a degree of efficiency really surprising when the ages and origin of the boys are considered. With the exception of drums and triangles, wind instruments are exclusively used—clarionets, cornets, trombones, euphoniums, &c., and the selections played are always pleasing, and sometimes really difficult. About forty boys are always in the band proper, and a similar number in training to fill the places of those who leave. These boys are eagerly sought after by the masters of military bands, into which most of them eventually go, if they are free from physical defect. The band is in great demand during the summer months for garden parties, flower shows, and other fêtes in the neighbourhood, and the money so earned goes to provide the boys themselves with a summer outing. They have a capital uniform for special occasions, of which the little fellows are naturally very proud.

The school infirmary has ten wards, each capable of receiving from fifteen to twenty patients. It is provided with all the necessary sick-room appliances, and it is served by competent nurses, assisted by the half-time girls. Illustrated books, both sacred and secular, draughts and chess, toys and dolls and fragrant flowers, all find a welcome here. The walls too are decorated with bright-looking pictures and texts, and everything else that can be thought of is done to cheer the invalids and make life happy in spite of aches and pains.

The school diet, in accordance with the regulations of the Local Government Board, is liberal and varied. For breakfast and supper each child is supplied with a basin of cocoa containing a large proportion of milk, and an ample allowance of bread and butter. The dinners vary from day to day. Roast and boiled meats, with the usual 'trimmings,' meat puddings and pies, 'toad in the hole,' substantial treacle and plum puddings, and fruit puddings when in season, all take their turns. The food is wheeled up the dining-hall in portable ovens and served by the

attendants, each portion being weighed more quickly than it takes to tell, and passed along by a detachment of boys told off for that purpose. The long and spacious dining-hall is lighted by a glass roof, and its walls are decorated with frescoes and appropriate mottoes. A wide passage runs down the middle, and tiers of narrow tables with a form attached to each are fixed on either side for the boys and girls respectively. About eight hundred children are served here, but the younger 'infants' and the infirmary children have meals in their wards, and the ophthalmia children have a dining-room of their own. The diet, however, is the same throughout, except of course for those on invalid fare. Before meals the children assemble in the playground, or in the corridors if wet, whence they march into the hall in orderly troops. The marching to the mid-day meal is assisted by the band, the strains of which not only give precision to the steps but also drown the clatter of the sixteen hundred feet. Grace is sung, and when the children are seated quiet talking to a moderate extent is not forbidden. During dinner letters are given out, and others collected which the children wish to send away.

District school children are not without their high days and holidays. One day in each week is called 'visiting day,' when their parents and friends (if they have any) can come and see them for two hours. The same people cannot come oftener than once in three months; still the visiting room is generally well filled, and the meetings of mother and child are often very touching. The growth and healthy appearance of the little ones form the usual topic of conversation, and grateful indeed do the parents always seem to find their children so happy and well cared for. Then, twice a year the schools are *en fête* for the managers and their friends, who enter into the games and amusements of the children, distribute prizes, and regale them with daintier fare. In the height of summer, again, school work is suspended for three weeks, and the children ramble through the meadows culling buttercups and daisies or romping in the hay. Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide also bring their share of recreation.

District schools, as may be expected, are under a rigid system of inspection. The managers are divided into five committees, and one or more of these pay weekly an official visit, and go the round of the establishment. Workshops, stores, class-rooms, dormitories, farm-buildings, gasworks, and every other part, come under their official notice and survey, and their visits give encouragement to

officers and children alike. The latter are always the recipients of kind words, and not infrequently of something more substantial when any peculiar circumstances render special favours possible. The Poor Law Board inspectors come without notice several times in the year to see that all the arrangements are being duly and properly performed according to the orders of that Board, and the educational inspector comes annually to take stock of the advancement of the children in their school work. As there are five or six standards of each sex to be examined, as well as the ophthalmia ward and the 'infants,' several days are occupied by this inspection, and a report is subsequently published recording the result.

Unless the parents remove them previously, the children generally leave the school soon after the age of fourteen, and in no case are they kept beyond sixteen. The boys go to various situations and trades, and the girls to domestic service, all being provided with liberal outfits. Many of the boys join a training-ship, and become sailors, while others get into regimental bands. Most of the girls when in service are under the kindly care of the 'Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Girls' until they are twenty years of age. This excellent society provides, in the person of a lady visitor, a guardian angel for each girl, finds a fresh place when necessary, and a home during any time that may intervene between two situations.

Such is an outline of the plan and working of 'Our District Schools.' They may have their blemishes or defects, like every other institution. To say that they are perfect would be to call them more than human, but of their excellence no one who knows them well can entertain a doubt. The overgrowth of some may be a disadvantage, so may the want of home life, especially for girls; but their magnitude is not without its compensations, and home life is not always what it ought to be. At any rate, the children mostly turn out well; many are now in good situations, and some are occupying important positions of trust. Black sheep there may be amongst them, as there are in every large community, but these are the exception, and are not more numerous there than at any other schools. So long as good food, pure air, cleanly habits, and careful training—physical, intellectual, and moral—together with a good start in life, are acknowledged to be the best foundation for a healthy, useful, happy future, schools like these for our pauper children will not be easily superseded.

TURNED OFF!

There, 'ang up the bill-'ook, missus, and give us my pipe and a light;
'Aint I ready for supper?' No, thank'e, I wants no supper to-night;
'Twill be time enough when I'm 'ungry to turn to the victuals and drink,
To-night all I wants is the baccy, and to sit by the fire and think.
What about? Wor it that ye wor axin? Lor bless 'er, poor soul, I forgot,
I 'asnt as yet bin and told 'er—and yet I'd as lief be shot,
Like our lad as went out for a soger last year in the Injin fight,
As tell 'er, the poor old missus, why I can't eat no supper to-night!
Yet, tell 'er I maun, same as Joey was forced to stand there stock still,
And face them davils of Injins as they swarm'd on 'im down the 'ill,
And the longer yer waits for to do it, why the wusser it be, I 'spose,
So, I'll just get my pipe well started—that's it—and then orf I goes!
Well, missus, I'se got news for yer, but yer maun't, now, take it amiss,
When we lost our Joey yer bore up, and so yer maun do ower this,
Not as this 'ere time, lor bless yer, it's onything like as black—
It's only my Lord's goin' a tourin', and I—well I'se got the sack!
There, don't say no 'ard things, missus, it ain't my Lord's fault, mebbe;
'E's allers bin fair enough spoken, and her Leddyship, so 'as she;
But as the folks says at the orfice ('tis them in course 'as to speak),
They must begin savin' somewhere, and I corsts 'em twelve shillin' a week.
There's them fellers, yer says, in powder, and her Leddyship's pair o' cobs,
As she spanks with to church in the summer, or a goin' to 'ave tea with the nobs,

And the chap as they calls 'er 'tiger' (tho' why puzzles my old crown!)
And them deer we gets never a taste on—why, yer says, don't they put *them* down?
Or them horchids my Lord's so crazed with, each blossom, as I'se 'eard said,
If yer reckons one year wi' another, corsting ower a guinea a 'ead!
And the pheyzants as stands in a pot, too, by the time they'se ready for killin'—
Why doan't they, yer says, put *them* down, afore they docks my twelve shillin'?
There, I can't tell yer, missus; says passon, some things 'ere on earth below,
It's no sort o' use to inquire on; yer isn't supposed to know;
And this 'ere be one on 'em, mebbe; and passon, 'e's no bad chap,
And things ain't a goin' so easy as they used to wi' 'im, mayhap!
Still, my feyther, 'e served my Lord's feyther, as afore him 'is feyther, 'e
Werked, too, for my Lord's grandfeyther, as I 'ave for this 'un, yer see,
Ever since just a lad from Collidge 'e took to the title and 'states,
And it's 'ard when ye're nigh agen sixty, to be turned like a tramp from the gates!
But there, I'se too old for them meetins they talks on, the younger chaps,
And flags, and brass bands, and what not, and spoutin' from four-'orse traps;
Says passon, the Lord 'as willed it, so I 'ad best, too, be willin';
And the werk'us, mebbe, at sixty, is as good, arter all, as twelve shillin'!

JOHN HUXFORD'S HIATUS.

STRANGE it is and wonderful to mark how upon this planet of ours the smallest and most insignificant of events set a train of consequences in motion which act and react until their final results are portentous and incalculable. Set a force rolling, however small, and who can say where it shall end, or what it may lead to! Trifles develop into tragedies, and the bagatelle of one day ripens into the catastrophe of the next. An oyster throws out a secretion to surround a grain of sand, and so a pearl comes into being; a pearl diver fishes it up, a merchant buys it and sells it to a jeweller who disposes of it to a customer. The customer is robbed of it by two scoundrels who quarrel over the booty. One slays the other and perishes himself upon the scaffold. Here is a direct chain of events with a sick mollusc for its first link, and a gallows for its last one. Had that grain of sand not chanced to wash in between the shells of the bivalve, two living breathing beings with all their potentialities for good and for evil would not have been blotted out from among their fellows. Who shall undertake to judge what is really small and what is great?

Thus when in the year 1821 Don Diego Salvador bethought him that if it paid the heretics in England to import the bark of his cork oaks, it would pay him also to found a factory by which the corks might be cut and sent out ready made, surely at first sight no very vital human interests would appear to be affected. Yet there were poor folk who would suffer, and suffer acutely—women who would weep and men who would become sallow and hungry-looking and dangerous in places of which the Don had never heard, and all on account of that one idea which had flashed across him as he strutted, cigarettiferous, beneath the grateful shadow of his limes. So crowded is this old globe of ours, and so interlaced our interests, that one cannot think a new thought without some poor devil being the better or the worse for it.

Don Diego Salvador was a capitalist, and the abstract thought soon took the concrete form of a great square plastered building wherein a couple of hundred of his swarthy countrymen worked with deft nimble fingers at a rate of pay which no English artisan could have accepted. Within a few months the result of this new

competition was an abrupt fall of prices in the trade, which was serious for the largest firms and disastrous for the smaller ones. A few old-established houses held on as they were, others reduced their establishments and cut down their expenses, while one or two put up their shutters and confessed themselves beaten. In this last unfortunate category was the ancient and respected firm of Fairbairn Brothers of Brisport.

Several causes had led up to this disaster, though Don Diego's début as a cork-cutter had brought matters to a head. When a couple of generations back the original Fairbairn had founded the business, Brisport was a little fishing town with no outlet or occupation for her superfluous population. Men were glad to have safe and continuous work upon any terms. All this was altered now, for the town was expanding into the centre of a large district in the west, and the demand for labour and its remuneration had proportionately increased. Again, in the old days when carriage was ruinous and communication slow, the vintners of Exeter and of Barnstaple were glad to buy their corks from their neighbour of Brisport, but now the large London houses sent down their travellers who competed with each other to gain the local custom, until profits were cut down to the vanishing point. For a long time the firm had been in a precarious position, but this further drop in prices settled the matter and compelled Mr. Charles Fairbairn, the acting manager, to close his establishment.

It was a murky, foggy Saturday afternoon in November when the hands were paid for the last time, and the old building was to be finally abandoned. Mr. Fairbairn, an anxious-faced, sorrow-worn man, stood on a raised dais by the cashier while he handed the little pile of hardly-earned shillings and coppers to each successive workman as the long procession filed past his table. It was usual with the employés to clatter away the instant that they had been paid, like so many children let out of school; but to-day they waited, forming little groups over the great dreary room, and discussing in subdued voices the misfortune which had come upon their employers and the future which awaited themselves. When the last pile of coins had been handed across the table and the last name checked by the cashier, the whole throng faced silently round to the man who had been their master, and waited expectantly for any words which he might have to say to them.

Mr. Charles Fairbairn had not expected this, and it embarrassed him. He had waited as a matter of routine duty until the wages

were paid, but he was a taciturn, slow-witted man, and he had not foreseen this sudden call upon his oratorical powers. He stroked his thin cheek nervously with his long white fingers, and looked down with weak watery eyes at the mosaic of upturned serious faces.

'I am sorry that we have to part, my men,' he said at last in a crackling voice. 'It's a bad day for all of us, and for Brisport too. For three years we have been losing money over the works. We held on in the hope of a change coming, but matters are going from bad to worse. There's nothing for it but to give it up before the balance of our fortune is swallowed up. I hope you may all be able to get work of some sort before very long. Good-bye, and God bless you!'

'God bless you, sir! God bless you!' cried a chorus of rough voices. 'Three cheers for Mr. Charles Fairbairn!' shouted a bright-eyed, smart young fellow, springing up upon a bench and waving his peaked cap in the air. The crowd responded to the call, but their huzzas wanted the true ring which only a joyous heart can give. Then they began to flock out into the sunlight, looking back as they went at the long deal tables and the cork-strewn floor—above all at the sad-faced, solitary man whose cheeks were flecked with colour at the rough cordiality of their farewell.

'Huxford,' said the cashier, touching on the shoulder the young fellow who had led the cheering; 'the governor wants to speak to you.'

The workman turned back and stood swinging his cap awkwardly in front of his ex-employer, while the crowd pushed on until the doorway was clear, and the heavy fog-wreaths rolled unchecked into the deserted factory.

'Ah, John!' said Mr. Fairbairn, coming suddenly out of his reverie and taking up a letter from the table. 'You have been in my service since you were a boy, and you have shown that you merited the trust which I have placed in you. From what I have heard I think I am right in saying that this sudden want of work will affect your plans more than it will many of my other hands.'

'I was to be married at Shrovetide,' the man answered, tracing a pattern upon the table with his horny forefinger. 'I'll have to find work first.'

'And work, my poor fellow, is by no means easy to find. You see you have been in this groove all your life, and are unfit for anything else. It's true you've been my foreman, but even that won't help you, for the factories all over England are discharging

hands, and there's not a vacancy to be had. It's a bad outlook for you and such as you.'

'What would you advise, then, sir?' asked John Huxford.

'That's what I was coming to. I have a letter here from Sheridan and Moore, of Montreal, asking for a good hand to take charge of a workroom. If you think it will suit you, you can go out by the next boat. The wages are far in excess of anything which I have been able to give you.'

'Why, sir, this is real kind of you,' the young workman said earnestly. 'She—my girl—Mary, will be as grateful to you as I am. I know what you say is right, and that if I had to look for work I should be likely to spend the little that I have laid by towards housekeeping before I found it. But, sir, with your leave I'd like to speak to her about it before I made up my mind. Could you leave it open for a few hours?'

'The mail goes out to-morrow,' Mr. Fairbairn answered. 'If you decide to accept you can write to-night. Here is their letter, which will give you their address.'

John Huxford took the precious paper with a grateful heart. An hour ago his future had been all black, but now this rift of light had broken in the west, giving promise of better things. He would have liked to have said something expressive of his feelings to his employer, but the English nature is not effusive, and he could not get beyond a few choking awkward words which were as awkwardly received by his benefactor. With a scrape and a bow, he turned on his heel, and plunged out into the foggy street.

So thick was the vapour that the houses over the way were only a vague loom, but the foreman hurried on with springy steps through side streets and winding lanes, past walls where the fishermen's nets were drying, and over cobble-stoned alleys redolent of herring, until he reached a modest line of whitewashed cottages fronting the sea. At the door of one of these the young man tapped, and then without waiting for a response, pressed down the latch and walked in.

An old silvery-haired woman and a young girl hardly out of her teens were sitting on either side of the fire, and the latter sprang to her feet as he entered.

'You've got some good news, John,' she cried, putting her hands upon his shoulders, and looking into his eyes. 'I can tell it from your step. Mr. Fairbairn is going to carry on after all.'

'No, dear, not so good as that,' John Huxford answered,

smoothing back her rich brown hair; 'but I have an offer of a place in Canada, with good money, and if you think as I do, I shall go out to it, and you can follow with the granny whenever I have made all straight for you at the other side. What say you to that, my lass?'

'Why, surely, John, what you think is right must be for the best,' said the girl quietly, with trust and confidence in her pale plain face and loving hazel eyes. 'But poor granny, how is she to cross the seas?'

'Oh, never mind about me,' the old woman broke in cheerfully. 'I'll be no drag on you. If you want granny, granny's not too old to travel; and if you don't want her, why she can look after the cottage, and have an English home ready for you whenever you turn back to the old country.'

'Of course we shall need you, granny,' John Huxford said with a cheery laugh. 'Fancy leaving granny behind! That would never do, Mary! But if you both come out, and if we are married all snug and proper at Montreal, we'll look through the whole city until we find a house something like this one, and we'll have creepers on the outside just the same, and when the doors are shut and we sit round the fire on the winter's nights, I'm hanged if we'll be able to tell that we're not at home. Besides, Mary, it's the same speech out there, and the same king and the same flag; it's not like a foreign country.'

'No, of course not,' Mary answered with conviction. She was an orphan with no living relation save her old grandmother, and no thought in life but to make a helpful and worthy wife to the man she loved. Where those two were she could not fail to find happiness. If John went to Canada, then Canada became home to her, for what had Brisport to offer when he was gone?

'I'm to write to-night then and accept?' the young man asked. 'I knew you would both be of the same mind as myself, but of course I couldn't close with the offer until we had talked it over. I can get started in a week or two, and then in a couple of months I'll have all ready for you on the other side.'

'It will be a weary, weary time until we hear from you, dear John,' said Mary, clasping his hand, 'but it's God's will and we must be patient. Here's pen and ink. You can sit at the table and write the letter which is to take the three of us across the Atlantic.' Strange how Don Diego's thoughts were moulding human lives in the little Devon village.

The acceptance was duly despatched, and John Huxford began immediately to prepare for his departure, for the Montreal firm had intimated that the vacancy was a certainty, and that the chosen man might come out without delay to take over his duties. In a very few days his scanty outfit was completed, and he started off in a coasting-vessel for Liverpool where he was to catch the passenger ship for Quebec.

'Remember, John,' Mary whispered, as he pressed her to his heart upon the Brisport quay; 'the cottage is our own, and come what may we have always that to fall back upon. If things should chance to turn out badly over there, we have always a roof to cover us. There you will find me until you send word to us to come.'

'And that will be very soon, my lass,' he answered cheerfully with a last embrace. 'Good-bye, granny, good-bye.' The ship was a mile and more from the land before he lost sight of the figures of the straight slim girl and her old companion, who stood watching and waving to him from the end of the grey stone quay. It was with a sinking heart and a vague feeling of impending disaster that he saw them at last as minute specks in the distance, walking townward and disappearing amid the crowd who lined the beach.

From Liverpool the old woman and her granddaughter received a letter from John announcing that he was just starting in the barque 'St. Lawrence,' and six weeks afterwards a second longer epistle informed them of his safe arrival at Quebec and gave them his first impressions of the country. After that a long unbroken silence set in. Week after week and month after month passed by, and never a word came from across the seas. A year went over their heads, and yet another, but no news of the absentee. Sheridan and Moore were written to, and replied that though John Huxford's letter had reached them, he had never presented himself, and they had been forced to fill up the vacancy as best they could. Still Mary and her grandmother hoped against hope, and looked out for the letter-carrier every morning with such eagerness, that the kind-hearted man would often make a détour rather than pass the two pale anxious faces which peered at him from the cottage window. At last, three years after the young foreman's disappearance, old granny died and Mary was left alone, a broken sorrowful woman, living as best she might on a small annuity which had descended to her, and eating her heart out as she

brooded over the mystery which hung over the fate of her lover.

Among the shrewd west-country neighbours there had long, however, ceased to be any mystery in the matter. Huxford arrived safely in Canada—so much was proved by his letter. Had he met with his end in any sudden way during the journey between Quebec and Montreal, there must have been some official inquiry, and his luggage would have sufficed to have established his identity. Yet the Canadian police had been communicated with and had returned a positive answer that no inquest had been held, or any body found, which could by any possibility be that of the young Englishman. The only alternative appeared to be that he had taken the first opportunity to break all the old ties, and had slipped away to the backwoods or to the States to commence life anew under an altered name. Why he should do this no one professed to know, but that he had done it appeared only too probable from the facts. Hence many a deep growl of righteous anger rose from the brawny smacksmen when Mary with her pale face and sorrow-sunken head passed along the quays on her way to her daily marketing; and it is more than likely that if the missing man had turned up in Brisport he might have met with some rough words or rougher usage unless he could give some very good reason for his strange conduct. This popular view of the case never, however, occurred to the simple trusting heart of the lonely girl, and as the years rolled by her grief and her suspense were never for an instant tinged with a doubt as to the good faith of the missing man. From youth she grew into middle age, and from that into the autumn of her life, patient, longsuffering, and faithful, doing good as far as lay in her power, and waiting humbly until fate should restore either in this world or the next that which it had so mysteriously deprived her of.

In the meantime neither the opinion held by the minority that John Huxford was dead, nor that of the majority, which pronounced him to be faithless, represented the true state of the case. Still alive, and of stainless honour, he had yet been singled out by fortune as her victim in one of those strange freaks which are of such rare occurrence and so beyond the general experience that they might be put by as incredible had we not the most trustworthy evidence of their occasional possibility.

Landing at Quebec, with his heart full of hope and courage, John selected a dingy room in a back street, where the terms were

less exorbitant than elsewhere, and conveyed thither the two boxes which contained his worldly goods. After taking up his quarters there he had half a mind to change again, for the landlady and the fellow-lodgers were by no means to his taste, but the Montreal coach started within a day or two, and he consoled himself by the thought that the discomfort would only last for that short time. Having written home to Mary to announce his safe arrival, he employed himself in seeing as much of the town as was possible, walking about all day, and only returning to his room at night.

It happened, however, that the house on which the unfortunate youth had pitched was one which was notorious for the character of its inmates. He had been directed to it by a pimp, who found regular employment in hanging about the docks and decoying new-comers to this den. The fellow's specious manner and proffered civility had led the simple-hearted west-countryman into the toils, and, though his instinct told him that he was in unsafe company, he refrained, unfortunately, from at once making his escape. He contented himself with staying out all day, and associating as little as possible with the other inmates. From the few words which he did let drop, however, the landlady gathered that he was a stranger without a single friend in the country to inquire after him should misfortune overtake him.

The house had an evil reputation for the hocussing of sailors, which was done not only for the purpose of plundering them, but also to supply outgoing ships with crews, the men being carried on board insensible, and not coming to until the ship was well down the St. Lawrence. This trade caused the wretches who followed it to be experts in the use of stupefying drugs, and they determined to practise their arts upon their friendless lodger, so as to have an opportunity of ransacking his effects, and of seeing what it might be worth their while to purloin. During the day he invariably locked his door and carried off the key in his pocket, but if they could render him insensible for the night they could examine his boxes at their leisure, and deny afterwards that he had ever brought with him the articles which he missed. It happened, therefore, upon the eve of Huxford's departure from Quebec, that he found, upon returning to his lodgings, that his landlady and her two ill-favoured sons, who assisted her in her trade, were waiting up for him over a bowl of punch, which they cordially invited him to share. It was a bitterly cold night, and the fra-

grant steam overpowered any suspicions which the young Englishman may have entertained, so he drained off a bumper, and then, retiring to his bedroom, threw himself upon his bed without undressing, and fell straight into a dreamless slumber, in which he still lay when the three conspirators crept into his chamber, and, having opened his boxes, began to investigate his effects.

It may have been that the speedy action of the drug caused its effect to be evanescent, or, perhaps, that the strong constitution of the victim threw it off with unusual rapidity. Whatever the cause, it is certain that John Huxford suddenly came to himself, and found the foul trio squatted round their booty, which they were dividing into the two categories of what was of value and should be taken, and what was valueless and might therefore be left. With a bound he sprang out of bed, and, seizing the fellow nearest him by the collar, he slung him through the open doorway. His brother rushed at him, but the young Devonshireman met him with such a facer that he dropped in a heap upon the ground. Unfortunately, the violence of the blow caused him to overbalance himself, and, tripping over his prostrate antagonist, he came down heavily upon his face. Before he could rise, the old hag sprang upon his back and clung to him, shrieking to her son to bring the poker. John managed to shake himself clear of them both, but before he could stand on his guard he was felled from behind by a crashing blow from an iron bar, which stretched him senseless upon the floor.

'You've hit too hard, Joe,' said the old woman, looking down at the prostrate figure. 'I heard the bone go.'

'If I hadn't fetched him down he'd ha' been too many for us,' said the young villain sulkily.

'Still you might ha' done it without killing him, clumsy,' said his mother. She had had a large experience of such scenes, and knew the difference between a stunning blow and a fatal one.

'He's still breathing,' the other said, examining him; 'the back o' his head's like a bag o' dice though. The skull's all splintered. He can't last. What are we to do?'

'He'll never come to himself again,' the other brother remarked. 'Sarve him right. Look at my face! Let's see, mother; who's in the house?'

'Only four drunk sailors.'

'They wouldn't turn out for any noise. It's all quiet in the

street. Let's carry him down a bit, Joe, and leave him there. He can die there, and no one think the worse of us.'

'Take all the papers out of his pocket, then,' the mother suggested; 'they might help the police to trace him. His watch, too, and his money—three pound odd; better than nothing. Now carry him softly and don't slip.'

Kicking off their shoes, the two brothers carried the dying man down stairs and along the deserted street for a couple of hundred yards. There they laid him among the snow, where he was found by the night patrol, who carried him on a shutter to the hospital. He was duly examined by the resident surgeon, who bound up the wounded head, but gave it as his opinion that the man could not possibly live for more than twelve hours.

Twelve hours passed, however, and yet another twelve, but John Huxford still struggled hard for his life. When at the end of three days he was found to be still breathing, the interest of the doctors became aroused at his extraordinary vitality, and they bled him, as the fashion was in those days, and surrounded his shattered head with icebags. It may have been on account of these measures, or it may have been in spite of them, but at the end of a week's deep trance the nurse in charge was astonished to hear a gabbling noise, and to find the stranger sitting up upon the couch and staring about him with wistful, wondering eyes. The surgeons were summoned to behold the phenomenon, and warmly congratulated each other upon the success of their treatment.

'You have been on the brink of the grave, my man,' said one of them, pressing the bandaged head back on to the pillow; 'you must not excite yourself. What is your name?'

No answer, save a wild stare.

'Where do you come from?'

Again no answer.

'He is mad,' one suggested. 'Or a foreigner,' said another. 'There were no papers on him when he came in. His linen is marked J. H. Let us try him in French and German.'

They tested him with as many tongues as they could muster among them, but were compelled at last to give the matter over and to leave their silent patient, still staring up wild-eyed at the whitewashed hospital ceiling.

For many weeks John lay in the hospital, and for many weeks efforts were made to gain some clue as to his antecedents, but in

vain. He showed as the time rolled by, not only by his demeanour but also by the intelligence with which he began to pick up fragments of sentences, like a clever child learning to talk, that his mind was strong enough in the present, though it was a complete blank as to the past. The man's memory of his whole life before the fatal blow was entirely and absolutely erased. He neither knew his name, his language, his home, his business, nor anything else. The doctors held learned consultations upon him, and discoursed upon the centre of memory and depressed tables, deranged nerve-cells and cerebral congestions, but all their polysyllables began and ended at the fact that the man's memory was gone, and that it was beyond the power of science to restore it. During the weary months of his convalescence he picked up reading and writing, but with the return of his strength came no return of his former life. England, Devonshire, Brisport, Mary, Granny—the words brought no recollection to his mind. All was absolute darkness. At last he was discharged, a friendless, tradeless, penniless man, without a past and with very little to look to in the future. His very name was altered, for it had been necessary to invent one. John Huxford had passed away, and John Hardy took his place among mankind. Here was a strange outcome of a Spanish gentleman's tobacco-inspired meditations.

John's case had aroused some discussion and curiosity in Quebec, so that he was not suffered to drift into utter helplessness upon emerging from the hospital. A Scotch manufacturer named McKinlay found him a post as porter in his establishment, and for a long time he worked at seven dollars a week at the loading and unloading of vans. In the course of years it was noticed, however, that his memory, however defective as to the past, was extremely reliable and accurate when concerned with anything which had occurred since his accident. From the factory he was promoted into the counting-house, and the year 1835 found him a junior clerk at a salary of 120*l.* a year. Steadily and surely John Hardy fought his way upward from post to post, with his whole heart and mind devoted to the business. In 1840 he was third clerk, in 1845 he was second, and in 1852 he became manager of the whole vast establishment, and second only to Mr. McKinlay himself.

There were few who grudged John this rapid advancement, for it was obviously due to neither chance nor favouritism, but entirely to his marvellous powers of application and industry.

From early morning until late in the night he laboured hard in the service of his employer, checking, overlooking, superintending, setting an example to all of cheerful devotion to duty. As he rose from one post to another his salary increased, but it caused no alteration in his mode of living, save that it enabled him to be more open-handed to the poor. He signalised his promotion to the managership by a donation of 1,000*l.* to the hospital in which he had been treated a quarter of a century before. The remainder of his earnings he allowed to accumulate in the business, drawing a small sum quarterly for his sustenance, and still residing in the humble dwelling which he had occupied when he was a warehouse porter. In spite of his success he was a sad, silent, morose man, solitary in his habits, and possessed always of a vague undefined yearning, a dull feeling of dissatisfaction and of craving which never abandoned him. Often he would strive with his poor crippled brain to pierce the curtain which divided him from the past, and to solve the enigma of his youthful existence, but though he sat many a time by the fire until his head throbbed with his efforts, John Hardy could never recall the least glimpse of John Huxford's history.

On one occasion he had, in the interests of the firm, to journey to Quebec, and to visit the very cork factory which had tempted him to leave England. Strolling through the work-room with the foreman, John automatically, and without knowing what he was doing, picked up a square piece of the bark, and fashioned it with two or three deft cuts of his penknife into a smooth tapering cork. His companion picked it out of his hand and examined it with the eye of an expert. 'This is not the first cork which you have cut by many a hundred, Mr. Hardy,' he remarked. 'Indeed you are wrong,' John answered, smiling: 'I never cut one before in my life.' 'Impossible!' cried the foreman. 'Here's another bit of cork. Try again.' John did his best to repeat the performance, but the brains of the manager interfered with the trained muscles of the cork-cutter. The latter had not forgotten their cunning, but they needed to be left to themselves, and not directed by a mind which knew nothing of the matter. Instead of the smooth graceful shape, he could produce nothing but rough-hewn clumsy cylinders. 'It must have been chance,' said the foreman, 'but I could have sworn that it was the work of an old hand!'

As the years passed John's smooth English skin had warped

and crinkled until he was as brown and as seamed as a walnut. His hair, too, after many years of iron-grey, had finally become as white as the winters of his adopted country. Yet he was a hale and upright old man, and when he at last retired from the managership of the firm with which he had been so long connected, he bore the weight of his seventy years lightly and bravely. He was in the peculiar position himself of not knowing his own age, as it was impossible for him to do more than guess at how old he was at the time of his accident.

The Franco-German war came round, and while the two great rivals were destroying each other, their more peaceful neighbours were quietly ousting them out of their markets and their commerce. Many English ports benefited by this condition of things, but none more than Brisport. It had long ceased to be a fishing village, but was now a large and prosperous town, with a great breakwater in place of the quay on which Mary had stood, and a frontage of terraces and grand hotels where all the grandees of the west country came when they were in need of a change. All these extensions had made Brisport the centre of a busy trade, and her ships found their way into every harbour in the world. Hence it was no wonder, especially in that very busy year of 1870, that several Brisport vessels were lying in the river and alongside the wharves of Quebec.

One day John Hardy, who found time hang a little on his hands since his retirement from business, strolled along by the water's edge listening to the clanking of the steam winches, and watching the great barrels and cases as they were swung ashore and piled upon the wharf. He had observed the coming in of a great ocean steamer, and having waited until she was safely moored, he was turning away, when a few words fell upon his ear uttered by some one on board a little weather-beaten barque close by him. It was only some commonplace order that was bawled out, but the sound fell upon the old man's ears with a strange mixture of disuse and familiarity. He stood by the vessel and heard the seamen at their work, all speaking with the same broad, pleasant jingling accent. Why did it send such a thrill through his nerves to listen to it? He sat down upon a coil of rope and pressed his hands to his temples, drinking in the long-forgotten dialect and trying to piece together in his mind the thousand half-formed nebulous recollections which were surging up in it. Then he rose, and walking along to the stern he read the name of the ship,

'The Sunlight, Brisport.' Brisport! Again that flush and tingle through every nerve. Why was that word and the men's speech so familiar to him? He walked moodily home, and all night he lay tossing and sleepless, pursuing a shadowy something which was ever within his reach and yet which ever evaded him.

Early next morning he was up and down on the wharf listening to the talk of the west-country sailors. Every word they spoke seemed to him to revive his memory and bring him nearer to the light. From time to time they paused in their work, and seeing the white-haired stranger sitting so silently and attentively, they laughed at him and broke little jests upon him. And even these jests had a familiar sound to the exile, as they very well might, seeing that they were the same which he had heard in his youth, for no one ever makes a new joke in England. So he sat through the long day, bathing himself in the west-country speech and waiting for the light to break.

And it happened that when the sailors broke off for their midday meal, one of them, either out of curiosity or good-nature, came over to the old watcher and greeted him. So John asked him to be seated on a log by his side and began to put many questions to him about the country from which he came, and the town. All which the man answered glibly enough, for there is nothing in the world that a sailor loves to talk of so much as of his native place, for it pleases him to show that he is no mere wanderer, but that he has a home to receive him whenever he shall choose to settle down to a quiet life. So the seaman prattled away about the Town Hall and the Martello Tower, and the Esplanade, and Pitt Street and the High Street, until his companion suddenly shot out a long eager arm and caught him by the wrist. 'Look here, man,' he said in a low quick whisper. 'Answer me truly as you hope for mercy. Are not the streets that run out of the High Street, Fox Street, Caroline Street, and George Street, in the order named?' 'They are,' the sailor answered, shrinking away from the wild flashing eyes. And at that moment John's memory came back to him, and he saw clear and distinct his life as it had been and as it should have been, with every minutest detail traced as in letters of fire. Too stricken to cry out, too stricken to weep, he could only hurry away homewards wildly and aimlessly; hurry as fast as his aged limbs would carry him, as if, poor soul! there were some chance yet of catching up the fifty years which had gone by. Staggering and tremulous

he hastened on until a film seemed to gather over his eyes, and throwing his arms into the air with a great cry, 'Oh, Mary, Mary! Oh, my lost, lost life!' he fell senseless upon the pavement.

The storm of emotion which had passed through him, and the mental shock which he had undergone, would have sent many a man into a raging fever, but John was too strong-willed and too practical to allow his strength to be wasted at the very time when he needed it most. Within a few days he realised a portion of his property, and starting for New York, caught the first mail steamer to England. Day and night, night and day, he trod the quarter-deck, until the hardy sailors watched the old man with astonishment, and marvelled how any human being could do so much upon so little sleep. It was only by this unceasing exercise, by wearing down his vitality until fatigue brought lethargy, that he could prevent himself from falling into a very frenzy of despair. He hardly dared ask himself what was the object of this wild journey? What did he expect? Would Mary be still alive? She must be a very old woman. If he could but see her and mingle his tears with hers he would be content. Let her only know that it had been no fault of his, and that they had both been victims to the same cruel fate. The cottage was her own, and she had said that she would wait for him there until she heard from him. Poor lass, she had never reckoned on such a wait as this.

At last the Irish lights were sighted and passed, Land's End lay like a blue fog upon the water, and the great steamer ploughed its way along the bold Cornish coast until it dropped its anchor in Plymouth Bay. John hurried to the railway station, and within a few hours he found himself back once more in his native town, which he had quitted a poor cork-cutter, half a century before.

But was it the same town? Were it not for the name engraved all over the station and on the hotels, John might have found a difficulty in believing it. The broad, well-paved streets, with the tram lines laid down the centre, were very different from the narrow winding lanes which he could remember. The spot upon which the station had been built was now the very centre of the town, but in the old days it would have been far out in the fields. In every direction, lines of luxurious villas branched away in streets and crescents bearing names which were new to the exile. Great warehouses, and long rows of shops with glittering fronts, showed him how enormously Brisport had increased in wealth as well as in dimensions. It was only when he came upon

the old High Street that John began to feel at home. It was much altered but still it was recognisable, and some few of the buildings were just as he had left them. There was the place where Fairbairn's cork works had been. It was now occupied by a great brand-new hotel. And there was the old grey Town Hall. The wanderer turned down beside it, and made his way with eager steps but a sinking heart in the direction of the line of cottages which he used to know so well.

It was not difficult for him to find where they had been. The sea at least was as of old, and from it he could tell where the cottages had stood. But alas, where were they now! In their place an imposing crescent of high stone houses reared their tall front to the beach. John walked wearily down past their palatial entrances, feeling heart-sore and despairing, when suddenly a thrill shot through him, followed by a warm glow of excitement and of hope, for, standing a little back from the line, and looking as much out of place as a bumpkin in a ball-room, was an old white-washed cottage, with wooden porch and walls bright with creeping plants. He rubbed his eyes and stared again, but there it stood with its diamond-paned windows and white muslin curtains, the very same down to the smallest details, as it had been on the day when he last saw it. Brown hair had become white, and fishing hamlets had changed into cities, but busy hands and a faithful heart had kept granny's cottage unchanged and ready for the wanderer.

And now, when he had reached his very haven of rest, John Huxford's mind became more filled with apprehension than ever, and he came over so deadly sick, that he had to sit down upon one of the beach benches which faced the cottage. An old fisherman was perched at one end of it, smoking his black clay pipe, and he remarked upon the wan face and sad eyes of the stranger.

'You have overtired yourself,' he said. 'It doesn't do for old chaps like you and me to forget our years.'

'I'm better now, thank you,' John answered. 'Can you tell me, friend, how that one cottage came among all those fine houses?'

'Why,' said the old fellow, thumping his crutch energetically upon the ground, 'that cottage belongs to the most obstinate woman in all England. That woman, if you'll believe me, has been offered the price of the cottage ten times over, and yet she won't part with it. They have even promised to remove it stone

by stone, and put it up on some more convenient place, and pay her a good round sum into the bargain, but, God bless you! she wouldn't so much as hear of it.'

'And why was that?' asked John.

'Well, that's just the funny part of it. It's all on account of a mistake. You see her spark went away when I was a youngster, and she's got it into her head that he may come back some day, and that he won't know where to go unless the cottage is there. Why, if the fellow were alive he would be as old as you, but I've no doubt he's dead long ago. She's well quit of him, for he must have been a scamp to abandon her as he did.'

'Oh, he abandoned her, did he?'

'Yes—went off to the States and never so much as sent a word to bid her good-bye. It was a cruel shame, it was, for the girl has been a-waiting and a-pining for him ever since. It's my belief that it's fifty years' weeping that blinded her.'

'She is blind!' cried John, half-rising to his feet.

'Worse than that,' said the fisherman. 'She's mortal ill and not expected to live. Why, look ye, there's the doctor's carriage a-waiting at her door.'

At this evil tidings old John sprang up and hurried over to the cottage, where he met the physician returning to his brougham.

'How is your patient, doctor?' he asked in a trembling voice.

'Very bad, very bad,' said the man of medicine, pompously. 'If she continues to sink she will be in great danger; but if, on the other hand, she takes a turn it is possible that she may recover,' with which oracular answer he drove away in a cloud of dust.

John Huxford was still hesitating at the doorway, not knowing how to announce himself, or how far a shock might be dangerous to the sufferer, when a gentleman in black came bustling up.

'Can you tell me, my man, if this is where the sick woman is?' he asked.

John nodded, and the clergyman passed in leaving the door half-open. The wanderer waited until he had gone into the inner room and then slipped into the front parlour, where he had spent so many happy hours. All was the same as ever, down to the smallest ornaments, for Mary had been in the habit whenever anything was broken of replacing it with a duplicate, so that there might be no change in the room. He stood irresolute, looking about him, until he heard a woman's voice from the inner chamber, and stealing to the door he peeped in.

The invalid was reclining upon a couch, propped up with pillows, and her face was turned full towards John as he looked round the door. He could have cried out as his eyes rested upon it, for there were Mary's pale, plain, sweet homely features as smooth and as unchanged as though she were still the half child, half woman, whom he had pressed to his heart on the Brisport quay. Her calm, eventless, unselfish life had left none of those rude traces upon her countenance which are the outward emblems of internal conflict and an unquiet soul. A chaste melancholy had refined and softened her expression, and her loss of sight had been compensated for by that placidity which comes upon the faces of the blind. With her silvery hair peeping out beneath her snow-white cap, and a bright smile upon her sympathetic face, she was the old Mary improved and developed, with something ethereal and angelic superadded.

'You will keep a tenant in the cottage,' she was saying to the clergyman, who sat with his back turned to the observer. 'Choose some poor deserving folk in the parish who will be glad of a home free. And when he comes you will tell him that I have waited for him until I have been forced to go on, but that he will find me on the other side still faithful and true. There's a little money too—only a few pounds—but I should like him to have it when he comes, for he may need it, and then you will tell the folk you put in to be kind to him, for he will be grieved, poor lad, and to tell him that I was cheerful and happy up to the end. Don't let him know that I ever fretted, or he may fret too.'

Now John listened quietly to all this from behind the door, and more than once he had to put his hand to his throat, but when she had finished, and when he thought of her long, blameless, innocent life, and saw the dear face looking straight at him and yet unable to see him, it became too much for his manhood, and he burst out into an irrepressible choking sob which shook his very frame. And then occurred a strange thing, for though he had spoken no word, the old woman stretched out her arms to him, and cried, 'Oh, Johnny, Johnny! Oh dear, dear Johnny, you have come back to me again,' and before the parson could at all understand what had happened, those two faithful lovers were in each other's arms, weeping over each other and patting each other's silvery heads, with their hearts so full of joy that it almost compensated for all that weary fifty years of waiting.

It is hard to say how long they rejoiced together. It seemed

a very short time to them and a very long one to the reverend gentleman, who was thinking at last of stealing away, when Mary recollected his presence and the courtesy which was due to him. 'My heart is full of joy, sir,' she said; 'it is God's will that I should not see my Johnny, but I can call his image up as clear as if I had my eyes. Now stand up, John, and I will let the gentleman see how well I remember you. He is as tall, sir, as the second shelf, as straight as an arrow, his face brown, and his eyes bright and clear. His hair is well-nigh black and his moustache the same—I shouldn't wonder if he had whiskers as well by this time. Now, sir, don't you think I can do without my sight?' The clergyman listened to her description, and looking at the battered, white-haired man before him, he hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry.

But it all proved to be a laughing matter in the end, for, whether it was that her illness had taken some natural turn, or that John's return had startled it away, it is certain that from that day Mary steadily improved until she was as well as ever. 'No special licence for me' John had said sturdily. 'It looks as if we were ashamed of what we are doing, as though we hadn't the best right to be married of any two folk in the parish.' So the banns were put up accordingly, and three times it was announced that John Huxford, bachelor, was going to be united to Mary Merton, spinster, after which no one objecting, they were duly married accordingly. 'We may not have very long in this world,' said old John, 'but at least we shall start fair and square in the next.'

John's share in the Quebec business was sold out, and gave rise to a very interesting legal question as to whether, knowing that his name was Huxford, he could still sign that of Hardy, as was necessary for the completion of the business. It was decided, however, that on his producing two trustworthy witnesses to his identity all would be right, so the property was duly realised and produced a very handsome fortune. Part of this John devoted to building a pretty villa just outside Brisport, and the heart of the proprietor of Beach Terrace leaped within him when he learned that the cottage was at last to be abandoned, and that it would no longer break the symmetry and impair the effect of his row of aristocratic mansions.

And there in their snug new home, sitting out on the lawn in the summer-time, and on either side of the fire in the winter, that

worthy old couple continued for many years to live as innocently and as happily as two children. Those who knew them well say that there was never a shadow between them, and that the love which burned in their aged hearts was as high and as holy as that of any young couple who ever went to the altar. And through all the country round, if ever man or woman were in distress and fighting against hard times, they had only to go up to the villa to receive help, and that sympathy which is more precious than help. So when at last John and Mary fell asleep in their ripe old age, within a few hours of each other, they had all the poor and the needy and the friendless of the parish among their mourners, and in talking over the troubles which these two had faced so bravely, they learned that their own miseries also were but passing things, and that faith and truth can never miscarry, either in this existence or the next.

NOTES BY A NATURALIST.

THE BADGER AND THE FOX.

Of the few animals which now inhabit the woods and the hill-sides, perhaps the badger is the least known to the general public. He is nocturnal, in the first place; and his colouring, being in broken tones, does not readily arrest the eye. His head, chin, and neck are white, with brownish-black bands running on either side from the nose over the eyes and ears. His upper parts are light-grey sprinkled with black, the lower parts brownish-black; his fore-feet are long and stout, his limbs muscular, his jaw powerful, and his teeth sharp; in fact he is well set up as far as these formidable weapons are concerned. The usual length of the animal is a little over three feet, but in his family, as well as in the human race, there are large and small individuals. Take his general appearance as he jogs along, and a small bear is at once suggested to your mind. Many of his ways, too, are bear-like; he will lie up in the winter, and eat vegetable as well as animal food. Some other creatures, that are supposed to be strictly carnivorous, will eat fruit when they can get it.

The badger, poor beast! is getting scarce; more's the pity, from the animal collector's and the naturalist's point of view. He generally manages to dispense with the observation of the latter; for, unless his ways are well known, he will escape from a place that might have been supposed strong enough to hold a rhinoceros. All his family have been excavators from the beginning, on the most scientific principles. Unless you take the greatest possible precautions, he will dig himself out and get away in quick time. He is a most quiet and orderly being, and a contented one too, if let alone; for, as a rule, he is fat.

His persecutors are many, from the keeper down to the rat-catcher's lad, who boasts that he has 'the best dog at any varmint as ever run on four legs.' Some of our common expressions require alteration, being founded on ignorance. For instance, folks say, 'Dirty as a badger'; whereas a cleaner creature in its home and surroundings would be hard to find. A very wide-awake individual he is; and he needs be, for the hand of both man and of boy is against him, and utterly without reason.

If the badger had but the same privileges extended to him that the fox has, he would not be so rare an animal as he is now. Why should he be so worried by dogs? It is to be hoped that badger-drawing has nearly had its day. This very practice, brutal as it is, testifies to his determined courage and fighting qualities; you could not find a more determined antagonist than he is when on his mettle.

With regard to his food, the greater part of it consists of such small deer as may fall in his way, when he wanders here and there in the evening after leaving the hole where he has lain dormant all the day. That long snout of his will poke and root out all manner of things, from a wild bees' nest to a field-mouse. He will eat young rabbits when he can get them, and old ones do not come amiss to him when the chance offers. A sporting character I knew once, procured a fine badger for the express purpose of having him baited by all the fancy dogs in his locality. Amongst other creatures he kept rabbits, and his particular fancy was to have the very best of the lop-eared variety that could be procured. One doe he valued most highly, because, setting aside her own qualities, she had a fine lot of young ones, well-grown, and as beautiful as herself.

The badger had only been caught the same evening on which it was brought to this individual. Not having a place ready for it, he placed it for the time in an empty hutch just over the one in which his favourite doe and her little ones were. Fastening the door securely, he left the animal to his own devices for the night, little thinking what these might be. Next morning he found, to his horror, that the badger had torn up the floor of the hutch where he had been placed, and got into that of the doe, where he had slaughtered the whole family. Their bodies lay dead there, the badger curled up in the middle of them, fast asleep, and very full of rabbit. His first impulse was to kill the beast, there and then, but on thinking it over he remembered that he had paid a considerable figure for it; so he got the badger out and sold him to one of his friends as a pet, telling him that it was 'quite harmless, would live on bread and milk, and in a very short time would follow him about like a dog.' Very soon, indeed, he was requested by this friend to take him back again, but he refused.

I will describe one of his homes, which I have visited many times. At the bottom of a glade, by the side of the chalk hill, is a dip or hollow, not deep, but a kind of basin about twice the size

of one of my living-rooms. Round this, old beeches, growing close by, have pushed forth their great roots in all directions ; on one side of the hollow a gnarled oak stands, not any great height, but of vast bulk, the great limbs reaching far over the open space. In the middle of the hollow, under the roots of this oak, our friar of orders grey has made his home, and a very secure and pleasant one it is.

When the moon is high up in the sky, and throws a soft silvery blue tone on the tops of the firs which line the side of the glade, the glade itself showing like a bright blue green stripe, and nothing is heard but the jar of the fern-owl as he flits over the glade, or the drone of some beetle as he flies along, then is the time for our friend the badger to come out and see how the world looks in the moonlight.

He has left his hole, and there he stands in the full light of the moon, the great limbs of the oak throwing chequered shadows around him on the greensward and on the exposed surface of the chalk here and there. The greater portion of the sides of the hollow nearest his home is covered with foxgloves and trailing bramble. He looks round about him for a few seconds, and sniffs, just to find out if anything peculiar is in the air; then, finding matters all right, as he thinks, he gives himself a scratch or two and a good shake, and deliberately waddles off to get something to eat; a very easy matter at this time of the year, for on a warm summer night all kinds of creatures are about, and he makes their acquaintance much to his own satisfaction, if not to theirs.

Little does he think that he is wanted on this particular evening. Whilst he goes plodding along, picking up a little bit here and there, the keeper and his lad are holding some conversation about him. I happen to come across them; my sympathies are with the badger, but it is not my business to interfere.

'Have ye got the bag and sack, Jim? If ye have, jest make yer way, quiet like, over t'other hill, an' cum down the side on it, on the quiet, mind; fix yer bag, an' when 'tis done, give three hoots, one arter t'other, to let me know as things is all right; ye minds what I tell ye; I'm goin' back to get Ginger an' Nipper. They'll hussle him up, an' no mistake. They ain't big uns, but better tarriers than what they be never cum inter this 'ere wurld. Now then, off ye goes, an' before ye gits yer job done I shall be near to ye, fur to hear ye hoot: he's sartin sure to be on the ramble.'

Arriving at the spot, Jim produces the bag, or rather a small sack, from his jacket pocket, and places it in the entrance to the badger's burrow in such a way that should the animal rush for home, as he generally does when alarmed, he will go right into it. The string that runs round the mouth of the sack will be pulled tight by the force of his rush, and there he will be like a pig in a poke. The string of the bag is secured, of course, to a peg. Having arranged all this to his own satisfaction, Jim picks up the large sack—he had two, a large and a small—walks out of the hollow on to the moonlit greensward, and hoots like a brown owl, three times. After this musical effort he stands quite still, and listens intently, but for some time the humming jar of the fern-owl, chur-chur-er-er-er-er-chur, is the only sound that reaches his ear. Suddenly he places his empty sack on the ground beside him, and is on the alert, for a sound of quickly moving feet at a distance makes itself heard. He knows what that means: Ginger and Nipper are close on the badger's track; and like the well-bred, well-trained little fox terriers that they are, they run him mute, save for the mere ghost of a whimper now and again, just enough to show they are eager to close with the poor beast.

That, however, is far from the keeper's intention; he would not let his two little beauties, game though they are, close with such a desperate antagonist as an old dog badger, if he could help it; for he knows well enough that dogs and badger would fight to the death. His plan is that they shall drive him to his burrow, and into the sack.

The best laid plans do not succeed always, however, as is proved in this case. Nearer and nearer comes the sound of pattering feet at full speed, and behind that the heavy tread of a man who is putting his best foot foremost. Nearer they come; they will break into the moonlight in another moment; we can hear them pant, for they have run him through the cover at top speed. The lad is ready to dash down into the hollow; in fact he has already moved to do so, when the sound of running feet stops dead; and then, in the thicket, a desperate tearing scuffle is heard going on, for Ginger and Nipper have run into and closed with him before he could reach home.

The sounds make Jim wild with excitement, and he shouts his loudest to the keeper, who is now close at hand and puffing like a steam-engine with running so hard.

'Can't ye git a badger in a sack without hollerin' like murder?' he asks, angrily. 'I'm a good mind——'

What he'd a good mind to did not transpire, for the boy yelled out, 'I ain't got him; they'se got him; don't ye hear 'em worryin' of him?'

Making use of some very strong expressions, such as he would not make use of at a chapel tea-meeting, the keeper dashes into the thicket, followed by Jim; quickly they reach the spot, where they see a confused mass of living matter, turning and twisting, growling, whining and snapping, at their feet.

'I'll murder ye, you old varmint! Look out, Jim! Cuss an' hang him! I can't git a stroke at him! Why the—— here they are; what's up now? Ginger! Ginger! loose him! Ginger! he'll rip ye up in bits. Let me smash him!'

'Here he is; hold hard, master! ye nearly had 'im; hold hard!'

'Well, if ever I take my tarriers! Oh, dear! oh, dear! if there ain't Nipper; he's done for. Hold him, Jim; don't ye let him out o' yer arms, fur mercy sake. Now then, here they are; now fur it, one way or t'other. This is the wust night's work as ever I come across. Jim! Jim! where be ye?'

'In this 'ere tangle; I'm comin' fast as I can.'

'Have ye got Nipper?'

'Yes, I got un.'

'He's a dunner, ain't he?'

'No, he ain't; it's tight work fur me to hold him!'

'Don't ye let him go; here they be, dead as herrins! Oh, dear, Ginger! if I ain't wound up clean! Never agin will I see your feller. If it waunt fur the shame on it, I could fairly beller! I be cut up, an' no mistake.'

'Pick him up, master! you'll hev to loose his holt, for dead as he be he's got him under the ear. This ere night's work about winds my pig up, I can tell ye.'

Picking Ginger up, and holding him in his arms, the keeper stood in silence. Presently a slight movement took place in the body of the terrier, and with a low whimper and one long-drawn breath he opened his eyes, and then licked the face of his master.

'Jim! hoora! houra! Ginger's alive; oh, my precious Ginger! oh, ain't you tore about! Give us Nipper, an' shove that cusnation warmint in the sack, an' let's git back fur to doctor these 'ere poor things. We'll git 'em round, if 'tis to be done.—

Look 'ere, Jim, did ye ever? they ain't hurt much; they're tryin' their werry hardest ter get out o' my hands ter hev another go at him! I don't think as there's sich another pair o' tarriers as these 'ere two, no, not nowheres: there can't be! Ye've got that murderin' warmint?'

'Yes, he's in the sack.'

'Then look sharp! we'll cut out o' this; come on! an' next time as master wants a badger fur one o' his friends, somebody else's tarriers 'll hev to drive un. The fust one as we got out was that old warmint's missus an' her cubs. That was a diggin' job, as we wunt forgit in a hurry; 'twas desprit work. But this 'ere bit o' business sets that aside clean. Jim! what are ye sniggerin' about? what's in the wind now, ticklin' yer fancy that way?'

'Oh, nuthin pertickler. Is Ginger an' Nipper quiet?'

'No, they ain't; I thinks as they'd like ter fall foul o' that ere sack.'

'Well, I dessay they wud; fur this 'ere warmint has cum round agin, an' is tearin' an' scratchin' like mad. It do take a lot to wind a badger's clock up, that it do!'

'Jim, when we've sin to the dogs, you come up an' hev a pint o' the best cider.'

THE FOX.

I feel it almost presumptuous on my part to say anything about that wonderful animal, the fox. So much has been written and said about him, both by sportsmen and some of the greatest of our literary geniuses. My account of him will be brief; not having the fox-hunter's feeling of veneration for him, nor the hatred natural to the poultry-keeper, my views will at any rate not be one-sided. Nor have I ever had the least wish to possess Master Reynard embalmed as a mummy, or to see the wily gentleman in a glass case, lean and hungry-looking, with squinting cunning in his eye. He is known to me as a clean, swift, strong, and handsome creature, full of courage. He is also universally credited with a very large amount of intellectual power, although it is always said to be employed exclusively for his own benefit. To call an individual of the human family an old fox is certainly not a compliment, for it implies that he is crafty and selfish.

His usual length is four feet, but he varies in size according to food and locality. In the Highlands of Scotland he is *almost* like a wolf in size and strength; and he is not regarded in the

same light as in England, for he is shot down without the least compunction there. The proper place to see all wild animals to advantage is in their own home. May I be allowed to say that, in this respect, they are unlike many individuals of the human species?

It is just after four o'clock on a soft May morning, and the sun lights up the tops of the trees, bringing the tender foliage out in sparkling relief against the hill-sides. At the foot of the one nearest us Reynard and his vixen partner have their home. Numbers of fine beeches grow here; the chalky soil is well suited to them. A large one has been blown down at some time, but it has been sawn from the roots long ago. For a long distance the soil was loosened in its fall, and Reynard has taken advantage of this to form an earth for himself and family among the loosened chalk, stones, and old tangled roots. The surface round about is covered with the finest and greenest turf. Many hawthorn bushes are there, giving out their delightful fragrance to perfection, for the morning is warm. On the end of a long beech bough, which reaches far out over the earth, a cuckoo sits, and flirts his tail about, shouting 'Cuckoo! Cuckoo!' The entrance to the earth and a small space about it is bare, for the little foxes are playful animals, and are at high jinks often, capering about. At present they are, comparatively speaking, quiet, for all their bellies are full. Father Reynard is sitting in the bright warm sunlight, winking in a most knowing manner, while two of his cubs play with his bushy tail to their hearts' content, tossing it from one side to the other in a most comical fashion. Mother vixen has a rabbit in her mouth, which she tosses up and catches, and then lets drop for one of the young ones to nibble at its ears, while the darling of the family torments a poor frog that has found his way there. The whole lot look as though they had a touch of dropsy, their bellies stick out so. The feathers and feet of pheasants strew the ground, and other remnants, for Reynard's motto is, 'Other creatures' young ones can cry for food if they let 'em; but mine don't, if I know it.'

At some distance the alarm note of a blackbird sounds. Reynard opens his eyes, pricks his ears, and the cubs leave off playing with his tail. The next moment a jay squeaks out, and comes flying overhead. That is enough; he is up on his feet, ears erected, eyes gleaming, and his brush held almost in a line with his back, his fore feet well to the front, the hind ones on the

spring. Squeak! squeak! and another jay flits past. With a rush the cubs dash to earth, followed more leisurely by their worthy parents. The cause of their stampede is soon explained, for up the side of the wooded slope a man is seen coming; it is the keeper on his early round.

Reynard is very accommodating as to his food; nothing nice comes amiss to him: game of all kinds, furred and feathered; fish, when he can get the run of them in spawning time, when they are on the sides of the shallows; field-mice, and his especial dainty, a well-fed barn rat. There is no lack of these in the harvest time, and up to the commencement of the winter months. Then they troop back to their old quarters for the cold season. He has a taste for poultry; ducks he values most highly. Perhaps no one but a miller would expect to find a fox in a swamp; but he knows his tricks and likings, and, though he curses him most heartily, yet lets him go free, for is he not St. Reynard? The miller's landlord hunts him in the orthodox manner.

On the tussocks, covered with flag and rush spread all over the swamp, the fox makes a most comfortable retreat. Getting into the middle of one, he twists himself round and round, dog fashion, and there he lies on a nice bed, soft and dry, completely hidden from view, remaining there until the miller informs his landlord's keeper that a fox is there; then the huntsman comes round—and the sooner he does this the better, or there will not be a duck left on the pond.

Reynard can hear them nozzling and softly quacking at the edge of his hiding-place; with cat-like steps he creeps closer, looking through the flags. When he finds that he is near enough for a jump, there is a splash, and one low quack and the drake is in his mouth. In pictures you may see him represented with his quarry slung over his back. This is not correct; he carries what he has caught in front of him, like a retriever. More than once, when in search of wading birds, have I come on the retreats of the fox and the otter very near to each other. For cool impudence, match him if you can. I have known a dog fox, when the vixen had the care of a family, enter the yard of the keeper's house, take one of his game hens from under his living-room windows, march off with it across the road and to his home, give it to his family, and then come back for another. A pointer was in the yard at the time, chained to his kennel. Driven off at his second visit, he coolly re-crossed the road to the turf, squatted on

his haunches there, and looked over at the yard, and the game hens used for hatching out the pheasants' eggs. It was too much for the keeper to put up with. Slipping a cartridge into his gun, he swung it up to his shoulder and let drive at the fox, saying, 'there's notice to quit, you thund'rin' sweep!' Then did Master Reynard play some extraordinary antics. First he jumped off the ground several times in the most lively manner, then he cuffed his ears vigorously with his fore-feet, gave a bit of a yelp, and bolted at top speed. His skin is thick, and what would knock other things over would not cripple him.

When the hunters and the hounds chevy him across the fields honest farmer Giles complains most bitterly. 'Dash my old gaiters, if I doan't wish as every warmint of a fox as ever run was cold and stiff; that I do; an' 'tis a pity as some folks ain't got better work for their hosses than ridin' over other people's craps an' breakin' fences an' gates. 'Tis wonderful what a likin' most of 'em have fur blunderin' thru a fence an' knockin' the padlock off a gate. Why doan't they jump over 'em? ef their hearts was as big as their hosses hap they wud. That there field of turmits will be punched inter sheep feed, they wunt want to go inter no cuttin' machine. Cuss all fox huntin'! I sez; 'tis ruin for farmers!'

It was wonderful how quickly farmer Giles was brought to modify these strong opinions on fox-hunting by the appearance of a two-gallon bottle labelled Old Irish, 'with the Hunt's compliments.' He uncorked the bottle, smelt and tasted it more than once, with and without sugar, ejaculating between each sip, 'Massy, oh alive!' Then he walked to those fields again over which they had ridden. Could it have been the softening influence of the Old Irish, or had he been making mountains out of molehills? for when he got back he told his 'missus,' with a beaming smile of benevolence on his face, that, 'Raly, considerin' the lot o' gentlemen as 'ad rid over the craps, the little harm as he cum across waunt wuth speekin' on.'

IN A GERMAN EMIGRANT-SHIP.

HAVING booked our places in the S.S. 'Frankfort,' leaving B—— in November 188–, we were directed to the emigrants' hotel, and were accommodated with a very narrow room containing two beds and a deal table which scarcely left any space to squeeze through, so that I was obliged to scramble over the beds when I wanted to pass my friend. The room was cold but clean, and the icy water in the morning was quite a treat to wash in. The morning before we started we went to have our baggage measured, our ticket giving us about three cubic feet for both of us for luggage. The scene was very animated, as another ship was leaving for New York at the same time as ours for South America, and the station was swarming with emigrants, mostly Bohemians. Our own companions we could, of course, not distinguish from the others, but next morning we found that they numbered only thirteen or fourteen, the greater part being a family of Germans from Sarastoff in Russia, where their ancestors had been settled for more than a hundred years. They looked very dirty and stupid in their Russian costume and cut of beard and hair, and only on board did we find out that they were so interesting. We talked to them there because we took them for Russians, and thought we could practise the language, but we soon found out that, though they understood it, they disliked speaking it, because they seem to keep very strictly separated from the Russians in their colony, and live like patriarchs. The other fellow-passengers were a few girls from Vienna and some young German merchants. The first-class passengers remained invisible till we were far out at sea.

On the morning of our departure we rose at 5 A.M., and found the hotel bill to be very modest, the landlord being a regular prototype of an old German *Herbergsvater*. He had given us advice as to our equipment, every emigrant being obliged to take his own bed (we took a couple of good broad campaign blankets, such as are used in the British army) and his own eating utensils. These are a tin cup fitting into a strange kind of dish, the upper part of which is for potatoes and covers a plate for meat, which in its turn covers a soup tureen, with a handle like a bucket, by

which you carry the whole affair when fetching your dinner from the kitchen. We were transported gratis by the company to the harbour-town in the third class, but for the time kept to ourselves and observed the others, who did not come near us because we conversed in Italian. In the harbour-town the agent, who took us both for first-class passengers—I don't know why—led us to an elegant carriage with two horses, and drove us off with our luggage in grand style. We waited about an hour, when the others arrived in a tramway, and we were marched off on to a steam-tug, which took us on board far out because of a dense fog, which the steamer wanted to avoid, at least in shallow water. On board we were surprised at a steward carrying our traps into a decent but simple little cabin, and so we protested, saying we had only emigrants' tickets. He seemed rather disgusted at having taken so much trouble about us, and now allowed us to carry our things with our own hands into the proper place, a kind of dirty saloon, without the least pretence to elegance or comfort, and provided with rows upon rows of berths in two storeys. The first glance at these was, to tell the truth, rather violently disgusting, nor was the disgust lessened by finding all the iron and wooden railings and sides of the beds so very recently painted white that anything touching them was instantly soiled, and the darkness was at first too intense to avoid contact. When we got accustomed to the gloom we found that the bed-places contained only straw sacks of a very doubtful colour. The beds were arranged for two and two, but without any partitions higher than the mattresses, so that, lying on the top storey, you could have overlooked the whole concern had it not been for the darkness. However, we found even this amusing after the first five minutes, and I at once chose what I saw would be the best place for my friend and myself—that was the top storey nearest the staircase, the lightest in the place, quite sufficiently so in the bright climes near the Canary Islands, though not in the foggy North Sea. I saw at once that the draught from the doors close to us would be trying at first, but I was right in judging that this very draught would be worth anything in the hot climates we were going to. We arranged our trunks as close to our beds as we could, packing them tighter than they had been, so that we could leave a small box empty and use it for all the small objects of daily use. Thus we felt pretty well prepared. The scanty number of our fellow-passengers had taken berths not very far from ours, and I felt rather glad that

our German Russians had been stowed away a little apart from the rest, as they really did not look at all inviting ; moreover they had about half-a-dozen children with them. We had scarcely got our things in order when a bell rang, which we guessed was for dinner, we being now already far from the vanishing land. So off we marched with our tins to the kitchen, where we found their various partitions useful for receiving pea-soup, boiled meat, and potatoes in their skins, with a large slice of rather good white bread. The rest was not very savoury, but was plentiful, and probably nourishing enough. In the evening we got only tea, if such it could be called, oceans of water with a very few tea-leaves swimming about in it, and the same bread as before, with what they called butter, a disgusting compound which I only tasted once and have refused ever since. I observed a very marked inclination in all—officers, stewards, &c.—to lord it over us, and treat us generally like prisoners, which I at once openly resisted, and very successfully too, at least as far as it concerned myself and five or six of the more intelligent passengers. In the morning coffee was served out, still weaker than the tea, with bread, which left only one substantial meal a day. The night was not quiet, the female passengers being all sick, which, however, did not at all disturb us, and one German persisted in cracking jokes rather too plentifully at the unusual situation, which, as we were comfortably rolled in all our blankets and shawls—a mode of sleeping we had practised in the hotel—did not, however, prevent us from sleeping some five hours.

The next day the vessel tossed heavily, and I did not escape a short sickness, but was able to eat with appetite half an hour afterwards, while most of the others left their dinners almost untouched. In spite of this I remarked that the slices of boiled meat had considerably diminished in size, so I went with a German passenger to the paymaster, and the effect of our remonstrance lasts to this day. I forgot to say that we were expected to fetch the coffee and tea in our machines, which we consequently had to wash thrice a day ourselves in the washhouse. We were not unprepared for this, and had taken towels and wash-leather on purpose ; but other passengers had not been so provident, and the steward would not assist them. We afterwards found that the ship ought to provide the emigrants with blankets as well as with tin plates and cups, but the stewards are instructed not to say so before the ship touches Spain, to save the trouble of distributing

the things thrice. The washing went well enough as far as Antwerp, but since then we were no longer allowed to fetch hot water. At Antwerp some sixty French and Belgian emigrants came on board, and the noise of their children, luggage, and the loading of cargo all day and night was enough to teach the most nervous of men how to sleep in any imaginable noise ever after. But at first the Frenchmen kept up such a hubbub that even we could not sleep. They were, however, all cleanly-looking folk, and were therefore allowed to take their berths near us—women, men, girls and children, all of a heap, according to their own wishes—nearly all being families. The rolling in the Channel and the Bay of Biscay is heavy enough to prevent writing, as we are not admitted to the saloon, and have no room of our own in which it might be possible to do so. I write sitting on deck, holding my slips of paper on my knee, the only possible way.

We had got well used to our life by the time we reached La Coruña, which is very beautifully situated, and looked doubly so under a bright full moon on the evening of our arrival. We arranged with a boy to fetch us next morning with a sailing-boat. He looked exactly like a Neapolitan lazzarone, and I understood his Spanish dialect so well that I was quite astonished. He, too, seemed to understand every word we said. Besides enjoying a plentiful meal on shore, the change seeming very much better than it really was, by contrast, we wandered through the town, and were delighted at finding it so like an Italian provincial town, and so pretty and bright in the beginning of December. We bought and took on board a provision of tinned *mortadella* (a kind of Bologna sausage) and a good many apples and oranges, to vary the monotony of our coffee, soup, and tea, and have since felt very glad we did so. We sailed back to the ship in the afternoon, but finding it far from ready to start, I insisted on sailing over to the opposite shore to Castel St. Antonio, and enjoyed it immensely. When we returned the Spanish emigrants were coming on board—a lot of regular southern-looking folks, with many women and children of different classes, on the whole nice quiet people, and as obliging as Italians, but whom the Germans on board treat like wild animals, for the simple reason that none, from the captain to the smallest cabin-boy, understands Spanish, except a Spanish cook whom they took on board at La Coruña, and who stands up like a man for his countrymen, and luckily can do a world of good, as he cooks for the emigrants, and the

other cook now serves the officers' and first-class passengers' mess. Since the Spaniards are on board our fare has changed for the better. Besides our dinner, at about 11.30, we have now a warm meal of rice and biscuits, or fish-soup or bean-soup, at 5 P.M., and both these meals are accompanied by half-a-pint of very decent Spanish wine, also taken on board at La Coruña; besides this, the tea and coffee as usual, with bread or biscuit. The only disagreeable change is that we are no longer allowed fresh water for washing, and as I wash napkins and towels every day, and sea-water is totally unfit for the purpose, even with the very best soap, I feel rather wild at it; so do the others; but it can't be helped, only I have made friends with the steward, so that every two or three days he wakes me at two in the morning and gives me a big tub of hot water, in which I wash everything I can, hanging it in the rigging to dry. I make my friend help me, and then we take a sea-bath under the pump (the sea-water is lukewarm now) and go to bed again quite happy. How one learns to appreciate small things in such a life! The first nights, with all the Spanish children mixing their howlings with those of the Belgian and Russian brats, were immensely amusing, and the whole saloon (!) looks like a bazaar with all the rags flying, and sounds like Babel or Bedlam. There are five other Italians on board, one being a Neapolitan coachman taking a horse to Monte Video. During the daytime I am continually in request to interpret Spanish to the Germans and Frenchmen, or *vice versâ*, or Neapolitan to the doctor, or even French to the officers, who scarcely understand even that. In return our box is always full of nuts and oranges; the Spaniards are offended if we don't accept them. The French people have never offered to give anything in return for our trouble; my friend knows as many languages as I do, and has quite as much to do. Time *flies* on board, notwithstanding I take always two hours' siesta, and am growing stout and rosy. Of course the Spaniards dance and sing a good deal from morning till night, and were scarcely on board when I one day found five little girls in one bed singing something very like the Neapolitan *stornelli* at the top of their voices.

We have had very gentle rolling ever since we left Spain, after taking some eighty more emigrants on board at Villagarcia, which port is quite as pretty as La Coruña, but we were not allowed to go on shore, though we stayed six hours. Since we left we have only met one sailing-ship, and seen nothing but sky and water

and the fins of five small whales (at least the first officer said they were whales) in the distance. We have had extraordinarily fine weather since we left Santa Cruz and very favourable wind, with the exception of one day of calm weather, but life on board has changed considerably, and by now I have found out which are the better disposed among passengers, crew and officers. The captain is disliked by all, from the first officer to the last ship's chicken, almost, for even the horse bites him (and no one else), and his own dog, strange to say, likes all the other officers better than its master, though towards the passengers it is as savage as he. The real commander of the ship is the head-steward, whom all are afraid of, because he has been ten years on board, and therefore longer than the captain and half as long as the dog, who has never left the ship for eighteen years, even when it has been in repair, only the hull being now left of the original ship. Everyone knows that the steward has been the cause of about a dozen officers and one captain's being dismissed during the ten years, and he keeps up a system of prying into everybody's affairs which would long since have settled his account in any but a German ship. The captain is an extremely dull, brutal sort of fellow, who likes to bully everybody unnecessarily, and has never been known to treat anybody with kindness, even in trifles. He does not know a word of Spanish, though he has crossed the Atlantic dozens of times, and he swears at the Spaniards in German, for which he is laughed at openly, and retires disgusted. When he wants to bully anyone, he usually sends one officer after another with orders, long before the first order could possibly have been obeyed. The Spanish cook is the best of the lot, and his coming on board continues to change the fare very much for the better; the paymaster tries to economise by warning the Germans and French not to eat the five o'clock meal, which he says is only fit for Spaniards, though it is by far the best meal of the day.

The day before yesterday (December 8) was rather hot and the night hotter. It is impossible to describe the stifling air in the common saloon, but we slept like tops, and then were so poisoned that in the morning we were both incapable even of thinking until we had been revived by the air and sun. We have determined to sleep on deck, however the weather may turn out, and at present it promises to keep fair. Yesterday we found a nice quiet nook under the awning, and were innocent enough to occupy it before dark. Of course the captain removed us by means of no

fewer than three messages in one minute, brought by the fourth, third and second mates; but we took up our quarters again in the dark, and slept very well indeed. This morning I politely thanked the captain for having allowed us to sleep so quietly all night in the same place which he had considered unfit for us the day before. I did this, because we had found a still better place, and, though he is fond of bullying, he is too stupid to put a stop to being chaffed in this manner, even by a third-class passenger. There is a very nice engineer who has known the ship ever since it was built, and who is delighted at anybody's daring to tease the captain. He said he would suggest a quantity of comfortable nooks where we could not be seen by the watch, and so I can continue to change places till the captain is tired of marking all the prohibited corners. My friend enjoys the sport too, and we sleep splendidly in the open air, wrapped in our blankets. The captain talked about using the pump to waken any stray sleepers, but he is too lazy to look about himself, and the officers dislike him too much to report. But I would rather risk a shower-bath than sleep down in the pestilential air of the saloon any longer.

Since the heat commenced life on board has changed. Towards evening the Spaniards, in small groups, dance and sing very like the workmen at Naples, only they dance well and with more violence; but the singing is rather monotonous. The groups of women and children very much resemble those to be seen at Santa Lucia in Naples, quite as dirty and with the same occupations. The babies are quite as pretty and quite as dirty, and as many rows go on continually. Nobody on board is without personal enemies, and daily the strangest scenes are enacted, and new inventions made purposely to vex these enemies. Especially the Frenchmen seem to be the maddest of the lot, and there is a group of four—one young girl, a youth of twenty and his father, and another young man—who continually fight pitched battles in their narrow sleeping-places as soon as their fellow-passengers go on deck. In spite of the stifling air, most of the emigrants still sleep in the 'saloon,' only dozens of Spaniards lie about anywhere on deck and are not at all particular as to their resting-places, many snoring a pace off other groups dancing and singing and playing the tambourine. Now that we sleep in our shelter on deck we have more opportunity of observing the row going on there, but we are so used to it that we can fall asleep at any moment. At about 4.30 A.M. the

decks are washed, but first the pig-stye is cleaned, the pigs scampering all about meanwhile, running over the sleeping Spaniards, and even sometimes into the first-class saloon, grunting like mad. Our nook is over this saloon, and we were amused at the sailors, who did not care a bit where the pigs went.

The morning of December 11 began with what would have been a great excitement on any other ship but ours. One of the coal-bunkers—who have to drag the coals from the hold, between the glowing fire-tubes of the engine, to the furnace, a place so terribly hot that it would kill anyone not used to the work, and where even these poor people continually fall down fainting, and are forced to continue their work by blows from the iron shovels of the stokers—was missing, and as they have searched for him everywhere the whole morning without finding him, he is generally supposed to have purposely jumped overboard the day before, after dark. These men have four hours of this frightful work in the day and four in the night, and are always bullied in their hours of rest by the stokers, who make them fetch water and do all kinds of service. They can eat very little, because of the great heat they continually endure, and only receive thirty-six marks a month as pay; enough to make many a man commit suicide who is older than the lad missing, who was only seventeen. Nobody seems to care or think more of him than they did of the ox that was killed the day after for our dinners (it was half-dying already). By evening they had searched every nook in the ship for the boy, and are now all quite sure he is gone, and have already taken his chest to the captain's cabin. The captain swears a little, but does not seem to care a bit about the man, and still less about the treatment in the furnace-rooms. If a passenger was missing he would care still less. They made a list of the passengers according to the tickets, and off Spain counted all on board, but could not make the numbers tally, and gave it up as a bad job. It seems that they are serenely indifferent as to the individuality, nationality, age, &c. of their passengers. We had not even once to show our passports since we stepped into the first train. They say themselves that, if anyone is without a passport, they write one on a slip of paper and hand it to the Government on shore when they arrive at their destination, leaving it to the pleasure of the individual to prove who he is, or to go wherever he likes without his papers; if he turned out to be a runaway criminal, harm could only come to him, and never to the ship's captain or the secretary,

because they cannot be expected to know the passengers individually.

Santa Cruz was the prettiest of all the places I have seen since I was in Naples. Of course more than half of its impression was due to the contrast of life on board and life on shore, but it would charm anybody by its quiet smiling aspect in fine weather—no beggars or cripples like in La Coruña, scarcely any niggers; we only saw one in a butcher's shop, and one woman selling bananas in the market-place. Here was a profusion of fruit in heaps. We got more oranges for a *pareta* than we could carry on board alone (more than a hundred for one franc, that is), and had to buy a big basket for four sous, and have two little boys to take it to the boat, but as we served them all round they are fast diminishing, and will be gone long before we reach Monte Video. Next Tuesday we expect to cross the Line. We did not even see St. Vincent, where we first expected to stay, as we left it far to the east. I have just been in the hospital, helping the doctor with five Spaniards, most of them suffering from wounds received on shore. He treats nearly all such things with nitrate of silver, and the patients don't seem to mind the burning much. The doctor is good natured but not experienced, this being his first voyage (for which he gets 100 marks a month), just after having passed his examination. He says he will never sail again with a ship belonging to the ——, and dislikes the captain as much as all the others do. One of the German girls has been sea-sick so long that they consented to give her better fare; rather too late, because she is now incapable of eating it; but I suppose she will recover on shore, as most sea-sick people do, and she was always well when she went on shore in Spain and at Teneriffe.

In Santa Cruz itself we could not see the Peak, but a few hours later it appeared, splendidly towering into the sky. But it was not what I thought it would be, as only the highest third of the mountain is peaked, all the rest having sides gradually sloping to the sea, less abruptly than even Vesuvius. Perhaps it is the prettiest from the other side. I was struck by the vegetation on the island, for it was not so tropical as I expected. Since we left the coast of Spain I have been deprived of my favourite recreation of looking at the sea-gulls, but in Santa Cruz a new species of very large dark birds followed us for about a day. Then we left them behind us, and since only two dark-brown, very elegantly-shaped sea-gulls have accompanied us, flying very

steadily, and not looking so eager and hungry as their European cousins. Besides, there is another small bird I never heard of, a sea-gull no bigger than a swallow, which for whole days and nights was the only one we ever saw; then there are hundreds upon hundreds of flying-fish, no bigger than herrings, which continually keep skimming the water for twenty to a hundred yards; one need only stand in the bows to see them dart away as the ship approaches. A few came on board the other night, and are now being smoked for the sailors, but they are too small to be worth keeping. Crossing the Line was not amusing; we crossed it at midnight on the 12th, and next morning the captain ordered the sailors to prepare and take part in a feast, but they flatly refused to have any merrymaking, saying that life on board did not dispose any of them to be merry, and still less so since it was ascertained that one of them was overboard. Besides, the day before crossing, and for two days after, it has been raining in torrents every two hours, and I have been sleeping soaked in the rain, because I could not bear to go into the 'saloon,' as we call it for fun, the stench being insufferable. It was rather hot rain, and in the morning I dried with a bathing-sheet, and hung up everything to dry near the engine, and felt very well all the day after.

By being so much in request to interpret the wishes of the Spaniards, mostly Galicians, I have found out a beautiful system the captain commands to be kept up for the hospital. He says, if better food is wanted for the sick, they are to have what remains of the first-class mess; if there are no remains, the sick are to have nothing at all. There were the wives of two Spaniards, for whom the doctor had ordered a cup of broth, and he had been unable to get it, so the system was explained to him by the captain. I at once told the Spaniards, who immediately wrote a supplication to the captain, which I translated and sent up to him. It luckily frightened him, and he has allowed the doctor to give what he thinks good for his patients under certain restrictions. I have remarked that the captain is more polite to me since, whereas I expected the contrary, and he lets us sleep in the rain in peace. Now we have left the rainy regions behind, and, strange to say, the air keeps cool and fresh, more so near the equator than it was off Spain. The steady and rather strong wind is the cause of this relief. During the rainy days there was scarcely any wind, and we only ran nine miles an hour, so that we were afraid there was something wrong with the engines. It now appears that the coals

they bought were of very inferior quality, and only since the fresher breeze set in do we make from ten and a quarter to eleven and a half miles an hour. Twice a week one of the oxen is killed, and one of the children, a beautiful little girl of only five years of age, claps her hands and is delighted at all the manipulations until the carcass is cut up for cooking. It is a strange contrast to see her so ferociously content (seemingly, for in reality she innocently thinks it great fun) and to hear her prattle about it, calling everything by diminutives, from the butcher himself down to the ox's tail. Her name is Jacinta (pronounced Cathinta), and it was difficult at first to guess what she meant when she said her name was 'Thinta.' She is the prettiest creature on board, and dances very nicely already in her rags, but she is exceptionally clean, luckily. I often stand for hours in the bows watching the flying-fish and the rainbow colours in the spray of the waves. As to weather and water, nothing could be more splendid, and it keeps cool, which I rather wonder at. The waves are very much smaller now than they were about Teneriffe, and new life begins after sunset, which is rather sudden, but not very much more so than at Naples. It is very beautiful, however, and is first almost without other colour than a light orange hue, but after ten minutes the same lovely rose colour we saw in Europe during the continuance of the 'remarkable sunsets' spreads till it reaches half over the sky; the pale crescent of the moon looks a light green in this rose colour, and everything reflects the strange soft light. Last week the captain found out that one of the notices for the Spanish passengers had been forgotten on shore, but the first officer found the German text, and they asked me to translate it into Spanish. As it was rather a long notice, some sixteen paragraphs of the Argentine law on emigration, I divided it into two forenoons' work, and in return was invited to dine with the officers. Though our usual fare becomes more and more disgusting by its uniformity, I did not much relish the officers' dinner either, and they were swearing at it and the cook all the time, treating the captain, who was absent, with very little respect even in my presence, so I find the spirit of discontent to be universal throughout the ship, and I should like to see what a mess they would make of it if they were in real danger.

While I was writing I heard a great row, the captain and paymaster calling the cook names, and getting paid back in the same coin. The whole disgraceful scene would be very funny if our poor

stomachs were not made to pay for it. I never thought such scenes could be possible on board a decent ship. There are some very good fellows among the boatswains and engineers, and many hunt me up, for they like to talk, as all sailors do. I was so disgusted with the fare lately that I could scarcely force myself to eat it, though I was hungry; another month of the same disgusting stuff would be enough to drive anyone wild. The sailors are also discontented, though they eat much better and more wholesome food. My friend writes at the same diminutive inkstand as myself, both lying on our stomachs in the sun, and every now and then rolling out of position; half the ink is spilt already. People now begin to miss objects, mostly stolen, but we have been careful to keep all under lock and key, and now, on nearing land, keep an alternate watch of two hours. The Spaniards have suffered most themselves, but the thieves are Spaniards without a shadow of doubt, and some have been already caught. We have enjoyed seeing Monte Video, where everything proves there are numbers of rich people. The streets look very gay with their preponderance of shops with fancy articles. When you see the prices of them you can scarcely believe so many people can live on their sale, but it is said that people here begin to spend like mad as soon as they have made money. We left Monte Video in the evening, and arrived at our destination, Buenos Ayres, on the 28th of December, very glad indeed to leave the ship for good.

A LIFE'S MORNING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'DEMOS,' 'THYRZA,' ETC.

CHAPTER XI.

EMILY'S DECISION.

EMILY reached home a few minutes before dinner-time. Her mother came to her from the back of the house, where things were in Saturday tumult, speaking with a voice of fretful satisfaction.

'I'd just given you up, and was wondering whether to let the meat spoil or begin dinner alone.'

'I am sorry to be late, mother.'

'No, you're not late, my dear,' the mother admitted. 'It's only that you're a little uncertain, and when one o'clock draws on I can never be quite sure of you, if you're out. I must say I like punctuality, though I dare say it's an old-fashioned kind of thing. Which would you like, potatoes baked or boiled? I've got both, as I always think the baked keep better for your father.'

'Whichever you have yourself, mother.'

'Now, child, do make a choice! As if you couldn't say which you would prefer.'

'Boiled.'

'There now, you say that because you think there won't be enough of the others. I know very well you always like the baked, when I have them. Don't you, now, Emily?'

'Mother, which you like! What *does* it matter?'

'Well, my dear, I'm sure I only wanted to please you,' said Mrs. Hood, in her tone of patience under injury. 'I can't see why you should be angry with me. If I could give you more choice I would. No doubt you're used to having potatoes done in all sorts of superior ways, but unfortunately I wasn't brought up as a cook——'

The strange look with which Emily was regarding her brought her to a pause; her voice dropped.

'Mother dear,' said the girl, in a low and shaken tone, 'I am

neither foolish nor unkind; do try to believe that. Something is troubling me. To-day let your choice be mine.'

Mrs. Hood moved away, and served the dinner in silence.

'What is your trouble, my dear?' she asked presently. 'Can't you tell me?'

Emily shook her head. Her mother relapsed into thoughtfulness, and they finished their meal with little conversation. Mrs. Hood was just rising from the table, when there was a sound of someone opening the gate before the house; she looked to the window, and at once uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

'Well! If that isn't——! He hasn't altered a bit all these years!'

'Who is it, mother?' Emily asked nervously.

'Why, my dear, it's that man Cheeseman! The very idea of his coming here! Now, mark my words, he's come to ask for that money back again, or for some of it, at all events. It was just showing off, pretending to pay it back; exactly like him! But if your father's foolish enough to do anything of the kind—— There, he's knocking. I hoped never to see his face again as long as I lived; how ever he can have the impudence to come! I suppose I must let him in; but I'm sure I shan't offer him any dinner.'

Emily had risen from her chair, and was trembling with excitement.

'Oh, yes, mother,' she cried, with a joy which astonished Mrs. Hood, 'we must behave kindly to him. He paid father the money; we must remember that.'

'Well, you'll see if I'm not right. But I can't keep him standing at the door. Do untie this apron, Emily; I'm so nervous, I can't get at the knot. See, now, if he hasn't come for the money back again.'

'Never mind; he paid it! He paid it!'

'I can't understand you, child. What is there to be so pleased about?'

'Mother, do go to the door. Or shall I?'

The girl was overcome with a sudden light in utter darkness. She grasped at her mother's explanation of the visitor's arrival; unable, in her ardour, to calculate probabilities, to review details. Dagworthy had been guilty of a base falsehood; the man approached who could assure her of it. It was a plot, deeply planned. In some manner Dagworthy had learned what had happened to her father in Hebsworth, and had risked everything on the terror

he could inspire in her. The coming of her father's friend was salvation.

She found herself clasping his hand warmly.

'Well, Miss Hood,' Cheeseman came in exclaiming, 'you may perhaps have half a recollection of me, when you're told who I am, but I'm quite sure I shouldn't have known you. Your good father was telling me about you yesterday; rare and proud he was to speak of you, too, and not without reason, I see. Mrs. Hood, you've no need to complain of your fortune. Times have been hard, no doubt, but they've brought you a blessing. If I had a young lady such as this to look at me and call me father—well, well, it won't do to think of it.'

In spite of her determination, Mrs. Hood was mollified into an offer of dinner. Mr. Cheeseman affected to refuse, but at a word from Emily he allowed himself to be persuaded. The two sat with him, and listened to his talk of bygone days. Emily's face was flushed; she kept her eyes on Cheeseman as if his arrival were that of a long-hoped-for friend. The visitor abounded in compliments to mother and daughter alike. He ate, the while, with extreme heartiness, and at length drew from the table in the most effusive mood.

'Mrs. Hood,' he said, leaning forward, 'I owe you an apology, many apologies. You and your good husband in times long past did me a service of a very substantial kind. You thought I had forgotten it,—yes, you couldn't help but think it——'

'Oh, we won't talk about that, Mr. Cheeseman,' interposed Mrs. Hood, not without a suggestion in her tone that she had indeed entertained the thought attributed to her.

'Ah, but I can't help speaking of it,' said Cheeseman, feelingly. 'Miss Hood, you probably don't know what I refer to; you were a very little lady in those days. They were hard times with me; indeed, I've never known anything else. I was saying to your good father yesterday that he could no longer talk of his ill-luck. Many a day he and I have encouraged each other to face fortune, but that's all over for him; he's got his foot on firm ground, thank heaven! I'm still catching at straws, you see; I dare say it's a good deal my own fault; and then I never had a good wife to look after me, and a daughter growing up to teach me prudence. Well but, Miss Hood, I was saying that your father did me a great service; he lent me what was a large sum for him in those days——'

'Not a little one even in these, Mr. Cheeseman,' remarked Mrs. Hood.

'Well, well, but in those times it was a thing few men in his position would have done. He lent me a ten-pound note, Miss Hood, and it's right you should know it. Years have gone by, years, and any one would think I'd kept out of the way to avoid paying the money back. I assure you, Mrs. Hood, and to you, Miss Hood, I give my solemn word of honour, that I've never from that day to this had more money than would just keep me in bread and cheese and such poor clothing as this you see on me. Why, even yesterday, as no doubt your good father has told you, I had but a sixpenny piece in the world, but one coin of sixpence. Ah, you may well look sad, my good young lady. Please God, you'll never know what that means. But one sixpence had I, and but for my old friend I should have been hard driven to find a place of rest last night. Now do I look and speak like an ungrateful man? Mrs. Hood, I've come here this day because I felt in duty bound to call on you, being so near. I didn't know your address, till that meeting by chance yesterday. When my old friend left me, I got restless; I felt I must see you all again before I went south, as I hope to do—to-morrow, perhaps. I felt I must clear myself from the charge of ingratitude; I couldn't live easy under it. It was too much like a piece of dishonesty, and that I've never yet been guilty of, for all I've gone through, and, please God, never shall. My old friend Hood and I, in days even before he had the happiness to meet you, Mrs. Hood, we used to say to each other—Let luck do its worst, we'll live and die honest men. And, thank heaven, we've kept our word; for an honester man than James Hood doesn't walk the earth, and no one ever yet brought a true charge of dishonesty against Alfred Cheeseman.'

He looked from mother to daughter. The former sat in helpless astonishment, gazing about her; Emily had hardened her face.

'You find it a sad tale,' Cheeseman proceeded. 'Why, so it is, dear ladies. If ever I had owned a ten-pound note, over and above the price of a loaf of bread and a night's lodging, it should have been put aside with the name of James Hood written on the back of it, and somehow I'd have found him out. And I say the same thing now. Don't think, Mrs. Hood, that I'm pleading my poverty as a way of asking you to forgive the debt. The debt shall be paid; be assured of that. If I can only get to London,

there's a prospect before me; I have a project which I explained to my old friend yesterday. You shall have the money, and, what's more, you shall have interest—four per cent. per annum. O yes, you shall. Only let me somehow get to London.'

The gate sounded again.

'Emily,' exclaimed Mrs. Hood, 'there's your father!'

She was pale, and the hand with which she pointed could not steady itself.

'Mother,' said the girl, just above her breath, 'go! He is coming in!'

Mrs. Hood rose and left the room. Cheeseman could not but observe that some strange agitation possessed them both. Possibly he explained it by the light of his own conscience. He sat, smiling at Emily rather uneasily. Then, seeing that there was likely to be a delay before Hood entered, he bent forward to speak confidentially.

'Miss Hood, I see it in your face, you're as kind and warm-hearted as your father is, and that's saying much. You won't think hardly of a poor fellow who oftener misses a dinner than gets one? Every word I've said to you's as true as the light of heaven. And my only chance is to get to London. I've made an invention, and I feel sure I know a man who will buy it of me. It took my last farthing to get here from Hebsworth. You don't think hardly of me? I don't drink, on my word I don't; it's sheer hard luck. Ah, if I had a home like this! It 'ud be like living in the garden of Eden. Well, well!'

The door opened, and Hood came in, followed by his wife. He was laughing, laughing loudly; the voice was so unlike his that this alone would have caused Emily to gaze at him in astonishment.

'So you've looked us up!' he exclaimed, holding out his hand. 'Why, you couldn't have done better; I was sorry afterwards I hadn't asked you. My wife tells me you've had dinner; you won't mind sitting by whilst I eat? And what do you think of Emily, eh? Grown a little since you saw her last—ha, ha! So you've made up your mind to go to London? Emily had dinner? Why, of course you have; I was forgetting. Baked potatoes! Remember my old weakness for them baked, Cheeseman? We used to buy 'em in the street at night, halfpenny a-piece, eh? Old man with one arm, remember? We used to hear him coming when he was half a mile off; what a voice!

And the man who sold peas; remember him? "All 'ot! All 'ot!" We were lads then, eh, Cheeseman? Emily, just a mouthful, with butter? Let me tempt you. No?—What train did you come by?'

He talked ceaselessly. There was a spot of red in the midst of each of his sallow cheeks, and his eyes gleamed with excitement. On leaving the mill a sudden thirst had come upon him, and he had quenched it with a glass of spirits at the first public-house he passed. Perhaps that had some part in his elation.

Emily almost immediately withdrew and went up to her bedroom. Here she sat alone for more than an hour, in fear lest her mother should come to the door. Then she heard the gate open, and, looking from the window, saw her father and his friend pass into the road and walk away together, the former still talking in an excited way. A minute or two later came the knock which she dreaded. She opened the door, and her mother entered.

'Emily, did you ever know your father so strange?' Mrs. Hood asked, in a tone of genuine alarm. She had sunk upon a chair, and looked to the girl as if overcome with physical weakness. 'What can it all mean? When I asked him why he had told that story about the money, he only laughed—said it was a joke, and he'd explain it all before long. *I* can't think where the money came from! And now he's gone to pay that man's fare to London, and no doubt to lend him more money too.'

Emily made no reply. She stood near the window, and looked out at the clouds which were breaking after a brief shower.

'Wherever the money may have come from,' pursued her mother, 'it's cruel that it should go in this way. We never wanted it worse than we do now. It's my belief he's borrowed it himself; a nice thing to borrow for one's own needs, and then throw it away on such a good-for-nothing as that.'

Emily turned and put a question quietly.

'Are you in more than usual need of money?'

'Well, my dear, you know I always try to say as little about such things as I can, but now your father's been and borrowed—as of course he must have done—there's no choice but to tell you. The house at Barnhill's going to be empty at the end of the quarter, and our rent here's going to be raised, and, all things coming together, we've had a good deal to make us anxious. It's just like your father—wanting to make me believe that things are better than they really are; it always was his way, and what's the

good of it I never could see. Of course he means it well, but he'd far better have been open about it, and have told me what he was going to do.'

Emily was shaken with agitation.

'Mother!' she exclaimed, 'why have you both insisted on keeping silence before me about your difficulties? There was no kindness in it; you have done me the cruelest wrong. Had I not money in plenty beyond what I needed? What if the future be uncertain? Has not the present its claims, and can your needs be separated from mine? Because you have succeeded in keeping me apart from the troubles of your life, you—you and father—have thought you had done a praiseworthy thing. Is it not bad enough that one human being should be indifferent to the wants of another, just because they call each other strangers? Was it right to bring such a hateful spirit of independence into a home, between parents and child? If the world is base and unjust, is not that a reason the more why we should draw ever more closely to each other, and be to each other all that our power allows? Independent! Because I earned money and could support myself, you have told me I must be independent, and leave you the same. That is the lesson that life has taught you. It is well to have understanding for lessons of a deeper kind.'

'Well, my child,' protested the mother, to whom the general tenor of such reasoning was well nigh as dark as its special application, 'we have always felt we were doing our duty to you. At your age it is only right you should have your money for yourself; who knows when you may want it? I don't think you should be angry with us, just because we've felt we'd rather put up with a little hardship now and then than have you feel some day we'd been a burden on you. I haven't complained, and I'm not complaining now. I'm sorry I came to speak to you about such a thing. It seems as if you could never take a thing as I mean it. It's like the potatoes at dinner; I meant to do you a kindness by giving you the choice, and you flew out as if you hadn't patience with me.'

Emily kept her eyes upon the window.

'How you can say,' went on Mrs. Hood, 'that we've been cruel to you and done you a wrong—— I know we've very different ways of looking at most things, but where we've wronged you is more than I can understand.'

'You have taken from me,' replied Emily, without moving

her eyes, 'the power to help you. I might have done much, now I can do nothing; and your loss is mine.'

'No, indeed it isn't, and shan't be, Emily. Your father and I have always said that one thing, that you shouldn't suffer by us. What did your father always say years ago? "Emily," he said, "shall have a good education, however we stint ourselves; then, when she grows up, she'll always be able to keep herself from want, and our poverty won't matter to her." And in that, at all events, he was right, and it's come about as he said. No, Emily, we're not going to be a burden to you, so don't fear it.'

'Mother, will you let me be by myself a little? I will come down to you presently.'

'Aren't you well, my dear?' the mother asked, with a mixture of offended reserve and anxiety occasioned by the girl's voice and aspect.

'I have a headache. I will rest till tea-time.'

Mrs. Hood had for a long time been unused to tend Emily with motherly offices; like her husband, she was not seldom impressed with awe of this nature so apart from her own. That feeling possessed her now; before Emily's last words she moved away in silence and closed the door behind her gently.

The irony of fate, coming out so bitterly in all that her mother had said, was like a cold hand on Emily's heart. She sat again in the chair from which she had risen, and let her head lie back. Her vitality was at a low ebb; the movement of indignation against the cruelty which was wrecking her life had passed and left behind it a weary indifference. Happily she need not think yet. There were still some hours of respite before her; there was the night to give her strength. The daylight was a burden; it must be borne with what patience she could summon. But she longed for the time of sacred silence.

To a spirit capable of high exaltations, the hour of lassitude is a foretaste of the impotence of death. To see a purpose in the cold light of intellectual conviction, and to lack the inspiring fervour which can glorify a struggle with the obstacles nature will interpose, is to realise intensely the rugged baldness of life stripped of illusion, life as we shall see it when the end approaches and the only voice that convinces tells us that all is vanity. It is the mood known by the artist when, viewing the work complete within his mind, his heart lacks its joy and his hand is cold to execute. Self-consciousness makes of life itself a work of art.

There are the blessed moments when ardour rises in pursuit of the ideal, when it is supreme bliss to strive and overcome; and there are the times of aching languor, when the conception is still clear in every line, but the soul asks wearily—To what end? In Emily it was reaction after the eagerness of her sudden unreasoning hope. Body and mind suffered beneath a burden of dull misery. Motives seemed weak; effort was weary and unprofitable; life unutterably mean. It could scarcely be called suffering, to feel thus.

She was roused by voices below, and, immediately after, her mother came to her door again.

'Isn't it vexatious?' Mrs. Hood whispered. 'Here are Jessie and Geraldine. I'm obliged to ask them to stay tea. Do you feel well enough to come down?'

Emily went down at once, almost with a sense of relief, and presented herself to the girls very much in her usual way.

'Now I know very well you don't want us,' said Jessie, with her sprightly frankness. 'We shouldn't have thought of coming if it hadn't been that we met Mr. Hood just this side of the bridge, and he forced us to come on; he said it wouldn't be very long before he was back himself. But of course we shan't stay tea, so it's no use——'

'Oh, of course not,' put in Geraldine. 'We know Mrs. Hood's always far too busy on a Saturday afternoon. *I* didn't want to come; I told Jessie it would be far better to put it off till to-morrow——'

'All the same,' resumed her sister, 'she wanted to see you very much. She's got something to tell you. Now you may as well get it out and done with, Jerry; you needn't expect I'm going to help you.'

The two giggled together.

'What is it?' inquired Mrs. Hood. 'I dare say I could guess if I tried very hard. Couldn't you, Emily?'

'Now then, Jerry, for the awful news,' urged her sister.

'No, *you'll* have to tell, Jessie,' said the other, giggling and blushing.

'Well, I suppose one of us must. She's been and engaged herself to Mr. Baldwin. Of course we all knew——'

'Now, Jessie, you knew nothing of the kind!'

'Didn't I, though! Oughtn't she to be ashamed of herself, at her age, Mrs. Hood? I know what Emily's opinion is; she's simply disgusted. Look at her, and see if she isn't.'

The gabble of the two girls was worthy of the occasion; their tongues went like mill-clappers. Whilst her mother busied herself in preparing tea, Emily sat and listened; fortunately there was little need for her to talk. To herself she seemed to be suffering a kind of trance, without detriment to her consciousness. The chattering and grimacing girls appeared before her as grotesque unrealities, puppets animated in some marvellous way, and set to caricature humanity. She tried to realise that one of them was a woman like herself, who had just consented to be a man's wife; but it was impossible to her to regard this as anything but an aping of things which at other times had a solemn meaning. She found herself gazing at Geraldine as one does at some singular piece of mechanism with a frivolous purpose. And it was not only the individuals that impressed her thus; these two represented life and the world. She had strange, cynical thoughts, imaginings which revolted her pure mind even whilst it entertained them. No endeavour would shake off this ghastly clairvoyance. She was picturing the scene of Geraldine's acceptance of the offer of marriage; then her thoughts passed on to the early days of wedded life. She rose, shuddering, and moved about the room; she talked to drive those images from her brain. It did but transfer the sense of unreality to her own being. Where was she, and what doing? Had she not dreamed that a hideous choice had been set before her, a choice from which there was no escape, and which, whatever the alternative she accepted, would blast her life? But that was something grave, earnest, and what place was there for either earnestness or gravity in a world where Geraldine represented womanhood wooed and about to be wedded? There was but one way of stopping the gabble which was driving her frantic; she threw open the piano and began to play, to play the first music that came into her mind. It was a passage from the Moonlight Sonata. A few moments, and the ghosts were laid. The girls still whispered together, but above their voices the pure stream of music flowed with gracious oblivion. When Emily ceased, it was with an inward fervour of gratitude to the master and the instrument. To know that, was to have caught once more the point of view from which life had meaning. Now let them chatter and mop and mow; the echo of that music still lived around.

Hood had not returned when they sat down to tea. Jessie began to ask questions about the strange-looking man they had met in company with him, but Mrs. Hood turned the conversation.

'I suppose you'll be coming with the same tale next, Jessie,' she said, with reference to Geraldine.

'Me, Mrs. Hood? No, indeed; I haven't had lessons from Emily for nothing. It's all very well for empty-headed chits like Jerry here, but I've got serious things to attend to. I'm like Emily, she and I are never going to be married.'

'Emily never going to be married?' exclaimed Mrs. Hood, half seriously. 'Ah, you mustn't believe all Emily tells you.'

'Oh, she hasn't told me that herself, but I'm quite sure she would be offended if anyone thought her capable of such frivolity.'

'Emily will keep it to herself till the wedding-day,' said Geraldine, with a mocking shake of the head. 'She isn't one to go telling her secrets.'

At this point Hood made his appearance. His wife paid no heed to him as he entered; Emily glanced at him furtively. He had the look of a man who has predetermined an attitude of easy good humour, nor had the parting with Cheeseman failed to prove an occasion for fresh recourse to that fiery adjuvant which of a sudden was become indispensable to him. Want of taste for liquor and life-long habit of abstemiousness had hitherto kept Hood the soberest of men; he could not remember to have felt the warm solace of a draught taken for solace' sake since the days when Cheeseman had been wont to insist upon the glass of gin at their meetings, and then it had never gone beyond the single glass, for he felt that his head was weak, and dreaded temptation. Four-and-twenty hours had wrought such a change in him, that already to enter a public-house seemed a familiar act, and he calculated upon the courage to be begotten of a smoking tumbler. Previously the mere outlay would have made him miserable, but the command of unearned coin was affecting him as it is wont to affect poor men. The new aid given to Cheeseman left a few shillings out of the second broken sovereign. Let the two pounds—he said to himself—be regarded as gone; eight remained untouched. For the odd shillings, let them serve odd expenses. So when he had purchased Cheeseman's ticket to King's Cross, he was free with small change at the station bar. At the last moment it occurred to him that he might save himself a walk by going in the train as far as Pendal. So it was here that the final parting had taken place.

He seated himself with his legs across a chair, and began to talk to Geraldine of the interesting news which Jessie had just

behind him, and they seemed to overflow with peaceful happiness. Irretrievable, his yielding and his shame; irrecoverable, the conscious rectitude bartered so cheaply. He saw now that his life had held vast blessings, and they were for ever lost.

Emily was speaking.

'Do you wish to stay here this evening, father?'

'No,' he answered hastily, 'I only called you up for—for that.'

Her heart reproached her with cruelty, but what remained save to leave him to himself? They could not face each other, could not exchange a natural word.

'Emily!'

She turned at the door. He had called her, but did not continue to speak.

'Yes, father?'

'It's only for to-night. You'll—you'll sit with me again as usual?'

'Oh, I hope so!'

A rush of tears had its way as she closed the door, something so deeply pathetic had there been in that appeal. It was the first time that her misery had found this outlet; unable to calm herself at once, she turned aside into her bedroom. Tears did not come to her readily; indeed, it was years since she had shed them; the fit shook her with physical suffering. The weeping would not stay itself, and to force her sobs into silence was almost beyond her power. She flung herself desperately by the bedside, throwing out her arms in the effort to free her chest from its anguishing constraint.

In an hour she went down. Her mother was sitting miserably in the kitchen, and Emily, dreading to have to talk again, kept apart in the parlour. When it began to dusk, Hood descended and supper was prepared for in the usual way. There was small pretence of conversation, and, as soon as possible, Emily bade her parents good-night. It was long before she heard them go to their room; they whispered together in passing her door.

And now the solemn hours shed about her guardian silence, and she could listen to the voice of her soul. It was incredible that the morning of the day which was not yet dead had witnessed that scene between her and Dagworthy on the Castle Hill; long spaces of featureless misery seem to stretch between. Perforce she had overborne reflection; one torment coming upon

another had occupied her with mere endurance; it was as though a ruthless hand tore from her shred after shred of the fair garment in which she had joyed to clothe herself, while a voice mockingly bade her be in congruence with the sordid shows of the world around. For a moment, whilst Beethoven sang to her, she knew the light of faith; but the dull mist crept up again and thickened. Weeping had not eased her bosom; she had only become more conscious of the load of tears surcharging it. Now she lay upon her bed in the darkness, hushing idle echoes of day, waiting upon the spirit that ever yet had comforted and guided her.

What, divested of all horror due to imagination, was the threat to which her life lay subject? Dagworthy had it in his power to ruin her father, to blast his remaining years with a desolation to which the life-long struggle with poverty would be the mere pleasantry of fate. She could no longer entertain a doubt of the guilt the first suggestion of which excited her scornful laughter, and she knew it to be more than probable that her father had yielded to temptation purposely put in his way. She was not unconscious of the power of reprisal which so gross a plot put into her hands, though it was true that the secresy Dagworthy had maintained in his intercourse with her left but her bare assertion for evidence against him. Yet the thought was profitless. Suppose he did not venture to prosecute on the charge of theft, none the less could he work the ruin he menaced; mere dismissal from his employment, with mention of the cause to this and the other person, was all that was needed to render the wretched clerk an outcast, hopeless of future means of livelihood, for ever disgraced in the eyes of all who knew him. She felt the cruelty of which this man, whose passions she had so frenzied, was readily capable. She believed he would not spare her an item of suffering which it was in his power to inflict. She knew that appeal to him was worse than useless, for it was only too clear that for her to approach him was to inflame his resolution. Her instinctive fear of him was terribly justified.

With her alone, then, it lay to save her parents from the most dreadful fate that could befall them, from infamy, from destitution, from despair. For, even if her father escaped imprisonment, it would be impossible for him to live on in Dunfield, and how, at his age, was a new life to be begun? And it was idle to expect that the last degradation would be spared him; his

disgrace would involve her; Dagworthy's jealousy would not neglect such a means of striking at her engagement. And Wilfrid must needs know; to Emily not even the possibility of hiding such a thing from him suggested itself. Could she become his wife with that stigma upon her, bringing as dowry her beggared parents for him to support?

Did it mean that? Was this the thought that she had dreaded to face throughout the day? Was it not only her father whose ruin was involved, and must she too bid farewell to hope?

She let those ghastly eyes stare from the darkness into her own, and tried to exhaust their horror. It overtaxed her courage; with a smothered cry of fear she sprang upright, and her shaking hands struck a flame to bring light into the room. Not once, but again and again, did the chill of terror pass through her whole frame. She caught a passing glimpse of her image in the glass, and was fascinated into regarding it closely. 'You, who stand there in the pitiless night'—thus did thought speak within her—'you, poor human thing, with the death-white face and eyes, staring in all but distraction, is this the very end of the rapturous dream which has lulled you whilst destiny wrought your woe? Is it even now too late to struggle? Is this the wild sorrow of farewell to love, the beginning of an anguish which shall torture your soul to death? Have you lost *him*?' For moments it was as though life fought with the last and invincible enemy. On the spot where she had been standing she sank powerless to her knees, clinging to the nearest object, her head falling back.

The clock outside her door struck one; how long the dull vibration seemed to endure. She was conscious of it, though lying with all but palsied faculties. It was the first of the divisions which marked her long vigil; the hours succeeded each other quickly; between voice and voice there seemed to pass but a single wave of surging thought. But each new warning of coming day found her nearer the calm of resolve.

Look at this girl, and try to know her. Emily knew but one article of religion, and that bade her preserve, if need be, at the cost of life, the purity of her soul. This was the supreme law of her being. The pieties of kindred were as strong in her as in any heart that ever beat, but respect for them could not constrain her to a course which opposed that higher injunction. Growing with her growth, nourished by the substance which developed her intellectual force, a sense of all that was involved in her woman-

hood had come to be the guiding principle of her existence. Imagine the great artist Nature bent upon the creation of a soul which should hold in subtlest perfection of consciousness every element essential to the successive ideals of maiden, wife, mother, and the soul of this girl is pictured. Her religion of beauty was the symbolic expression of instincts wholly chaste; her body was to her a temple which preserved a sacred flame, and she could not conceive existence if once the shrine had suffered desecration. We are apt to attribute to women indiscriminately at least the outlines of this consciousness; for the vast majority it confuses itself with the prescriptions of a traditional dogma, if not with the mere prejudice of social usage. For Emily no external dogma existed, and the tenor of her life had aided her in attaining independence of ignoble dictation. Her views were often strangely at variance with those of the social tribunal which sits in judgment on virtue and vice. To her, for instance, the woman who sells herself with ecclesiastical sanction differed only in degree of impurity from her whose track is under the street-lamps. She was not censorious, she was not self-righteous; she spoke to no one of the convictions that ruled her, and to herself held them a mystery of holiness, a revelation of high things vouchsafed she knew not whence nor how. Suppose her to have been heart-free at this juncture of her fate, think you she would have found it a whit less impossible to save her father by becoming Dagworthy's wife? There was in her thought but one parallel to this dire choice which lay before her: it was the means offered to Isabel of rescuing her brother Claudio. That passion of purity which fired Isabel's speech was the breath of Emily's life. She knew well that many, and women too, would spare no condemnation of what they would call her heartless selfishness; she knew that the paltriest considerations of worldly estate are deemed sufficient to exact from a woman the sacrifice now demanded of her. That was no law to Emily. The moral sense which her own nature had developed must here alone control her. Purity, as she understood it—the immaculate beauty of the soul—was her religion: if other women would die rather than deny the object of their worship, to her the ideal of chastity was worth no less perfect a zeal. Far removed from the world which theorises, she presented in her character a solution of the difficulties entertained by those who doubtingly seek a substitute for the old religious sanctions. Her motives had the simplicity of elemental faith;

they were indeed but the primary instincts of womanhood exalted to a rare perfection and reflected in a consciousness of exceeding lucidity.

The awakening of love in such a nature as this was, as it were, the admission to a supreme sacrament. Here was the final sanction of the creed that had grown from within. In the plighting of her troth to Wilfrid Athel, Emily had, as she herself saw it, performed the most solemn and sacred act of her life; instead of being a mere preliminary to a holy observance which should in truth unite them, it made that later formality all but trivial. It was the aspiration of her devoutest hours that this interchange of loving promise might keep its binding sanctity for ever, that no touch of mutability might come upon her heart till the last coldness stayed its beating. A second love appeared to her self-contradicted; to transfer to another those thoughts which had wedded her soul to Wilfrid's would not merely be sin, it was an impossibility. Did he ever cease to cherish her—a thought at which she smiled in her proud confidence—that could in nothing affect her love for him, which was not otherwise to be expressed than as the sum of her consciousness. . . . .

The pale light of dawn began to glimmer through the window-blind. Emily gave it full admission, and looked out at the morning sky; faintest blue was growing between streaks of cold grey. Her eyes ached from the fixedness of intense thought; the sweet broad brow was marble, the disorder of her hair spoke of self-abandonment in anguish. She had no thought of seeking rest; very far from her was sleep and the blessedness of oblivion. She felt as though sleep would never come again.

But she knew what lay before her; doubt was gone, and there only remained fear to shake her heart. A day and a night had to be lived through before she could know her fate, so long must she suffer things not to be uttered. A day and a night, and then, perchance—nay, certainly—the vanguard of a vast army of pain-stricken hours. There was no passion now in her thought of Wilfrid; her love had become the sternness of resolve which dreads itself. An hour ago her heart had been pierced with self-pity in thinking that she should suffer thus so far away from him, without the possibility of his aid, her suffering undreamt by him. Now, in her reviving strength, she had something of the martyr's joy. If the worst came, if she had spoken to him her last word of tenderness, the more reason that her soul should keep un-

sullied the image of that bliss which was the crown of life. His and his only, his in the rapture of ideal love, his whilst her tongue could speak, her heart conceive, his name.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FINAL INTERVIEW.

On six days of the week, Mrs. Hood, to do her justice, made no show of piety to the powers whose ordering of life her tongue incessantly accused; if her mode of Sabbatical observance was bitter, the explanation was to be sought in the mere force of habit dating from childhood, and had, indeed, a pathetic significance to one sufficiently disengaged from the sphere of her acerbity to be able to judge fairly such manifestations of character. A rigid veto upon all things secular, a preoccupied severity of visage, a way of speaking which suggested difficult tolerance of injury, an ostentation of discomfort in bodily inactivity—these were but traditions of happier times; to keep her Sunday thus was to remind herself of days when the outward functions of respectability did in truth correspond to self-respect; and it is probable that often enough, poor woman, the bitterness was not only on her face. As a young girl in her mother's home she had learnt that the Christian Sabbath was to be distinguished by absence of joy, and as she sat through these interminable afternoons, on her lap a sour little book which she did not read, the easy chair abandoned for one which hurt her back, the very cat not allowed to enter the room lest it should gambol, here on the verge of years which touch the head with grey, her life must have seemed to her a weary pilgrimage to a goal of discontent. How far away was girlish laughter, how far the blossoming of hope which should attain no fruitage, and, alas, how far the warm season of the heart, the woman's heart that loved and trusted, that joyed in a new-born babe, and thought not of the day when the babe, in growing to womanhood, should have journeyed such lengths upon a road where the mother might not follow.

Neither Hood nor his daughter went to church; the former generally spent the morning in his garret, the latter helped herself against the depression which the consciousness of the day

engendered by playing music which respect would have compelled her to refrain from had her mother been present. The music was occasionally heard by an acquaintance who for some reason happened to be abroad in church time, and Mrs. Hood was duly informed of the sad things done in her absence, but she had the good sense to forbid herself interference with Emily's mode of spending the Sunday. She could not understand it, but her husband's indifference to religion had taught her to endure, and, in truth, her own zeal, as I have said, was not of active colour. Discussion on such subjects there had never been. Her daughter, she had learnt to concede, was strangely other than herself; Emily was old enough to have regard for her own hereafter.

Breakfast on Sunday was an hour later than on other days, and was always a very silent meal. On the day which we have now reached it was perhaps more silent than usual. Hood had a newspaper before him on the table; his wife wore the wonted Sabbath absentness, suggestive of a fear lest she should be late for church; Emily made a show of eating, but the same diminutive slice of bread and butter lasted her to the end of the meal. She was suffering from a slight feverishness, and her eyes, unclosed throughout the night, were heavy with a pressure which was not of conscious fatigue. Having helped in clearing the table and ordering the kitchen, she was going upstairs when her mother spoke to her for the first time.

'I see you've still got your headache,' Mrs. Hood said, with plaintiveness which was not condolence.

'I shall go out a little, before dinner-time,' was the reply.

Her mother dismally admitted the wisdom of the proposal, and Emily went to her room. Before long the bell of the chapel-of-ease opposite began its summoning, a single querulous bell, jerked with irregular rapidity. The bells of Pendal church sent forth a more kindly bidding, but their music was marred by the harsh clanging so near at hand. Emily heard and did not hear. When she had done housemaid's office in her room, she sat propping her hot brows, waiting for her mother's descent in readiness for church. At the sound of the opening and closing bedroom door, she rose and accompanied her mother to the parlour. Mrs. Hood was in her usual nervous hurry, giving a survey to each room before departure, uttering a hasty word or two, then away with constricted features.

The girl ascended again, and, as soon as the chapel bell had

ceased its last notes of ill-tempered iteration, began to attire herself hastily for walking. When ready, she unlocked a drawer and took from it an envelope, of heavy contents, which lay ready to her hand. Then she paused for a moment and listened. Above there was a light footfall, passing constantly hither and thither. Leaving the room with caution, she passed downstairs noiselessly and quitted the house by the back door, whence by a circuit she gained the road. Her walk was towards the Heath. As soon as she entered upon it, she proceeded rapidly—so rapidly, indeed, that before long she had to check herself and take breath. No sun shone, and the air was very still and warm; to her it seemed oppressive. Over Dunfield hung a vast pile of purple cloud, against which the wreaths of mill smoke, slighter than on week-days, lay with a dead whiteness. The Heath was solitary; a rabbit now and then started from a brake, and here and there grazed sheep. Emily had her eyes upon the ground, save when she looked rapidly ahead to measure the upward distance she had still to toil over.

On reaching the quarry, she stayed her feet. The speed at which she had come, and an agitation which was increasing made breathing so difficult that she turned a few paces aside, and sat down upon a rough block of stone, long since quarried and left unused. Just before her was a small patch of marshy ground, long grass growing about a little pool. A rook had alighted on the margin, and was pecking about. Presently it rose on its heavy wings; she watched it flap athwart the dun sky. Then her eye fell on a little yellow flower near her feet, a flower she did not know. She plucked and examined it, then let it drop carelessly from her hand.

The air was growing brown; a storm threatened. She looked about her with a hasty fear, then resumed her walk to the upper part of the Heath. Reaching the smooth sward, she made straight across it for Dagworthy's house.

Crossing the garden, she was just at the front door, when it was opened, and by Dagworthy himself. His eyes fell before her.

'Will you come this way?' he said, indistinctly.

He led into the large sitting-room where he had previously entertained Emily and her father. As soon as he had closed the door, he took eager steps towards her.

'You have come,' he said. 'Something told me you would come this morning. I've watched at the window for you.'

The assurance of victory had softened him. His voice was like that of one who greets a loving mistress. His gaze clung to her.

'I have come to bring you this!' Emily replied, putting upon the table the heavy envelope. 'It is the money we owe you.'

Dagworthy laughed, but his eyes were gathering trouble.

'You owe me nothing,' he said, affecting easiness.

'How do you mean that?'—Emily gave him a direct look. Her manner had now nothing of fear, nor even the diffidence with which she had formerly addressed him. She spoke with a certain remoteness, as if her business with him were formal. The lines of her mouth were hard; her heavy lids only half raised themselves.

'I mean that you owe nothing of this kind,' he answered, rather confusedly. His confidence was less marked; her look overcame his.

'Not ten pounds?'

'Well, *you* don't.' He added, 'Whose is this money?'

'It is my own; I have earned it.'

'Does your father know you are paying it?'

'He does not. I was not likely to speak to him of what you told me. There is the debt, Mr. Dagworthy; we have paid it, and now I will leave you.'

He examined her. Even yet he could not be sure that he understood. In admitting her, he had taken it for granted that she could come with but one purpose. It was but the confirmation of the certain hope in which he had lived through the night. Was the girl a simpleton? Had she got it into her head that repayment in this way discharged his hold upon her father? It was possible; women are so ludicrously ignorant of affairs. He smiled, though darkly.

'Why have you brought this money?' he asked.

She was already moving nearer to the door. He put himself in her way.

'What good do you imagine this is?'

'None, perhaps. I pay it because I wish to.'

'And—is it your notion that this puts your father straight? Do you think this is a way out of his difficulty?'

'I have not thought that. But it was only to restore the money that I came.'

There was silence.

'Have you forgotten,' he asked, half wonderingly, half with quiet menace, 'what I said to you yesterday?'

'You see my answer,' said Emily, pointing hastily to the table. 'I owe you that, but I can give you nothing more.' Her voice quivered, as she continued, 'What you said to me yesterday was said without thought, or only with evil thoughts. Since then you have had hours of reflection. It is not in your power—it would be in the power of no man who is not utterly base and wicked—to repeat such words this morning. Mr. Dagworthy, I believe in the affection you have professed for me; feeling that, you are incapable of dastardly cruelty. I will not believe your tongue against yourself. In a moment of self-forgetfulness you spoke words which you will regret through your life, for they were inhuman, and were spoken to a defenceless girl. After hearing them, I cannot beg your mercy for my father; but you know that misfortune which strikes him falls also upon me. You have done me the greatest wrong that man can do to woman; you owe me what reparation is in your power.'

She had not thought to speak thus. Since daylight dawned her heart had felt too numb, too dead; barely to tell him that she had no answer to his words was the purpose with which she had set out. The moment prompted her utterance, and words came without reflection. It was a noble speech, and nobly delivered; the voice was uncertain at times, but it betrayed no weakness of resolve, no dread of what might follow. The last sentences were spoken with a dignity which rebuked rather than supplicated. Dagworthy's head bowed as he listened.

He came nearer.

'Do you think me,' he asked, under his breath, 'a mere ignorant lout, who has to be shamed before he knows what's manly and what isn't? Do you think because I'm a manufacturer, and the son of one, that I've no thought or feeling above my trade? I know as well as you can tell me, though you speak with words I couldn't command, that I'm doing a mean and a vile thing—there; hear me say it, Emily Hood. But it's not a cruel thing. I want to compel you to do what, in a few years, you'll be glad of. I want you to accept love such as no other man can give you, and with it the command of pretty well everything you can wish for. I want to be a slave at your feet, with no other work in life than finding out your desires and satisfying them. You're not to be tempted with money, and I don't try to; but I value

the money because it will give me power to show my love. And mind what I say; ask yourself if it isn't true. If you hadn't been engaged already, you'd have listened to me; I feel that power in myself; I know I should have made you care for me by loving you as desperately as I do. I wouldn't have let you refuse me,—you hear, Emily? Emily! Emily! Emily!—it does me good to call you by your name—I haven't done so before to-day, have I, Emily? Not a cruel thing, because I offer you more than any man living can, more of that for which you care most, the life a highly educated woman can appreciate. You shall travel where you will; you shall buy books and pictures, and all else to your heart's content; and, after all, you shall love me. That's a bold word, but I tell you I feel the power in me to win your love. I'm not hateful to you, even now; you can't really despise me, for you know that whatever I do is for no mean purpose. There is no woman living like you, and to make you my wife I am prepared to do anything, however vile it seems. Some day you'll forgive it all, because some day you'll love me!'

It was speaking as he had never yet done. He assumed that his end was won, and something of the triumph of passion endued his words with a joyous fervour. Very possibly there was truth in much that he said, for he spoke with the intense conviction which fulfils prophecies. But the only effect was to force Emily back upon her cold defiance.

'I am in your house, Mr. Dagworthy,' she said, 'and you can compel me to hear whatever you choose to say. But I have no other answer than that you know. I wish to leave you.'

His flushed eagerness could not at once adapt itself to another tone.

'No, you don't wish to leave me. You want to see that I am a man of my word, that I mean what I say, and am not afraid to stick to it. Emily, you don't leave me till you have promised to be my wife. You're a noble girl. You wouldn't be frightened into yielding. And it isn't that way I want to have you. You're more now in my eyes than ever. It shall be love for love. Emily, you will marry me?'

What resources of passion the man was exhibiting! By forethought he could have devised no word of these speeches which he uttered with such vigour; it was not he who spoke but the very Love God within him. He asked the last question with a voice subdued in tenderness; his eyes had a softer fire.

Emily gave her answer.

'I would not marry you, though you stood to kill me if I refused.'

No bravado, no unmeasured vehemence of tone, but spoken as it would have been had the very weapon of death gleamed in his hand.

He knew that this was final.

'So you are willing that your father shall be put into the dock at the police-court to-morrow morning?'

'If you can do that, it must be so.'

'If I *can*? You know very well I have the power to, and you ought to know by now that I stick at nothing. Go home and think about it.'

'It is useless. I have thought. If you think still to make me yield by this fear, it is better that you should act at once. I will tell you: If I were free, if I had the power to give myself to you in marriage, it would make your threat of no more avail. I love my father; to you I cannot say more than that; but though I would give my life to save his from ruin, I could not give—my father would not wish me, O never!—my woman's honour. You will find it hard to understand me, for you seem not to know the meaning of such words.'

She closed with stern bitterness, compelled to it by the tone of his last bidding. A glorious beauty flashed in her face. Alas, Wilfrid Athel would never know the pride of seeing thus the woman he knew so noble. But Wilfrid was in her heart; his soul allied itself with hers and gave her double strength. Dagworthy had wrought for her that which in the night's conflict she could not bring about by her own force; knowing, in the face of utter despair, the whole depth of the love with which she held to her father, she could yet speak his doom with calmness, with clear intelligence that the sacrifice she was asked to make was disproportionate to the disaster threatened.

He answered with cold decision.

'It's you who don't know me. I've nothing more to say to you; you are at liberty to go. To-morrow your father will be before the magistrates.'

Emily moved to the door. The sound of the words had blanched her lips. She felt that, if she would keep hold upon her bodily strength she must breathe the outer air.

'Look here, I say,' he exclaimed, stepping to the table. 'Take the money. I've nothing to do with that.'

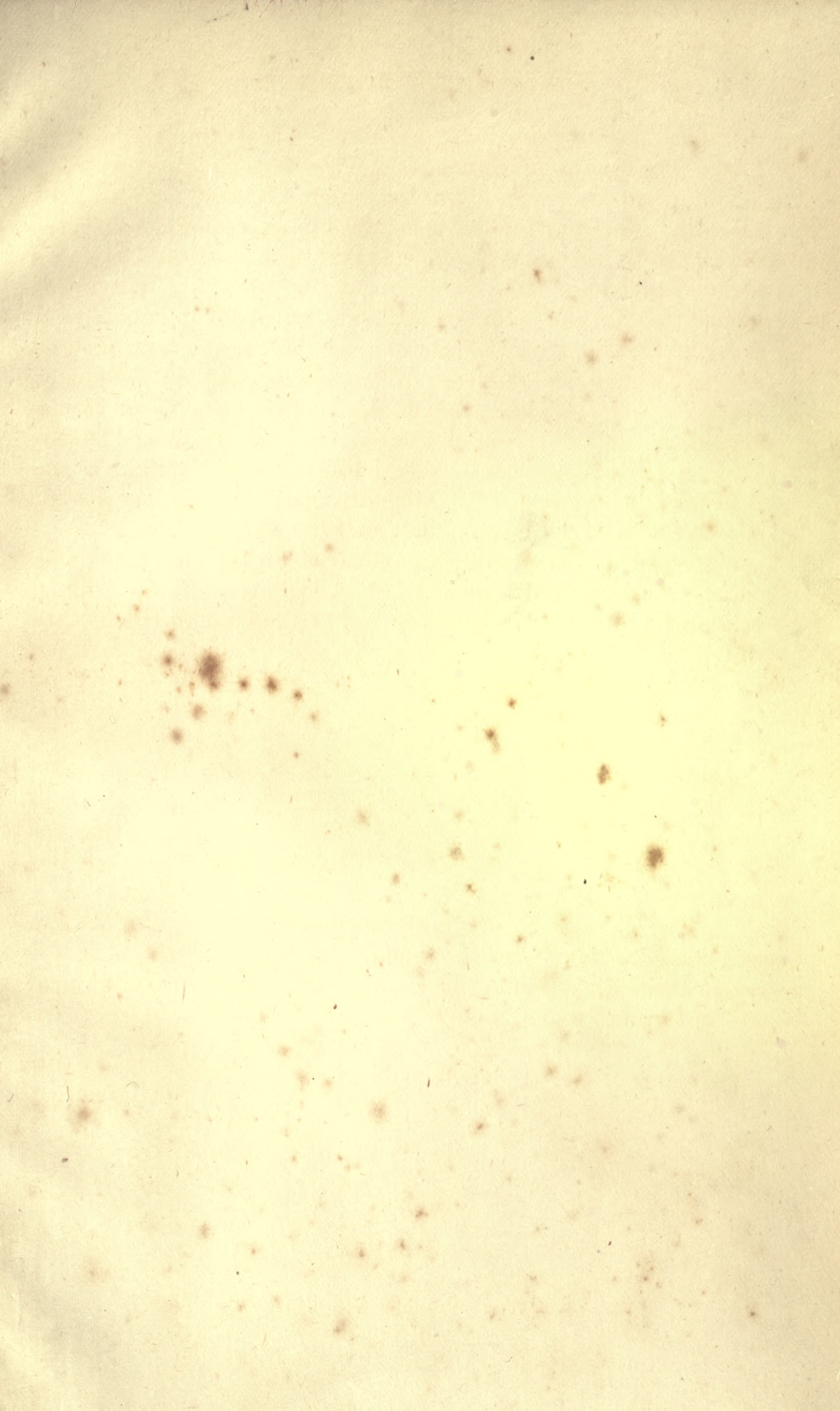
She made a motion with her hand, but hastened still and escaped. Once in the garden she all but ran, thinking she heard his footsteps in pursuit, and smitten with that sudden terror which comes sometimes when a danger is escaped. But she had gained the Heath, and it was certain now that he had not tried to overtake her, a glance back showed her that no one was in sight. She walked rapidly on, though her heart seemed about to burst, walked without pausing till she had reached the quarry. Here she sat on the same stone as before. She was in dread of fainting; the anguish of her leaping blood was intolerable; she had neither sight nor hearing. But the crisis of suffering passed; she let her head fall forward and buried it upon her lap.

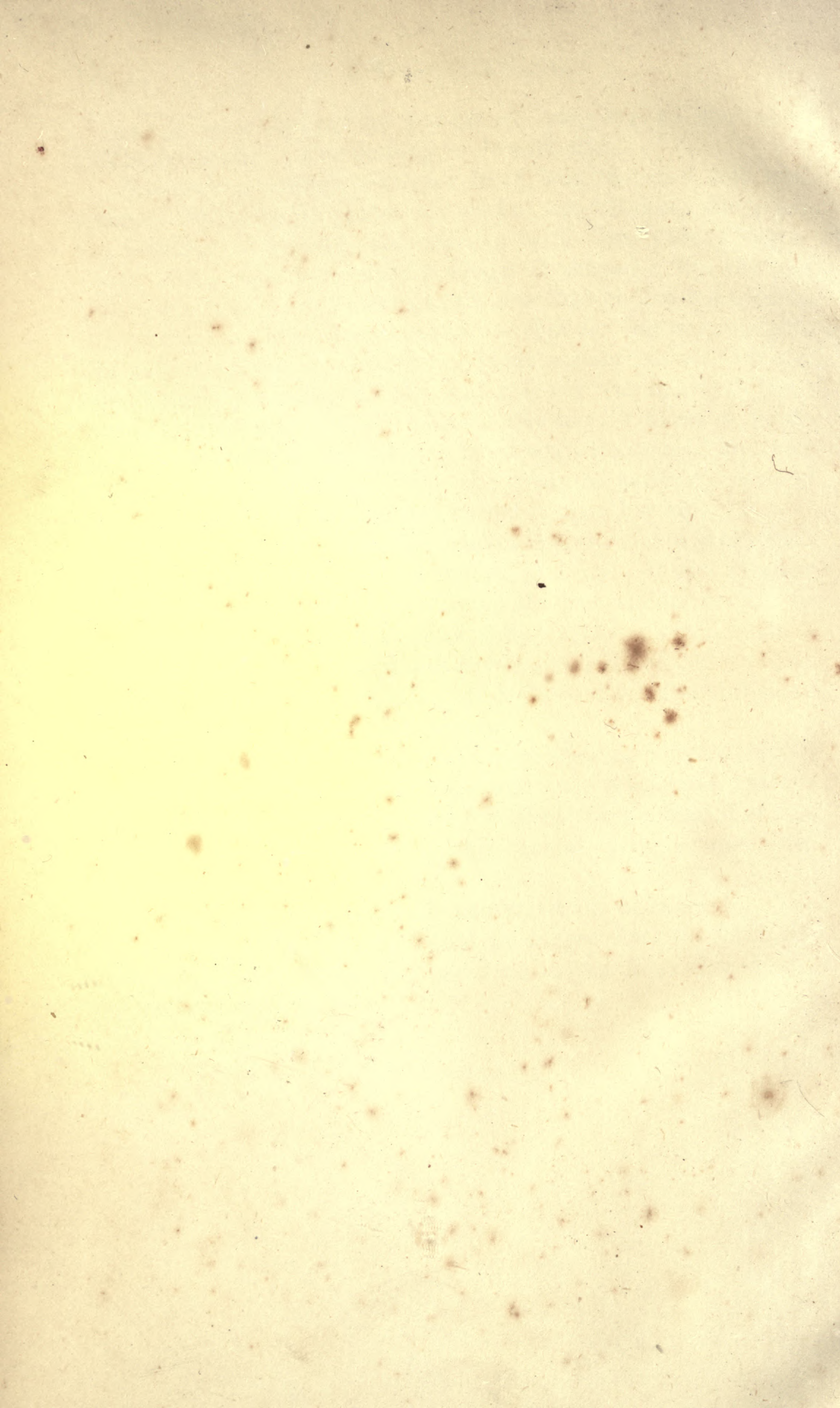
Perhaps for ten minutes she remained thus, then a great crash from the near heavens caused her to look up. It was raining, had rained since she sat there, though she had not known it. In the little pool before her great drops splashed and made a miniature tempest. The yellow flower she had plucked lay close by, and was beaten by the rain. It lightened vividly, and there followed heavier thunder than before.

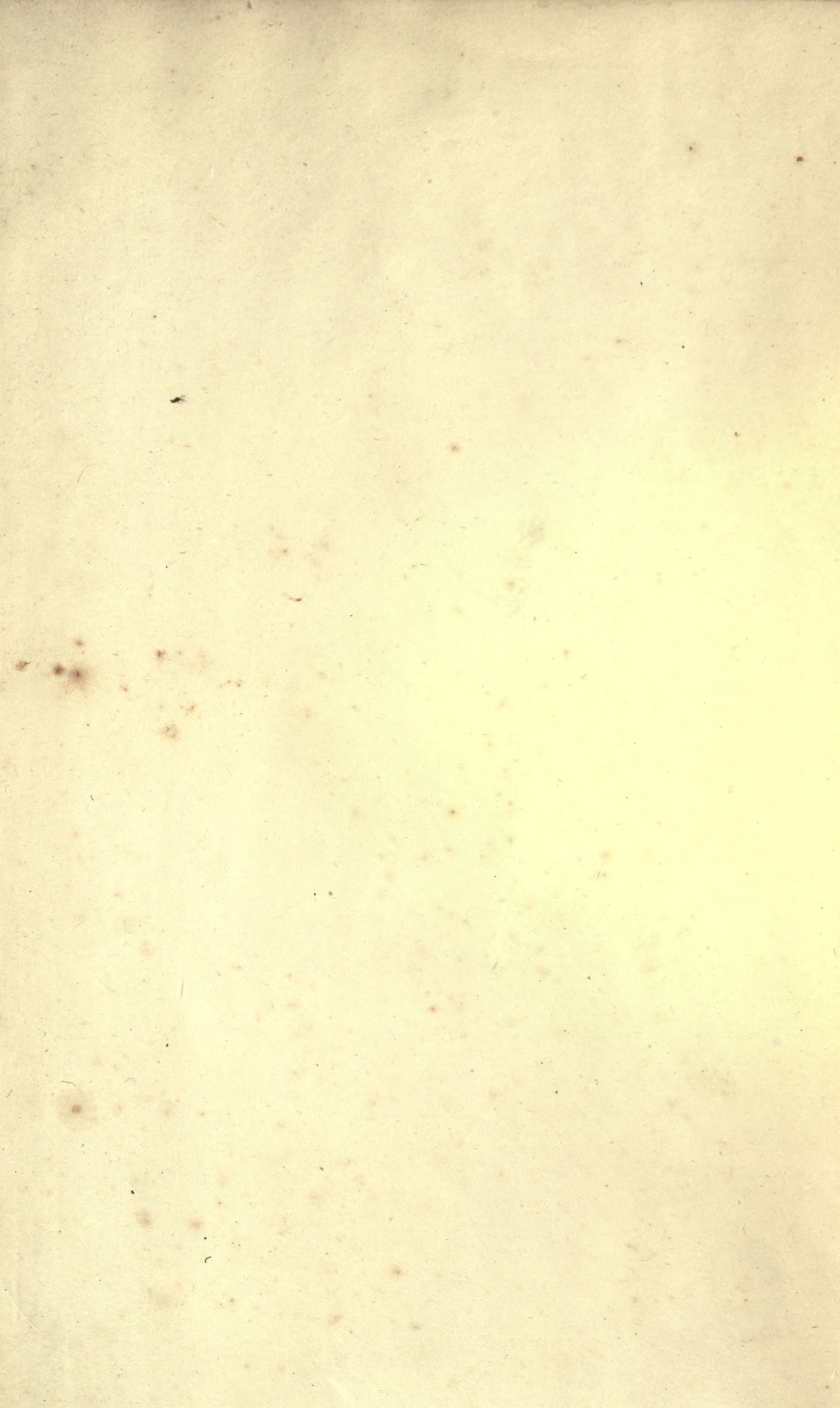
She wished to shed tears—tears were choking her, but would not rise and shed themselves; she could only sob, aloud, hysterically. The words 'Father' and 'Wilfrid' broke from her lips several times. Was there red-hot metal poured upon her forehead?

It cost her a great effort to rise and walk homewards. The rain streamed down, but she could no longer hasten. Still she reached the house before her mother's return from church, and she was glad of that.

(*To be continued.*)







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