





LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823

B27

1896

v. 10


This edition, printed on Japan paper, is limited to one hundred and fifty copies for America and England, of which this is

No. **67**.....

J. M. BARRIE


VOL. X

TOMMY AND GRIZEL



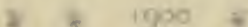
Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign



THE NOVELS, TALES
AND SKETCHES OF
J. M. BARRIE 

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

PART II




PUBLISHED IN
NEW YORK BY
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S
SONS 

... AND GOING TO IT, HIS TEETH SET

From a Drawing by Herbert R. Smith







...AND CLUNG TO IT, HIS TEETH SET
From a Drawing by Bernard Partridge.

THE NOVELS, TALES
AND SKETCHES OF
J. M. BARRIE   

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

PART II

 PUBLISHED IN
NEW YORK BY
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S
SONS   1900 

AUTHOR'S EDITION

J. M. Barrie

Copyright, 1900, by CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

CONTENTS

PART II

	PAGE
XVIII THE GIRL SHE HAD BEEN . . .	1
XIX OF THE CHANGE IN THOMAS .	13
XX A LOVE-LETTER	30
XXI THE ATTEMPT TO CARRY EL- SPETH BY NUMBERS	54
XXII GRIZEL'S GLORIOUS HOUR . . .	70
XXIII TOMMY LOSES GRIZEL	80
XXIV THE MONSTER	95
XXV MR. T. SANDYS HAS RETURNED TO TOWN	114
XXVI GRIZEL ALL ALONE	133
XXVII GRIZEL'S JOURNEY	152
XXVIII TWO OF THEM	164
XXIX THE RED LIGHT	181
XXX THE LITTLE GODS DESERT HIM	192
XXXI "THE MAN WITH THE GREETIN' EYES"	211
XXXII TOMMY'S BEST WORK	229
XXXIII THE LITTLE GODS RETURN WITH A LADY	241
XXXIV A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY .	254
XXXV THE PERFECT LOVER	276

x 523
B27
1898
x 10

30 Oct 53 Bennington v10, 1912a

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

PART II

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GIRL SHE HAD BEEN

AS they sat amid the smell of rosin on that summer day, she told him, with a glance that said, "Now you will laugh at me," what had brought her into Caddam Wood.

"I came to rub something out."

He reflected. "A memory?"

"Yes."

"Of me?"

She nodded.

"An unhappy memory?"

"Not to me," she replied, leaning on him. "I have no memory of you I would rub out, no, not the unhappiest one, for it was you, and that makes it dear. All memories, however sad, of loved ones become sweet, don't they, when we get far enough away from them?"

"But to whom, then, is this memory painful, Grizel?"

Again she cast that glance at him. "To her," she whispered.

"That little girl'!"

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“Yes; the child I used to be. You see, she never grew up, and so they are not distant memories to her. I try to rub them out of her mind by giving her prettier things to think of. I go to the places where she was most unhappy, and tell her sweet things about you. I am not morbid, am I, in thinking of her still as some one apart from myself? You know how it began, in the lonely days when I used to look at her in mamma’s mirror, and pity her, and fancy that she was pitying me and entreating me to be careful. Always when I think I see her now, she seems to be looking anxiously at me and saying, ‘Oh, do be careful!’ And the sweet things I tell her about you are meant to show her how careful I have become. Are you laughing at me for this? I sometimes laugh at it myself.”

“No, it is delicious,” he answered her, speaking more lightly than he felt. “What a numskull you make, Grizel, of any man who presumes to write about women! I am at school again, and you are Miss Ailie teaching me the alphabet. But I thought you lost that serious little girl on the doleful day when she heard you say that you loved me best.”

“She came back. She has no one but me.”

“And she still warns you against me?”

Grizel laughed gleefully. “I am too clever for her,” she said. “I do all the talking. I allow her

THE GIRL SHE HAD BEEN

to listen only. And you must not blame her for distrusting you; I have said such things against you to her! Oh, the things I said! On the first day I saw you, for instance, after you came back to Thrums. It was in church. Do you remember?"

"I should like to know what you said to her about me that day."

"Would you?" Grizel asked merrily. "Well, let me see. She was not at church — she never went there, you remember; but of course she was curious to hear about you, and I had no sooner got home than she came to me and said, 'Was he there?' 'Yes,' I said. 'Is he much changed?' she asked. 'He has a beard,' I said. 'You know that is not what I really mean,' she said, and then I said, 'I don't think he is so much changed that it is impossible to recognize him again.'"

Tommy interrupted her: "Now what did you mean by that?"

"I meant that I thought you were a little annoyed to find the congregation looking at Gavinia's baby more than at you!"

"Grizel, you are a wretch, but perhaps you were right. Well, what more did the little inquisitor want to know?"

"She asked me if I felt any of my old fear of you, and I said No, and then she clapped her hands with joy. And she asked whether you

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

looked at me as if you were begging me to say I still thought you a wonder, and I said I thought you did ——”

“Grizel!”

“Oh, I told her ever so many dreadful things as soon as I found them out. I told her the whole story of your ankle, sir, for instance.”

“On my word, Grizel, you seem to have omitted nothing!”

“Ah, but I did,” she cried. “I never told her how much I wanted you to be admirable; I pretended that I despised you merely, and in reality I was wringing my hands with woe every time you did not behave like a god.”

“They will be worn away, Grizel, if you go on doing that.”

“I don’t think so,” she replied, “nor can she think so if she believes half of what I have told her about you since. She knows how you saved the boy’s life. I told her that in the old Lair because she had some harsh memories of you there; and it was at the Cuttle Well that I told her about the glove.”

“And where,” asked Tommy, severely, “did you tell her that you had been mistaken in thinking me jealous of a baby and anxious to be considered a wonder?”

She hid her face for a moment, and then looked up roughly into his. “I have not told her that

THE GIRL SHE HAD BEEN

yet!" she replied. It was so audacious of her that he took her by the ears.

"If I were vain," Tommy said reflectively, "I would certainly shake you now. You show a painful want of tact, Grizel, in implying that I am not perfect. Nothing annoys men so much. We can stand anything except that."

His merriness gladdened her. "They are only little things," she said, "and I have grown to love them. I know they are flaws; but I love them because ——"

"Say because they are mine. You owe me that."

"No; but because they are weaknesses I don't have. I have others, but not those, and it is sweet to me to know that you are weak in some matters in which I am strong. It makes me feel that I can be of use to you."

"Are you insinuating that there are more of them?" Tommy demanded, sitting up.

"You are not very practical," she responded, "and I am."

"Go on."

"And you are — just a little — inclined to be senti——"

"Hush! I don't allow that word; but you may say, if you choose, that I am sometimes carried away by a too generous impulse."

"And that it will be my part," said she, "to

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

seize you by the arm and hold you back. Oh, you will give me a great deal to do! That is one of the things I love you for. It was one of the things I loved my dear Dr. McQueen for." She looked up suddenly. "I have told him also about you."

"Lately, Grizel?"

"Yes, in my parlour. It was his parlour, you know, and I had kept nothing from him while he was alive; that is to say, he always knew what I was thinking of, and I like to fancy that he knows still. In the evenings he used to sit in the arm-chair by the fire, and I sat talking or knitting at his feet, and if I ceased to do anything except sit still, looking straight before me, he knew I was thinking the morbid thoughts that had troubled me in the old days at Double Dykes. Without knowing it I sometimes shuddered at those times, and he was distressed. It reminded him of my mamma."

"I understand," Tommy said hurriedly. He meant: "Let us avoid painful subjects."

"It is years," she went on, "since those thoughts have troubled me, and it was he who drove them away. He was so kind! He thought so much of my future that I still sit by his arm-chair and tell him what is happening to his Grizel. I don't speak aloud, of course; I scarcely say the words to myself even; and yet we seem to have long talks together. I told him I had given you his coat."

THE GIRL SHE HAD BEEN

“Well, I don’t think he was pleased at that, Grizel. I have had a feeling for some time that the coat dislikes me. It scratched my hand the first time I put it on. My hand caught in the hook of the collar, you will say; but no, that is not what I think. In my opinion, the deed was maliciously done. McQueen always distrusted me, you know, and I expect his coat was saying, ‘Hands off my Grizel.’”

She took it as quite a jest. “He does not distrust you now,” she said, smiling. “I have told him what I think of you, and though he was surprised at first, in the end his opinion was the same as mine.”

“Ah, you saw to that, Grizel!”

“I had nothing to do with it. I merely told him everything, and he had to agree with me. How could he doubt when he saw that you had made me so happy! Even mamma does not doubt.”

“You have told her! All this is rather eerie, Grizel.”

“You are not sorry, are you?” she asked, looking at him anxiously. “Dr. McQueen wanted me to forget her. He thought that would be best for me. It was the only matter on which we differed. I gave up speaking of her to him. You are the only person I have mentioned her to since I became a woman; but I often think of her. I am

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

sure there was a time, before I was old enough to understand, when she was very fond of me. I was her baby, and women can't help being fond of their babies, even though they should never have had them. I think she often hugged me tight."

"Need we speak of this, Grizel?"

"For this once," she entreated. "You must remember that mamma often looked at me with hatred, and said I was the cause of all her woe; but sometimes in her last months she would give me such sad looks that I trembled, and I felt that she was picturing me growing into the kind of woman she wished so much she had not become herself, and that she longed to save me. That is why I have told her that a good man loves me. She is so glad, my poor dear mamma, that I tell her again and again, and she loves to hear it as much as I to tell it. What she loves to hear most is that you really do want to marry me. She is so fond of hearing that because it is what my father would never say to her."

Tommy was so much moved that he could not speak, but in his heart he gave thanks that what Grizel said of him to her mamma was true at last.

"It makes her so happy," Grizel said, "that when I seem to see her now she looks as sweet and pure as she must have been in the days when she was an innocent girl. I think she can enter into my feelings more than any other person could ever do."

THE GIRL SHE HAD BEEN

Is that because she was my mother? She understands how I feel just as I can understand how in the end she was willing to be bad because he wanted it so much."

"No, no, Grizel," Tommy cried passionately, "you don't understand that!"

She rocked her arms. "Yes, I do," she said; "I do. I could never have cared for such a man; but I can understand how mamma yielded to him, and I have no feeling for her except pity, and I have told her so, and it is what she loves to hear her daughter tell her best of all."

They put the subject from them, and she told him what it was that she had come to rub out in Caddam. If you have read of Tommy's boyhood you may remember the day it ended with his departure for the farm, and that he and Elspeth walked through Caddam to the cart that was to take him from her, and how, to comfort her, he swore that he loved her with his whole heart, and Grizel not at all, and that Grizel was in the wood and heard. And how Elspeth had promised to wave to Tommy in the cart as long as it was visible, but broke down and went home sobbing, and how Grizel took her place and waved, pretending to be Elspeth, so that he might think she was bearing up bravely. Tommy had not known what Grizel did for him that day, and when he heard it now for the first time from her own lips,

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

he realized afresh what a glorious girl she was and had always been.

“You may try to rub that memory out of little Grizel’s head,” he declared, looking very proudly at her, “but you shall never rub it out of mine.”

It was by his wish that they went together to the spot where she had heard him say that he loved Elspeth only—“if you can find it,” Tommy said, “after all these years”; and she smiled at his mannish words—she had found it so often since! There was the very clump of whin.

And here was the boy to match. Oh, who by striving could make himself a boy again as Tommy could! I tell you he was always irresistible then. What is genius? It is the power to be a boy again at will. When I think of him flinging off the years and whistling childhood back, not to himself only, but to all who heard, distributing it among them gaily, imperiously calling on them to dance, dance, for they are boys and girls again until they stop—when to recall him in those wild moods is to myself to grasp for a moment at the dear dead days that were so much the best, I cannot wonder that Grizel loved him. I am his slave myself; I see that all that was wrong with Tommy was that he could not always be a boy.

“Hide there again, Grizel,” he cried to her, little Tommy cried to her, Stroke the Jacobite, her captain, cried to the Lady Griselda; and he disappeared,

THE GIRL SHE HAD BEEN

and presently marched down the path with an imaginary Elspeth by his side. "I love you both, Elspeth," he was going to say, "and my love for the one does not make me love the other less"; but he glanced at Grizel, and she was leaning forward to catch his words as if this were no play, but life or death, and he knew what she longed to hear him say, and he said it: "I love you very much, Elspeth, but however much I love you, it would be idle to pretend that I don't love Grizel more."

A stifled cry of joy came from a clump of whin hard by, and they were man and woman again.

"Did you not know it, Grizel?"

"No, no; you never told me."

"I never dreamed it was necessary to tell you."

"Oh, if you knew how I have longed that it might be so, yes, and sometimes hated Elspeth because I feared it could not be! I have tried so hard to be content with second place. I have thought it all out, and said to myself it was natural that Elspeth should be first."

"My tragic love," he said, "I can see you arguing in that way, but I don't see you convincing yourself. My passionate Grizel is not the girl to accept second place from anyone. If I know anything of her, I know that."

To his surprise, she answered softly: "You are wrong. I wonder at it myself, but I had made up

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

my mind to be content with second place, and to be grateful for it."

"I could not have believed it!" he cried.

"I could not have believed it myself," said she.

"Are you the Grizel ——" he began.

"No," she said, "I have changed a little," and she looked pathetically at him.

"It stabs me," he said, "to see you so humble."

"I am humbler than I was," she answered huskily, but she was looking at him with the fondest love.

"Don't look at me so, Grizel," he implored. "I am unworthy of it. I am the man who has made you so humble."

"Yes," she answered, and still she looked at him with the fondest love. A film came over his eyes, and she touched them softly with her handkerchief.

"Those eyes that but a little while ago were looking so coldly at you!" he said.

"Dear eyes!" said she.

"Though I were to strike you ——" he cried, raising his hand.

She took the hand in hers and kissed it.

"Has it come to this!" he said, and as she could not speak, she nodded. He fell upon his knees before her.

"I am glad you are a little sorry," she said; "I am a little sorry myself."

CHAPTER XIX

OF THE CHANGE IN THOMAS

To find ways of making David propose to Elspeth, of making Elspeth willing to exchange her brother for David — they were heavy tasks, but Tommy yoked himself to them gallantly and tugged like an Arab steed in the plough. It should be almost as pleasant to us as to him to think that love was what made him do it, for he was sure he loved Grizel at last, and that the one longing of his heart was to marry her; the one marvel to him was that he had ever longed ardently for anything else. Well, as you know, she longed for it also, but she was firm in her resolve that until Elspeth was engaged Tommy should be a single man. She even made him promise not to kiss her again so long as their love had to be kept secret. “It will be so sweet to wait,” she said bravely. As we shall see presently, his efforts to put Elspeth into the hands of David were apparently of no avail, but though this would have embittered many men, it drew only to the surface some of Tommy’s noblest attributes; as he suffered

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

in silence he became gentler, more considerate, and acquired a new command over himself. To conquer self for her sake (this is in the "Letters to a Young Man") is the highest tribute a man can pay to a woman; it is the only real greatness, and Tommy had done it now. I could give you a score of proofs. Let us take his treatment of Aaron Latta.

One day about this time Tommy found himself alone in the house with Aaron, and had he been the old Tommy he would have waited but a moment to let Aaron decide which of them should go elsewhere. It was thus that these two, ever so uncomfortable in each other's presence, contrived to keep the peace. Now note the change.

"Aaron," said Tommy, in the hush that had fallen on that house since quiet Elspeth left it, "I have never thanked you in words for all that you have done for me and Elspeth."

"Dinna do it now, then," replied the warper, fidgeting.

"I must," Tommy said cheerily, "I must"; and he did, while Aaron scowled.

"It was never done for you," Aaron informed him, "nor for the father you are the marrows o'."

"It was done for my mother," said Tommy, reverently.

"I'm none so sure o't," Aaron rapped out. "I think I brocht you twa here as bairns, that the re-

OF THE CHANGE IN THOMAS

minder of my shame should ever stand before me."

But Tommy shook his head, and sat down sympathetically beside the warper. "You loved her, Aaron," he said simply. "It was an undying love that made you adopt her orphan children." A charming thought came to him. "When you brought us here," he said, with some elation, "Elspeth used to cry at nights because our mother's spirit did not come to us to comfort us, and I invented boyish explanations to appease her. But I have learned since why we did not see that spirit; for though it hovered round this house, its first thought was not for us, but for him who succoured us."

He could have made it much better had he been able to revise it, but surely it was touching, and Aaron need not have said "Damn," which was what he did say.

One knows how most men would have received so harsh an answer to such gentle words, and we can conceive how a very holy man, say a monk, would have bowed to it. Even as the monk did Tommy submit, or say rather with the meekness of a nun.

"I wish I could help you in any way, Aaron," he said, with a sigh.

"You can," replied Aaron, promptly, "by taking yourself off to London, and leaving Elspeth here

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

wi' me. I never made pretence that I wanted you, except because she wouldna come without you. Laddie and man, as weel you ken, you were aye a scunner to me."

"And yet," said Tommy, looking at him admiringly, "you fed and housed and educated us. Ah, Aaron, do you not see that your dislike gives me the more reason only to esteem you?" Carried away by desire to help the old man, he put his hand kindly on his shoulder. "You have never respected yourself," he said, "since the night you and my mother parted at the Cuttle Well, and my heart bleeds to think of it. Many a year ago, by your kindness to two forlorn children, you expiated that sin, and it is blotted out from your account. Forget it, Aaron, as every other person has forgotten it, and let the spirit of Jean Myles see you tranquil once again."

He patted Aaron affectionately; he seemed to be the older of the two.

"Tak' your hand off my shuther," Aaron cried fiercely.

Tommy removed his hand, but he continued to look yearningly at the warper. Another beautiful thought came to him.

"What are you looking so holy about?" asked Aaron, with misgivings.

"Aaron," cried Tommy, suddenly inspired, "you are not always the gloomy man you pass for being.

OF THE CHANGE IN THOMAS

You have glorious moments still. You wake in the morning, and for a second of time you are in the heyday of your youth, and you and Jean Myles are to walk out to-night. As you sit by this fire you think you hear her hand on the latch of the door; as you pass down the street you seem to see her coming towards you. It is for a moment only, and then you are a gray-haired man again, and she has been in her grave for many a year; but you have that moment."

Aaron rose, amazed and wrathful. "The de'il tak' you," he cried, "how did you find out that?"

Perhaps Tommy's nose turned up rapturously in reply, for the best of us cannot command ourselves altogether at great moments, but when he spoke he was modest again.

"It was sympathy that told me," he explained; "and, Aaron, if you will only believe me, it tells me also that a little of the man you were still clings to you. Come out of the moroseness in which you have enveloped yourself so long. Think what a joy it would be to Elspeth."

"It's little she would care."

"If you want to hurt her, tell her so."

"I'm no denying but what she's fell fond o' me."

"Then for her sake," Tommy pleaded.

But the warper turned on him with baleful eyes. "She likes me," he said in a grating voice, "and yet I'm as nothing to her; we are all as nothing to

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

her beside you. If there hadna been you I should hae become the father to her I craved to be; but you had mesmerized her; she had eyes for none but you. I sent you to the herding, meaning to break your power over her, and all she could think o' was my cruelty in sindering you. Syne you ran aff wi' her to London, stealing her frae me. I was without her while she was growing frae lassie to woman, the years when maybe she could hae made o' me what she willed. Magerful Tam took the mother frae me, and he lived again in you to tak' the dochter."

"You really think me masterful—me!" Tommy said, smiling.

"I suppose you never were!" Aaron replied ironically.

"Yes," Tommy admitted frankly, "I was masterful as a boy, ah, and even quite lately. How we change!" he said musingly.

"How we dinna change!" retorted Aaron, bitterly. He had learned the truer philosophy.

"Man," he continued, looking Tommy over, "there's times when I see mair o' your mother than your father in you. She was a wonder at making believe. The letters about her grandeur that she wrote to Thrums when she was starving! Even you couldna hae wrote them better. But she never managed to cheat hersel'. That's whaur you sail away frae her."

OF THE CHANGE IN THOMAS

“I used to make believe, Aaron, as you say,” Tommy replied sadly. “If you knew how I feel the folly of it now, perhaps even you would wish that I felt it less.

“But we must each of us dree his own weird,” he proceeded, with wonderful sweetness, when Aaron did not answer. “And so far, at least, as Elspeth is concerned, surely I have done my duty. I had the bringing up of her from the days when she was learning to speak.”

“She got into the way o’ letting you do everything for her,” the warper responded sourly. “You thought for her, you acted for her, frae the first; you toomed her, and then filled her up wi’ yoursel’.”

“She always needed some one to lean on.”

“Ay, because you had maimed her. She grew up in the notion that you were all the earth and the wonder o’ the world.”

“Could I help that?”

“Help it! Did you try? It was the one thing you were sure o’ yoursel’; it was the one thing you thought worth anybody’s learning. You stood before her crowing the whole day. I said the now I wished you would go and leave her wi’ me: but I wouldna dare to keep her; she’s helpless without you; if you took your arm awa frae her now, she would tumble to the ground.”

“I fear it is true, Aaron,” Tommy said, with bent

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

head. "Whether she is so by nature, or whether I have made her so, I cannot tell, but I fear that what you say is true."

"It's true," said Aaron, "and yours is the wite. There's no life for her now except what you mak'; she canna see beyond you. Go on thinking yoursel' a wonder if you like, but mind this: if you were to cast her off frae you now, she would die like an amputated hand."

To Tommy it was like listening to his doom. Ah, Aaron, even you could not withhold your pity, did you know how this man is being punished now for having made Elspeth so dependent on him! Some such thought passed through Tommy's head, but he was too brave to appeal for pity. "If that is so," he said firmly, "I take the responsibility for it. But I began this talk, Aaron, not to intrude my troubles on you, but hoping to lighten yours. If I could see you smile, Aaron ——"

"Drop it!" cried the warper; and then, going closer to him: "You would hae seen me smile, ay, and heard me laugh, gin you had been here when Mrs. McLean came yont to read your book to me. She fair insistit on reading the terrible noble bits to me, and she grat they were so sublime; but the sublimer they were, the mair I laughed, for I ken you, Tommy, my man, I ken you."

He spoke with much vehemence, and, after all, our hero was not perfect. He withdrew stiffly to

OF THE CHANGE IN THOMAS

the other room. I think it was the use of the word Tommy that enraged him.

But in a very few minutes he scorned himself, and was possessed by a pensive wonder that one so tragically fated as he could resent an old man's gibe. Aaron misunderstood him. Was that any reason why he should not feel sorry for Aaron? He crossed the hallan to the kitchen door, and stopped there, overcome with pity. The warper was still crouching by the fire, but his head rested on his chest; he was a weary, desolate figure, and at the other side of the hearth stood an empty chair. The picture was the epitome of his life, or so it seemed to the sympathetic soul at the door, who saw him passing from youth to old age, staring at the chair that must always be empty. At the same moment Tommy saw his own future, and in it, too, an empty chair. Yet, hard as was his own case, at least he knew that he was loved; if her chair must be empty, the fault was as little hers as his, while Aaron —

A noble compassion drew him forward, and he put his hand determinedly on the dear old man's shoulder.

“Aaron,” he said, in a tremble of pity, “I know what is the real sorrow of your life, and I rejoice because I can put an end to it. You think that Jean Myles never cared for you; but you are strangely wrong. I was with my mother to the last, Aaron,

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

and I can tell you, she asked me with her dying breath to say to you that she loved you all the time."

Aaron tried to rise, but was pushed back into his chair. "Love cannot die," cried Tommy, triumphantly, like the fairy in the pantomime; "love is always young ——"

He stopped in mid-career at sight of Aaron's disappointing face. "Are you done?" the warper inquired. "When you and me are alane in this house there's no room for the both o' us, and as I'll never hae it said that I made Jean Myles's bairn munt, I'll go out mysel'."

And out he went, and sat on the dyke till Elspeth came home. It did not turn Tommy sulky. He nodded kindly to Aaron from the window in token of forgiveness, and next day he spent a valuable hour in making a cushion for the old man's chair. "He must be left with the impression that you made it," Tommy explained to Elspeth, "for he would not take it from me."

"Oh, Tommy, how good you are!"

"I am far from it, Elspeth."

"There is a serenity about you nowadays," she said, "that I don't seem to have noticed before," and indeed this was true; it was the serenity that comes to those who, having a mortal wound, can no more be troubled by the pin-pricks.

OF THE CHANGE IN THOMAS

“There has been nothing to cause it, has there?” Elspeth asked timidly.

“Only the feeling that I have much to be grateful for,” he replied. “I have you, Elspeth.”

“And I have you,” she said, “and I want no more. I could never care for anyone as I care for you, Tommy.”

She was speaking unselfishly; she meant to imply delicately that the doctor's defection need not make Tommy think her unhappy. “Are you glad?” she asked.

He said Yes bravely. Elspeth, he was determined, should never have the distress of knowing that for her sake he was giving up the one great joy which life contains. He was a grander character than most. Men have often in the world's history made a splendid sacrifice for women, but if you turn up the annals you will find that the woman nearly always knew of it.

He told Grizel what Aaron had said and what Elspeth had said. He could keep nothing from her now; he was done with the world of make-believe for ever. And it seemed wicked of him to hope, he declared, or to let her hope. “I ought to give you up, Grizel,” he said, with a groan.

“I won't let you,” she replied adorably.

“Gemmell has not come near us for a week. I ask him in, but he avoids the house.”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“I don’t understand it,” Grizel had to admit; “but I think he is fond of her, I do indeed.”

“Even if that were so, I fear she would not accept him. I know Elspeth so well that I feel I am deceiving you if I say there is any hope.”

“Nevertheless you must say it,” she answered brightly; “you must say it and leave me to think it. And I do think it. I believe that Elspeth, despite her timidity and her dependence on you, is like other girls at heart, and not more difficult to win.

“And even if it all comes to nothing,” she told him, a little faintly, “I shall not be unhappy. You don’t really know me if you think I should love to be married so — so much as all that.”

“It is you, Grizel,” he replied, “who don’t see that it is myself I am pitying. It is I who want to be married as much as all that.”

Her eyes shone with a soft light, for of course it was what she wanted him to say. These two seemed to have changed places. That people could love each other, and there the end, had been his fond philosophy and her torment. Now, it was she who argued for it and Tommy who shook his head.

“They can be very, very happy.”

“No,” he said.

“But one of them is.”

OF THE CHANGE IN THOMAS

“Not the other,” he insisted; and of course it was again what she wanted him to say.

And he was not always despairing. He tried hard to find a way of bringing David to Elspeth's feet, and once, at least, the apparently reluctant suitor almost succumbed. Tommy had met him near Aaron's house, and invited him to come in and hear Elspeth singing. “I did not know she sang,” David said, hesitating.

“She is so shy about it,” Tommy replied lightly, “that we can hear her by stealth only. Aaron and I listen at the door. Come and listen at the door.”

And David had yielded and listened at the door, and afterwards gone in and remained like one who could not tear himself away. What was more, he and Elspeth had touched upon the subject of love in their conversation, Tommy sitting at the window so engrossed in a letter to Pym that he seemed to hear nothing, though he could repeat everything afterwards to Grizel.

Elspeth had said, in her shrinking way, that if she were a man she could love only a woman who was strong and courageous and helpful — such a woman as Grizel, she had said.

“And yet,” David replied, “women have been loved who had none of those qualities.”

“In spite of the want of them?” Elspeth asked.

“Perhaps because of it,” said he.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“They are noble qualities,” Elspeth maintained a little sadly, and he assented. “And one of them, at least, is essential,” she said. “A woman has no right to be loved who is not helpful.”

“She is helpful to the man who loves her,” David replied.

“He would have to do for her,” Elspeth said, “the very things she should be doing for him.”

“He may want very much to do them,” said David.

“Then it is her weakness that appeals to him. Is not that loving her for the wrong thing?”

“It may be the right thing,” David insisted, “for him.”

“And at that point,” Tommy said, boyishly, to Grizel, “I ceased to hear them, I was so elated; I felt that everything was coming right. I could not give another thought to their future, I was so busy mapping out my own. I heard a hammering. Do you know what it was? It was our house going up—your house and mine; our home, Grizel! It was not here, nor in London. It was near the Thames. I wanted it to be upon the bank, but you said No, you were afraid of floods. I wanted to superintend the building, but you conducted me contemptuously to my desk. You intimated that I did not know how to build—that no one knew except yourself. You instructed the architect, and bullied the workmen, and cried

OF THE CHANGE IN THOMAS

for more store-closets. Grizel, I saw the house go up; I saw you the adoration and terror of your servants; I heard you singing from room to room."

He was touched by this; all beautiful thoughts touched him.

But as a rule, though Tommy tried to be brave for her sake, it was usually she who was the comforter now, and he the comforted, and this was the arrangement that suited Grizel best. Her one thought need no longer be that she loved him too much, but how much he loved her. It was not her self-respect that must be humoured back, but his. If hers lagged, what did it matter? What are her own troubles to a woman when there is something to do for the man she loves?

"You are too anxious about the future," she said to him, if he had grown gloomy again. "Can we not be happy in the present, and leave the future to take care of itself?" How strange to know that it was Grizel who said this to Tommy, and not Tommy who said it to Grizel!

She delighted in playing the mother to him. "Now you must go back to your desk," she would say masterfully. "You have three hours' work to do to-night yet."

"It can wait. Let me stay a little longer with you, Grizel," he answered humbly. Ha! it was Tommy who was humble now. Not so long ago

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

he would not have allowed his work to wait for anyone, and Grizel knew it, and exulted.

“To work, sir,” she ordered. “And you must put on your old coat before you sit down to write, and pull up your cuffs so that they don’t scrape on the desk. Also, you must not think too much about me.”

She tried to look businesslike, but she could scarce resist rocking her arms with delight when she heard herself saying such things to him. It was as if she had the old doctor once more in her hands.

“What more, Grizel? I like you to order me about.”

“Only this. Good afternoon.”

“But I am to walk home with you,” he entreated.

“No,” she said decisively; but she smiled: once upon a time it had been she who asked for this.

“If you are good,” she said, “you shall perhaps see me to-morrow.”

“Perhaps only?” He was scared; but she smiled happily again: it had once been she who had to beg that there should be no perhaps.

“If you are good,” she replied,—“and you are not good when you have such a long face. Smile, you silly boy; smile when I order you. If you don’t I shall not so much as look out at my window to-morrow.”

OF THE CHANGE IN THOMAS

He was the man who had caused her so much agony, and she was looking at him with the eternally forgiving smile of the mother. "Ah, Grizel," Tommy cried passionately, "how brave and unselfish and noble you are, and what a glorious wife God intended you to be!"

She broke from him with a little cry, but when she turned round again it was to nod and smile to him.

CHAPTER XX

A LOVE-LETTER

SOME beautiful days followed, so beautiful to Grizel that as they passed away she kissed her hand to them. Do you see her standing on tiptoe to see the last of them? They lit a fire in the chamber of her soul which is the home of all pure maids, and the fagots that warmed Grizel were every fond look that had been on her lover's face and every sweet word he had let fall. She counted and fondled them, and pretended that one was lost that she might hug it more than all the others when it was found. To sit by that fire was almost better than having the days that lit it; sometimes she could scarcely wait for the day to go.

Tommy's fond looks and sweet words! There was also a letter in those days, and, now that I remember, a little garnet ring; and there were a few other fagots, but all so trifling it must seem incredible to you that they could have made so great a blaze—nothing else in it, on my honour, except a girl's heart added by herself that the fire might burn a moment longer.

A LOVE-LETTER

And now, what so chilly as the fire that has gone out! Gone out long ago, dear Grizel, while you crouched over it. You may put your hand in the ashes; they will not burn you now. Ah, Grizel, why do you sit there in the cold?

The day of the letter! It began in dread, but ended so joyfully, do you think Grizel grudged the dread? It became dear to her; she loved to return to it and gaze at the joy it glorified, as one sees the sunshine from a murky room. When she heard the postman's knock she was not even curious; so few letters came to her, she thought this must be Maggy Ann's monthly one from Aberdeen, and went on placidly dusting. At last she lifted it from the floor, for it had been slipped beneath the door, and then Grizel was standing in her little lobby, panting as if at the end of a race. The letter lay in both her hands, and they rose slowly until they were pressed against her breast.

She uttered some faint cries (it was the only moment in which I have known Grizel to be hysterical), and then she ran to her room and locked herself in—herself and it. Do you know why that look of elation had come suddenly to her face? It was because he had not even written the address in a disguised hand to deceive the postmistress. So much of the old Grizel was gone that the pathos of her elation over this was lost to her.

Several times she almost opened it. Why did she

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

pause? why had that frightened look come into her eyes? She put the letter on her table and drew away from it. If she took a step nearer, her hands went behind her back as if saying, "Grizel, don't ask us to open it; we are afraid."

Perhaps it really did say the dear things that love writes. Perhaps it was aghast at the way she was treating it. Dear letter! Her mouth smiled to it, but her hands remained afraid. As she stood irresolute, smiling, and afraid, she was a little like her mother. I have put off as long as possible saying that Grizel was ever like her mother. The Painted Lady had never got any letters while she was in Thrums, but she looked wistfully at those of other people. "They are so pretty," she had said; "but don't open them: when you open them they break your heart." Grizel remembered what her mother had said.

Had the old Grizel feared what might be inside, it would have made her open the letter more quickly. Two minds to one person were unendurable to her. But she seemed to be a coward now. It was pitiable.

Perhaps it was quite a common little letter, beginning "Dear Grizel," and saying nothing more delicious or more terrible than that he wanted her to lend him one of the doctor's books. She thought of a score of trivialities it might be about; but the letter was still unopened when David Gemmell

A LOVE-LETTER

called to talk over some cases in which he required her counsel. He found her sitting listlessly, something in her lap which she at once concealed. She failed to follow his arguments, and he went away puckering his brows, some of the old doctor's sayings about her ringing loud in his ears.

One of them was: "Things will be far wrong with Grizel when she is able to sit idle with her hands in her lap."

Another: "She is almost pitifully straightforward, man. Everything that is in Grizel must out. She can hide nothing."

Yet how cunningly she had concealed what was in her hands. Cunning applied to Grizel! David shuddered. He thought of Tommy, and shut his mouth tight. He could do this easily. Tommy could not do it without feeling breathless. They were types of two kinds of men.

David also remembered a promise he had given McQueen, and wondered, as he had wondered a good deal of late, whether the time had come to keep it.

But Grizel sat on with her unopened letter. She was to meet Tommy presently on the croquet lawn of the Dovecot, when Ailie was to play Mr. James (the champion), and she decided that she must wait till then. She would know what sort of letter it was the moment she saw his face. And then! She pressed her hands together.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

Oh, how base of her to doubt him! She said it to herself then and often afterwards. She looked mournfully in her mother's long mirror at this disloyal Grizel, as if the capacity to doubt him was the saddest of all the changes that had come to her. He had been so true yesterday; oh, how could she tremble to-day? Beautiful yesterday! but yesterday may seem so long ago. How little a time had passed between the moment when she was greeting him joyously in Caddam Wood and that cry of the heart, "How could you hurt your Grizel so!" No, she could not open her letter. She could kiss it, but she could not open it.

Foolish fears! for before she had shaken hands with Tommy in Mrs. McLean's garden she knew he loved her still, and that the letter proved it. She was properly punished, yet surely in excess, for when she might have been reading her first love-letter, she had to join in discussions with various ladies about Berlin wool and the like, and to applaud the prowess of Mr. James with the loathly croquet mallet. It seemed quite a long time before Tommy could get a private word with her. Then he began about the letter at once.

"You are not angry with me for writing it?" he asked anxiously. "I should not have done it; I had no right: but such a desire to do it came over me, I had to; it was such a glory to me to say in writing what you are to me."

A LOVE-LETTER

She smiled happily. Oh, exquisite day! "I have so long wanted to have a letter from you," she said. "I have almost wished you would go away for a little time, so that I might have a letter from you."

He had guessed this. He had written to give her delight.

"Did you like the first words of it, Grizel?" he asked eagerly.

The lover and the artist spoke together.

Could she admit that the letter was unopened, and why? Oh, the pain to him! She nodded assent. It was not really an untruth, she told herself. She did like them—oh, how she liked them, though she did not know what they were!

"I nearly began 'My beloved,'" he said solemnly.

Somehow she had expected it to be this. "Why did n't you?" she asked, a little disappointed.

"I like the other so much better," he replied. "To write it was so delicious to me, I thought you would not mind."

"I don't mind," she said hastily. (What could it be?)

"But you would have preferred 'beloved'?"

"It is such a sweet name."

"Surely not so sweet as the other, Grizel?"

"No," she said, "no." (Oh, what could it be!)

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“Have you destroyed it?” he asked, and the question was a shock to her. Her hand rose instinctively to defend something that lay near her heart.

“I could not,” she whispered.

“Do you mean you wanted to?” he asked dolefully.

“I thought you wanted it,” she murmured.

“I!” he cried, aghast, and she was joyous again.

“Can’t you guess where it is?” she said.

He understood. “Grizel! You carry my letter there!”

She was full of glee; but she puzzled him presently.

“Do you think I could go now?” she inquired eagerly.

“And leave me?”

It was dreadful of her, but she nodded.

“I want to go home.”

“Is it not home, Grizel, when you are with me?”

“I want to go away from home, then.” She said it as if she loved to tantalize him.

“But why?”

“I won’t tell you.” She was looking wistfully at the door. “I have something to do.”

“It can wait.”

“It has waited too long.” He might have heard an assenting rustle from beneath her bodice.

A LOVE-LETTER

“Do let me go,” she said coaxingly, as if he held her.

“I can’t understand ——” he began, and broke off. She was facing him demurely but exultantly, challenging him, he could see, to read her now. “Just when I am flattering myself that I know everything about you, Grizel,” he said, with a long face, “I suddenly wonder whether I know anything.”

She would have liked to clap her hands. “You must remember that we have changed places,” she told him. “It is I who understand you now.”

“And I am devoutly glad,” he made answer, with humble thankfulness. “And I must ask you, Grizel, why you want to run away from me.”

“But you think you know,” she retorted smartly. “You think I want to read my letter again!”

Her cleverness staggered him. “But I am right, am I not, Grizel?”

“No,” she said triumphantly, “you are quite wrong. Oh, if you knew how wrong you are!” And having thus again unhorsed him, she made her excuses to Ailie and slipped away. Dr. Gemmell, who was present and had been watching her narrowly, misread the flush on her face and her restless desire to be gone.

“Is there anything between those two, do you think?” Mrs. McLean had said in a twitter to him while Tommy and Grizel were talking, and he had answered No almost sharply.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“People are beginning to think there is,” she said in self-defence.

“They are mistaken,” he told her curtly, and it was about this time that Grizel left. David followed her to her home soon afterwards, and Maggy Ann, who answered his summons, did not accompany him upstairs. He was in the house daily, and she left him to find Grizel for himself. He opened the parlour door almost as he knocked, and she was there, but had not heard him. He stopped short, like one who had blundered unawares on what was not for him.

She was on her knees on the hearth-rug, with her head buried in what had been Dr. McQueen’s chair. Ragged had been the seat of it on the day when she first went to live with him, but very early on the following morning, or, to be precise, five minutes after daybreak, he had risen to see if there were burglars in the parlour, and behold, it was his grateful little maid repadding the old arm-chair. How a situation repeats itself! Without disturbing her, the old doctor had slipped away with a full heart. It was what the young doctor did now.

But the situation was not quite the same. She had been bubbling over with glee then; she was sobbing now. David could not know that it was a sob of joy; he knew only that he had never seen her crying before, and that it was the letter in

A LOVE-LETTER

her hands that had brought tears at last to those once tranquil and steadfast eyes.

In an odd conversation which had once taken place in that room between the two doctors, Gemmell had said: "But the time may come without my knowing it." And McQueen's reply was: "I don't think so, for she is so open; but I'll tell you this, David, as a guide. I never saw her eyes wet. It is one of the touching things about her that she has the eyes of a man, to whom it is a shame to cry. If you ever see her greeting, David, I'm sore doubting that the time will have come."

As David Gemmell let himself softly out of the house, to return to it presently, he thought the time had come. What he conceived he had to do was a hard thing, but he never thought of not doing it. He had kept himself in readiness to do it for many days now, and he walked to it as firmly as if he were on his professional rounds. He did not know that the skin round his eyes had contracted, giving them the look of pain which always came there when he was sorry or pitiful or indignant. He was not well acquainted with his eyes, and, had he glanced at them now in a glass, would have presumed that this was their usual expression.

Grizel herself opened the door to him this time, and "Maggy Ann, he is found!" she cried victoriously. Evidently she had heard of his previous visit. "We have searched every room in the

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

house for you," she said gaily, "and had you disappeared for much longer, Maggy Ann would have had the carpets up."

He excused himself on the ground that he had forgotten something, and she chided him merrily for being forgetful. As he sat with her David could have groaned aloud. How vivacious she had become! but she was sparkling in false colours. After what he knew had been her distress of a few minutes ago, it was a painted face to him. She was trying to deceive him. Perhaps she suspected that he had seen her crying, and now, attired in all a woman's wiles, she was defying him to believe his eyes.

Grizel garbed in wiles! Alack the day! She was shielding the man, and Gemmell could have driven her away roughly to get at him. But she was also standing over her own pride, lest anyone should see that it had fallen; and do you think that David would have made her budge an inch?

Of course she saw that he had something on his mind. She knew those puckered eyes so well, and had so often smoothed them for him.

"What is it, David?" she asked sympathetically. "I see you have come as a patient to-night."

"As one of those patients," he rejoined, "who feel better at mere sight of the doctor."

"Fear of the prescription?" said she.

"Not if you prescribe yourself, Grizel."

A LOVE-LETTER

“David!” she cried. He had been paying compliments!

“I mean it.”

“So I can see by your face. Oh, David, how stern you look!”

“Dr. McQueen and I,” he retorted, “used to hold private meetings after you had gone to bed, at which we agreed that you should no longer be allowed to make fun of us. They came to nothing. Do you know why?”

“Because I continued to do it?”

“No; but because we missed it so much if you stopped.”

“You are nice to-night, David,” she said, dropping him a courtesy.

“We liked all your bullying ways,” he went on. “We were children in your masterful hands.”

“I was a tyrant, David,” she said, looking properly ashamed. “I wonder you did not marry, just to get rid of me.”

“Have you ever seriously wondered why I don’t marry?” he asked quickly.

“Oh, David,” she exclaimed, “what else do you think your patients and I talk of when I am trying to nurse them? It has agitated the town ever since you first walked up the Marrywellbrae, and we can’t get on with our work for thinking of it.”

“Seriously, Grizel?”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

She became grave at once. "If you could find the right woman," she said wistfully.

"I have found her," he answered; and then she pressed her hands together, too excited to speak.

"If she would only care a little for me," he said.

Grizel rocked her arms. "I am sure she does," she cried. "David, I am so glad!"

He saw what her mistake was, but pretended not to know that she had made one. "Are you really glad that I love you, Grizel?" he asked.

It seemed to daze her for a moment. "Not me, David," she said softly, as if correcting him. "You don't mean that it is me?" she said coaxingly. "David," she cried, "say it is not me!"

He drooped his head, but not before he had seen all the brightness die out of her face. "Is it so painful to you even to hear me say it?" he asked gravely.

Her joy had been selfish as her sorrow was. For nigh a minute she had been thinking of herself alone, it meant so much to her; but now she jumped up and took his hand in hers.

"Poor David!" she said, making much of his hand as if she had hurt it. But David Gemmell's was too simple a face to oppose to her pitying eyes, and presently she let his hand slip from her and stood regarding him curiously. He had to look another way, and then she even smiled, a little forlornly.

A LOVE-LETTER

“Do you mind talking it over with me, Grizel?” he asked. “I have always been well aware that you did not care for me in that way, but nevertheless I believe you might do worse.”

“No woman could do better,” she answered gravely. “I should like you to talk it over, David, if you begin at the beginning”; and she sat down with her hands crossed.

“I won’t say what a good thing it would be for me,” was his beginning; “we may take that for granted.”

“I don’t think we can,” she remarked; “but it scarcely matters at present. That is not the beginning, David.”

He was very anxious to make it the beginning.

“I am weary of living in lodgings,” he said. “The practice suffers by my not being married. Many patients dislike being attended by a single man. I ought to be in McQueen’s house; it has been so long known as the doctor’s house. And you should be a doctor’s wife—you who could almost be the doctor. It would be a shame, Grizel, if you who are so much to patients were to marry out of the profession. Don’t you follow me?”

“I follow you,” she replied; “but what does it matter? You have not begun at the beginning.” He looked at her inquiringly. “You must begin,” she informed him, “by saying why

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

you ask me to marry you when you don't love me." She added, in answer to another look from him: "You know you don't." There was a little reproach in it. "Oh, David, what made you think I could be so easily taken in!"

He looked so miserable that by and by she smiled, not so tremulously as before.

"How bad at it you are, David!" she said.

And how good at it she was! he thought gloomily.

"Shall I help you out?" she asked gently, but speaking with dignity. "You think I am unhappy; you believe I am in the position in which you placed yourself, of caring for someone who does not care for me."

"Grizel, I mistrust him."

She flushed; she was not quite so gentle now. "And so you offer me your hand to save me! It was a great self-sacrifice, David, but you used not to be fond of doing showy things."

"I did not mean it to be showy," he answered.

She was well aware of that, but—— "Oh, David," she cried, "that you should believe I needed it! How little you must think of me!"

"Does it look as if I thought little of you?" he said.

"Little of my strength, David, little of my pride."

"I think so much of them that how could I stand by silently and watch them go?"

A LOVE-LETTER

“You think you have seen that!” She was agitated now.

He hesitated. “Yes,” he said courageously.

Her eyes cried, “David, how could you be so cruel!” but they did not daunt him.

“Have you not seen it yourself, Grizel?” he said.

She pressed her hands together. “I was so happy,” she said, “until you came!”

“Have you not seen it yourself?” he asked again.

“There may be better things,” she retorted, “than those you rate so highly.”

“Not for you,” he said.

“If they are gone,” she told him, with a flush of resentment, “it is not you who can bring them back.”

“But let me try, Grizel,” said he.

“David, can I not even make you angry with me?”

“No, Grizel, you can't. I am very sorry that I can make you angry with me.”

“I am not,” she said dispiritedly. “It would be contemptible in me.” And then, eagerly: “But, David, you have made a great mistake, indeed you have. You—you are a dreadful bungler, sir!” She was trying to make his face relax, with a tremulous smile from herself to encourage him; but the effort was not successful. “You see, I can't

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

even bully you now!" she said. "Did that capacity go with the others, David?"

"Try a little harder," he replied. "I think you will find that I submit to it still."

"Very well." She forced some gaiety to her aid. After all, how could she let his monstrous stupidity wound a heart protected by such a letter?

"You have been a very foolish and presumptuous boy," she began. She was standing up, smiling, wagging a reproachful but nervous finger at him. "If it were not that I have a weakness for seeing medical men making themselves ridiculous so that I may put them right, I should be very indignant with you, sir."

"Put me right, Grizel," he said. He was sure she was trying to blind him again.

"Know, then, David, that I am not the poor-spirited, humble creature you seem to have come here in search of——"

"But you admitted——"

"How dare you interrupt me, sir! Yes, I admit that I am not quite as I was, but I glory in it. I used to be ostentatiously independent; now I am only independent enough. My pride made me walk on air; now I walk on the earth, where there is less chance of falling. I have still confidence in myself; but I begin to see that ways are not necessarily right because they are my ways. In short,

A LOVE-LETTER

David, I am evidently on the road to being a model character !”

They were gay words, but she ended somewhat faintly.

“ I was satisfied with you as you were,” was the doctor’s comment.

“ I wanted to excel !”

“ You explain nothing, Grizel,” he said reproachfully. “ Why have you changed so ?”

“ Because I am so happy. Do you remember how, in the old days, I sometimes danced for joy ? I could do it now.”

“ Are you engaged to be married, Grizel ?”

She took a quiet breath. “ You have no right to question me in this way,” she said. “ I think I have been very good in bearing with you so long.”

But she laid aside her indignation at once ; he was so old a friend, the sincerity of him had been so often tried. “ If you must know, David,” she said, with a girlish frankness that became her better, “ I am not engaged to be married. And I must tell you nothing more,” she added, shutting her mouth decisively. She must be faithful to her promise.

“ He forbids it ?” Gemmell asked mercilessly.

She stamped her foot, not in rage, but in hopelessness. “ How incapable you are of doing him justice !” she cried. “ If you only knew ——”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“Tell me. I want to do him justice.”

She sat down again, sighing. “My attempt to regain my old power over you has not been very successful, has it, David? We must not quarrel, though”—holding out her hand, which he grasped. “And you won’t question me any more?” She said it appealingly.

“Never again,” he answered. “I never wanted to question you, Grizel. I wanted only to marry you.”

“And that can’t be.”

“I don’t see it,” he said, so stoutly that she was almost amused. But he would not be pushed aside. He had something more to say.

“Dr. McQueen wished it,” he said; “above all else in the world he wished it. He often told me so.”

“He never said that to me,” Grizel replied quickly.

“Because he thought that to press you was no way to make you care for me. He hoped that it would come about.”

“It has not come about, David, with either of us,” she said gently. “I am sure that would have been sufficient answer to him.”

“No, Grizel, it would not, not now.”

He had risen, and his face was whiter than she had ever seen it.

“I am going to hurt you, Grizel,” he said, and

A LOVE-LETTER

every word was a pang to him. "I see no other way. It has got to be done. Dr. McQueen often talked to me about the things that troubled you when you were a little girl — the morbid fears you had then, and that had all been swept away years before I knew you. But though they had been long gone, you were so much to him that he tried to think of everything that might happen to you in the future, and he foresaw that they might possibly come back. 'If she were ever to care for some false loon!' he has said to me, and then, Grizel, he could not go on."

Grizel beat her hands. "If he could not go on," she said, "it was not because he feared what I should do."

"No, no," David answered eagerly, "he never feared for that, but for your happiness. He told me of a boy who used to torment you, oh, all so long ago, and of such little account that he had forgotten his name. But that boy has come back, and you care for him, and he is a false loon, Grizel."

She had risen too, and was flashing fire on David; but he went on.

"'If the time ever comes,' he said to me, 'when you see her in torture from such a cause, speak to her openly about it. Tell her it is I who am speaking through you. It will be a hard task to you, but wrestle through with it, David, in mem-

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

ory of any little kindness I may have done you, and the great love I bore my Grizel.' ”

She was standing rigid now. “Is there any more, David ?” she said in a low voice.

“Only this. I admired you then as I admire you now. I may not love you, Grizel, but of this I am very sure”—he was speaking steadily, he was forgetting no one — “that you are the noblest and bravest woman I have ever known, and I promised—he did not draw the promise from me, I gave it to him — that if I was a free man and could help you in any way without paining you by telling you these things, I would try that way first.”

“And this is the way ?”

“I could think of no other. Is it of no avail ?”

She shook her head. “You have made such a dreadful mistake,” she cried miserably, “and you won't see it. Oh, how you wrong him! I am the happiest girl in the world, and it is he who makes me so happy. But I can't explain. You need not ask me; I promised, and I won't.”

“You used not to be so fond of mystery, Grizel.”

“I am not fond of it now.”

“Ah, it is he,” David said bitterly, and he lifted his hat. “Is there nothing you will let me do for you, Grizel ?” he cried.

“I thought you were to do so much for me when

A LOVE-LETTER

you came into this room," she admitted wistfully, "and said that you were in love. I thought it was with another woman."

He remembered that her face had brightened. "How could that have helped you?" he asked.

She saw that she had but to tell him, and for her sake he would do it at once. But she could not be so selfish.

"We need not speak of that now," she said.

"We must speak of it," he answered. "Grizel, it is but fair to me. It may be so important to me."

"You have shown that you don't care for her, David, and that ends it."

"Who is it?" He was much stirred.

"If you don't know——"

"Is it Elspeth?"

The question came out of him like a confession, and hope turned Grizel giddy.

"Do you love her, David?" she cried.

But he hesitated. "Is what you have told me true, that it would help you?" he asked, looking her full in the eyes.

"Do you love her?" she implored, but he was determined to have her answer first.

"Is it, Grizel?"

"Yes, yes. Do you, David?"

And then he admitted that he did, and she rocked her arms in joy.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“But oh, David, to say such things to me when you were not a free man! How badly you have treated Elspeth to-day!”

“She does not care for me,” he said.

“Have you asked her?” — in alarm.

“No; but could she?”

“How could she help it?” She would not tell him what Tommy thought. Oh, she must do everything to encourage David.

“And still,” said he, puzzling, “I don’t see how it can affect you.”

“And I can’t tell you,” she moaned. “Oh, David, do, do find out. Why are you so blind?” She could have shaken him. “Don’t you see that once Elspeth was willing to be taken care of by some other person —— I must not tell you!”

“Then he would marry you?”

She cried in anxiety: “Have I told you, or did you find out?”

“I found out,” he said. “Is it possible he is so fond of her as that?”

“There never was such a brother,” she answered. She could not help adding, “But he is still fonder of me.”

The doctor pulled his arm over his eyes and sat down again. Presently he was saying with a long face: “I came here to denounce the cause of your unhappiness, and I begin to see it is myself.”

“Of course it is, you stupid David,” she said

A LOVE-LETTER

gleefully. She was very kind to the man who had been willing to do so much for her; but as the door closed on him she forgot him. She even ceased to hear the warning voice he had brought with him from the dead. She was re-reading the letter that began by calling her wife.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ATTEMPT TO CARRY ELSPETH BY NUMBERS

THAT was one of Grizel's beautiful days, but there were others to follow as sweet, if not so exciting; she could travel back through the long length of them without coming once to a moment when she had held her breath in sudden fear; and this was so delicious that she sometimes thought these were the best days of all.

Of course she had little anxieties, but they were nearly all about David. He was often at Aaron's house now, and what exercised her was this—that she could not be certain that he was approaching Elspeth in the right way. The masterful Grizel seemed to have come to life again, for, evidently, she was convinced that she alone knew the right way.

“Oh, David, I would not have said that to her!” she told him, when he reported progress; and now she would warn him, “You are too humble,” and again, “You were over-bold.” The doctor, to his bewilderment, frequently discovered, on laying re-

THE ATTEMPT TO CARRY ELSPETH

sults before her, that what he had looked upon as encouraging signs were really bad, and that, on the other hand, he had often left the cottage disconsolately when he ought to have been strutting. The issue was that he lost all faith in his own judgment, and if Grizel said that he was getting on well, his face became foolishly triumphant, but if she frowned, it cried, "All is over!"

Of the proposal Tommy did not know; it seemed to her that she had no right to tell even him of that; but the rest she did tell him: that David, by his own confession, was in love with Elspeth; and so pleased was Tommy that his delight made another day for her to cherish.

So now everything depended on Elspeth. "Oh, if she only would!" Grizel cried, and for her sake Tommy tried to look bright, but his head shook in spite of him.

"Do you mean that we should discourage David?" she asked dolefully; but he said No to that.

"I was afraid," she confessed, "that as you are so hopeless, you might think it your duty to discourage him so as to save him the pain of a refusal."

"Not at all," Tommy said, with some hastiness.

"Then you do really have a tiny bit of hope?"

"While there is life there is hope," he answered.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

She said: "I have been thinking it over, for it is so important to us, and I see various ways in which you could help David, if you would."

"What would I not do, Grizel! You have to name them only."

"Well, for instance, you might show her that you have a very high opinion of him."

"Agreed. But she knows that already."

"Then, David is an only child. Don't you think you could say that men who have never had a sister are peculiarly gentle and considerate to women?"

"Oh, Grizel! But I think I can say that."

"And — and that having been so long accustomed to doing everything for themselves, they don't need managing wives as men brought up among women need them."

"Yes. But how cunning you are, Grizel! Who would have believed it?"

"And then ——" She hesitated.

"Go on. I see by your manner that this is to be a big one."

"It would be such a help," she said eagerly, "if you could be just a little less attentive to her. I know you do ever so much of the housework because she is not fond of it; and if she has a headache you sit with her all day; and you beg her to play and sing to you, though you really dislike music. Oh, there are scores of things you do for

THE ATTEMPT TO CARRY ELSPETH

her, and if you were to do them a little less willingly, in such a way as to show her that they interrupt your work and are a slight trial to you, I — I am sure that would help !”

“ She would see through me, Grizel. Elspeth is sharper than you think her.”

“ Not if you did it very skilfully.”

“ Then she would believe I had grown cold to her, and it would break her heart.”

“ One of your failings,” replied Grizel, giving him her hand for a moment as recompense for what she was about to say, “ is that you think women’s hearts break so easily. If, at the slightest sign that she notices any change in you, you think her heart is breaking, and seize her in your arms, crying, ‘ Elspeth, dear little Elspeth !’ — and that is what your first impulse would be ——”

“ How well you know me, Grizel !” groaned Sentimental Tommy.

“ If that would be the result,” she went on, “ better not do it at all. But if you were to restrain yourself, then she could not but reflect that many of the things you did for her with a sigh David did for pleasure, and she would compare him and you ——”

“ To my disadvantage ?” Tommy exclaimed, with sad incredulity. “ Do you really think she could, Grizel ?”

“ Give her the chance,” Grizel continued, “ and

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

if you find it hard, you must remember that what you are doing is for her good."

"And for ours," Tommy cried fervently.

Every promise he made her at this time he fulfilled, and more; he was hopeless, but all a man could do to make Elspeth love David he did.

The doctor was quite unaware of it. "Fortunately, her brother had a headache yesterday and was lying down," he told Grizel, with calm brutality, "so I saw her alone for a few minutes."

"The fibs I have to invent," said Tommy, to the same confidante, "to get myself out of their way!"

"Luckily he does not care for music," David said, "so when she is at the piano he sometimes remains in the kitchen talking to Aaron."

Tommy and Aaron left together! Tommy described those scenes with much good humour. "I was amazed at first," he said to Grizel, "to find Aaron determinedly enduring me, but now I understand. He wants what we want. He says not a word about it, but he is watching those two courting like a born match-maker. Aaron has several reasons for hoping that Elspeth will get our friend (as he would express it): one, that this would keep her in Thrums; another, that to be the wife of a doctor is second only in worldly grandeur to marrying the manse; and thirdly and lastly, because he is convinced that it would be

THE ATTEMPT TO CARRY ELSPETH

such a staggerer to me. For he thinks I have not a notion of what is going on, and that, if I had, I would whisk her away to London."

He gave Grizel the most graphic, solemn pictures of those evenings in the cottage. "Conceive the four of us gathered round the kitchen fire — three men and a maid; the three men yearning to know what is in the maid's mind, and each concealing his anxiety from the others. Elspeth gives the doctor a look which may mean much or nothing, and he glares at me as if I were in the way, and I glance at Aaron, and he is on tenter-hooks lest I have noticed anything. Next minute, perhaps, David gives utterance to a plaintive sigh, and Aaron and I pounce upon Elspeth (with our eyes) to observe its effect on her, and Elspeth wonders why Aaron is staring, and he looks apprehensively at me, and I am gazing absent-mindedly at the fender.

"You may smile, Grizel," Tommy would say, "and now that I think of it, I can smile myself, but we are an eerie quartet at the time. When the strain becomes unendurable, one of us rises and mends the fire with his foot, and then I think the rest of us could say 'Thank you.' We talk desperately for a little after that, but soon again the awful pall creeps down."

"If I were there," cried Grizel, "I would not have the parlour standing empty all this time."

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“We are coming to the parlour,” Tommy replies impressively. “The parlour, Grizel, now begins to stir. Elspeth has disappeared from the kitchen, we three men know not whither. We did not notice her go; we don’t even observe that she has gone — we are too busy looking at the fire. By and by the tremulous tinkling of an aged piano reaches us from an adjoining chamber, and Aaron looks at me through his fingers, and I take a lightning glance at Mr. David, and he uncrosses his legs and rises, and sits down again. Aaron, in the most unconcerned way, proceeds to cut tobacco and rub it between his fingers, and I stretch out my legs and contemplate them with passionate approval. While we are thus occupied David has risen, and he is so thoroughly at his ease that he has begun to hum. He strolls round the kitchen, looking with sudden interest at the mantelpiece ornaments; he reads, for the hundredth time, the sampler on the wall. Next the clock engages his attention; it is ticking, and that seems to impress him as novel and curious. By this time he has reached the door; it opens to his touch, and in a fit of abstraction he leaves the room.”

“You don’t follow him into the parlour?” asks Grizel, anxiously.

“Follow whom?” Tommy replies severely. “I don’t even know that he has gone to the parlour; now that I think of it, I have not even noticed

THE ATTEMPT TO CARRY ELSPETH

that he has left the kitchen; nor has Aaron noticed it. Aaron and I are not in a condition to notice such things; we are conscious only that at last we have the opportunity for the quiet social chat we so much enjoy in each other's company. That, at least, is Aaron's way of looking at it, and he keeps me there with talk of the most varied and absorbing character; one topic down, another up; when very hard put to it, he even questions me about my next book, as if he would like to read the proof-sheets, and when I seem to be listening, a little restively, for sounds from the parlour (the piano has stopped), he has the face of one who would bar the door rather than lose my society. Aaron appreciates me at my true value at last, Grizel. I had begun to despair almost of ever bringing him under my charm."

"I should be very angry with you," Grizel said warningly, "if I thought you teased the poor old man."

"Tease him! The consideration I show that poor old man, Grizel, while I know all the time that he is plotting to diddle me! You should see me when it is he who is fidgeting to know why the piano has stopped. He stretches his head to listen, and does something to his ear that sends it another inch nearer the door; he chuckles and groans on the sly; and I—I notice nothing. Oh, he is becoming quite fond of me; he thinks me an idiot."

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“Why not tell him that you want it as much as he?”

“He would not believe me. Aaron is firmly convinced that I am too jealous of Elspeth’s affection to give away a thimbleful of it. He blames me for preventing her caring much even for him.”

“At any rate,” said Grizel, “he is on our side, and it is because he sees it would be so much the best thing for her.”

“And, at the same time, such a shock to me. That poor old man, Grizel! I have seen him rubbing his hands together with glee and looking quite leery as he thought of what was coming to me.”

But Grizel could not laugh now. When Tommy saw so well through Aaron and David, through everyone he came in contact with, indeed, what hope could there be that he was deceived in Elspeth?

“And yet she knows what takes him there; she must know it!” she cried.

“A woman,” Tommy said, “is never sure that a man is in love with her until he proposes. She may fancy—but it is never safe to fancy, as so many have discovered.”

“She has no right,” declared Grizel, “to wait until she is sure, if she does not care for him. If she fears that he is falling in love with her, she

THE ATTEMPT TO CARRY ELSPETH

knows how to discourage him; there are surely a hundred easy, kind ways of doing that."

"Fears he is falling in love with her!" Tommy repeated. "Is any woman ever afraid of that?"

He really bewildered her. "No woman would like it," Grizel answered promptly for them all, because she would not have liked it. "She must see that it would result only in pain to him."

"Still ——" said Tommy.

"Oh, but how dense you are!" she said, in surprise. "Don't you understand that she would stop him, though it were for no better reasons than selfish ones? Consider her shame if, in thinking it over afterwards, she saw that she might have stopped him sooner! Why," she cried, with a sudden smile, "it is in your book! You say: 'Every maiden carries secretly in her heart an idea of love so pure and sacred that, if by any act she is once false to that conception, her punishment is that she never dares to look at it again.' And this is one of the acts you mean."

"I had not thought of it, though," he said humbly. He was never prouder of Grizel than at that moment. "If Elspeth's outlook," he went on, "is different ——"

"It can't be different."

"If it is, the fault is mine; yes, though I wrote the passage that you interpret so nobly, Grizel. Shall I tell you," he said gently, "what I believe

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

is Elspeth's outlook exactly, just now? She knows that the doctor is attracted by her, and it gives her little thrills of exultation; but that it can be love — she puts that question in such a low voice, as if to prevent herself hearing it. And yet she listens, Grizel, like one who would like to know! Elspeth is pitifully distrustful of any one's really loving her, and she will never admit to herself that he does until he tells her."

"And then?"

Tommy had to droop his head.

"I see you have still no hope!" she said.

"It would be so easy to pretend I have," he replied, with longing, "in order to cheer you for the moment. Oh, it would even be easy to me to deceive myself; but should I do it?"

"No, no," she said; "anything but that; I can bear anything but that," and she shuddered. "But we seem to be treating David cruelly."

"I don't think so," he assured her. "Men like to have these things to look back to. But, if you want it, Grizel, I have to say only a word to Elspeth to bring it to an end. She is as tender as she is innocent, and — but it would be a hard task to me," he admitted, his heart suddenly going out to Elspeth; he had never deprived her of any gratification before. "Still, I am willing to do it."

"No!" Grizel cried, restraining him with her hand. "I am a coward, I suppose, but I can't help

THE ATTEMPT TO CARRY ELSPETH

wanting to hope for a little longer, and David won't grudge it to me."

It was but a very little longer that they had to wait. Tommy, returning home one day from a walk with his old school-friend, Gav Dishart (now M.A.), found Aaron suspiciously near the parlour keyhole.

"There's a better fire in the other end," Aaron said, luring him into the kitchen. So desirous was he of keeping Tommy there, fixed down on a stool, that "I'll play you at the dambrod," he said briskly.

"Anyone with Elspeth?"

"Some women-folk you dinna like," replied Aaron.

Tommy rose. Aaron, with a subdued snarl, got between him and the door.

"I was wondering, merely," Tommy said, pointing pleasantly to something on the dresser, "why one of them wore the doctor's hat."

"I forgot; he's there, too," Aaron said promptly; but he looked at Tommy with misgivings. They sat down to their game.

"You begin," said Tommy; "you're black." And Aaron opened with the Double Corner; but so pre-occupied was he that it became a variation of the Ayrshire lassie, without his knowing. His suspicions had to find vent in words: "You dinna speir wha the women-folk are?"

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“No.”

“Do you think I’m just pretending they’re there?” Aaron asked apprehensively.

“Not at all,” said Tommy, with much politeness, “but I thought you might be mistaken.” He could have “blown” Aaron immediately thereafter, but, with great consideration, forbore. The old man was so troubled that he could not lift a king without its falling in two. His sleeve got in the way of his fingers. At last he sat back in his chair. “Do you ken what is going on, man?” he demanded, “or do you no ken? I can stand this doubt no longer.”

A less soft-hearted person might have affected not to understand, but that was not Tommy’s way. “I know, Aaron,” he admitted. “I have known all the time.” It was said in the kindest manner, but its effect on Aaron was not soothing.

“Curse you!” he cried, with extraordinary vehemence, “you have been playing wi’ me a’ the time, ay, and wi’ him and wi’ her!”

What had Aaron been doing with Tommy? But Tommy did not ask that.

“I am sorry you think so badly of me,” he said quietly. “I have known all the time, Aaron, but have I interfered?”

“Because you ken she winna take him. I see it plain enough now. You ken your power over her ;

THE ATTEMPT TO CARRY ELSPETH

the honest man that thinks he could take her frae you is to you but a divert."

He took a step nearer Tommy. "Listen," he said. "When you came back he was on the point o' speiring her; I saw it in his face as she was playing the piano, and she saw it, too, for her hands began to trem'le and the tune wouldna play. I daursay you think I was keeking, but if I was I stoppit it when the piano stoppit; it was a hard thing to me to do, and it would hae been an easy thing no to do, but I wouldna spy upon Elspeth in her great hour."

"I like you for that, Aaron," Tommy said; but Aaron waved his likes aside.

"The reason I stood at the door," he continued, "was to keep you out o' that room. I offered to play you at the dambrod to keep you out. Ay, you ken that without my telling you, but do you ken what makes me tell you now? It's to see whether you'll go in and stop him; let's see you do that, and I'll hae some hope yet." He waited eagerly.

"You do puzzle me now," Tommy said.

"Ay," replied the old man, bitterly, "you're dull in the uptak' when you like! I dinna ken, I suppose, and you dinna ken, that if you had the least dread o' her taking him you would be into that room full bend to stop it; but you're so sure o' her, you're so mighty sure, that you can sit here and lauch instead."

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“Am I laughing, Aaron? If you but knew, Elspeth’s marriage would be a far more joyful thing to me than it could ever be to you.”

The old warper laughed unpleasantly at that. “And I’se uphaud,” he said, “you’re none sure but what she’ll tak’ him! You’re no as sure she’ll refuse him as that there’s a sun in the heavens, and I’m a broken man.”

For a moment sympathy nigh compelled Tommy to say a hopeful thing, but he mastered himself. “It would be weakness,” was what he did say, “to pretend that there is any hope.”

Aaron gave him an ugly look, and was about to leave the house; but Tommy would not have it. “If one of us must go, Aaron,” he said, with much gentleness, “let it be me”; and he went out, passing the parlour door softly, so that he might not disturb poor David. The warper sat on by the fire, his head sunk miserably in his shoulders. The vehemence had passed out of him; you would have hesitated to believe that such a listless, shrunken man could have been vehement that same year. It is a hardy proof of his faith in Tommy that he did not even think it worth while to look up when, by and by, the parlour door opened and the doctor came in for his hat. Elspeth was with him.

They told Aaron something.

It lifted him off his feet and bore him out at the

THE ATTEMPT TO CARRY ELSPETH

door. When he made up on himself he knew he was searching everywhere for Tommy. A terror seized him, lest he should not be the first to convey the news.

Had he been left a fortune? neighbours asked, amazed at this unwonted sight; and he replied, as he ran, "I have, and I want to share it wi' him!"

It was his only joke. People came to their doors to see Aaron Latta laughing.

CHAPTER XXII

GRIZEL'S GLORIOUS HOUR

ELSPETH was to be his wife! David had carried the wondrous promise straight to Grizel, and now he was gone and she was alone again.

Oh, foolish Grizel, are you crying, and I thought it was so hard to you to cry!

“Me crying! Oh, no!”

Put your hand to your cheeks, Grizel. Are they not wet?

“They are wet, and I did not know it! It is hard to me to cry in sorrow, but I can cry for joy. I am crying because it has all come right, and I was so much afraid that it never would.”

Ah, Grizel, I think you said you wanted nothing else so long as you had his love!

“But God has let it all come right, just the same, and I am thanking Him. That is why I did not know that I was crying.”

She was by the fireplace, on the stool that had always been her favourite seat, and of course she sat very straight. When Grizel walked or stood her strong, round figure took a hundred beautiful poses,

GRIZEL'S GLORIOUS HOUR

but when she sat it had but one. The old doctor, in experimenting moods, had sometimes compelled her to recline, and then watched to see her body spring erect the moment he released his hold. "What a dreadful patient I should make!" she said contritely. "I would chloroform you, miss," said he.

She sat thus for a long time; she had so much for which to thank God, though not with her lips, for how could they keep pace with her heart? Her heart was very full; chiefly, I think, with the tears that rolled down unknown to her.

She thanked God, in the name of the little hunted girl who had not been taught how to pray, and so did it standing. "I do so want to be good; oh, how sweet it would be to be good!" she had said in that long ago. She had said it out loud when she was alone on the chance of His hearing, but she had not addressed Him by name because she was not sure that he was really called God. She had not even known that you should end by saying "Amen," which Tommy afterwards told her is the most solemn part of it.

How sweet it would be to be good, but how much sweeter it is to be good! The woman that girl had grown into knew that she was good, and she thanked God for that. She thanked Him for letting her help. If He had said that she had not helped, she would have rocked her arms and re-

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

plied almost hotly: "You know I have." And He did know: He had seen her many times in the grip of inherited passions, and watched her fighting with them and subduing them; He had seen ugly thoughts stealing upon her, as they crawl towards every child of man; ah, He had seen them leap into the heart of the Painted Lady's daughter, as if a nest already made for them must be there, and still she had driven them away. Grizel had helped. The tears came more quickly now.

She thanked God that she had never worn the ring. But why had she never worn it, when she wanted so much to do so, and it was hers? Why had she watched herself more carefully than ever of late, and forced happiness to her face when it was not in her heart, and denied herself, at fierce moments, the luxuries of grief and despair, and even of rebellion? For she had carried about with her the capacity to rebel, but she had hidden it, and the reason was that she thought God was testing her. If she fell He would not give her the thing she coveted. Unworthy reason for being good, as she knew, but God overlooked it, and she thanked Him for that.

Her hands pressed each other impulsively, as if at the shock of a sudden beautiful thought, and then perhaps she was thanking God for making her the one woman who could be the right wife

GRIZEL'S GLORIOUS HOUR

for Tommy. She was so certain that no other woman could help him as she could; none knew his virtues as she knew them. Had it not been for her, his showy parts only would have been loved; the dear, quiet ones would never have heard how dear they were: the showy ones were open to all the world, but the quiet ones were her private garden. His faults as well as his virtues passed before her, and it is strange to know that it was about this time that Grizel ceased to cry and began to smile instead. I know why she smiled; it was because sentimentality was one of the little monsters that came skipping into her view, and Tommy was so confident that he had got rid at last of it! Grizel knew better! But she could look at it and smile. Perhaps she was not sorry that it was still there with the others, it had so long led the procession. I daresay she saw herself taking the leering, distorted thing in hand and making something gallant of it. She thought that she was too practical, too much given to seeing but one side to a question, too lacking in consideration for others, too impatient, too relentlessly just, and she humbly thanked God for all these faults, because Tommy's excesses were in the opposite direction, and she could thus restore the balance. She was full of humility while she saw how useful she could be to him, but her face did not show this; she had forgotten her face, and elation had spread over it

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

without her knowing. Perhaps God accepted the elation as part of the thanks.

She thanked God for giving Tommy what he wanted so much — herself. Ah, she had thanked Him for that before, but she did it again. And then she went on her knees by her dear doctor's chair, and prayed that she might be a good wife to Tommy.

When she rose the blood was not surging through her veins. Instead of a passion of joy it was a beautiful calm that possessed her, and on noticing this she regarded herself with sudden suspicion, as we put our ear to a watch to see if it has stopped. She found that she was still going, but no longer either fast or slow, and she saw what had happened: her old serene self had come back to her. I think she thanked God for that most of all.

And then she caught sight of her face — oh, oh! Her first practical act as an engaged woman was to wash her face.

Engaged! But was she? Grizel laughed. It is not usually a laughing matter, but she could not help that. Consider her predicament. She could be engaged at once, if she liked, even before she wiped the water from her face, or she might postpone it, to let Tommy share. The careful reader will have noticed that this problem presented itself to her at an awkward moment. She

GRIZEL'S GLORIOUS HOUR

laughed, in short, while her face was still in the basin, with the very proper result that she had to grope for the towel with her eyes shut.

It was still a cold, damp face (Grizel was always in such a hurry) when she opened her most precious drawer and took from it a certain glove which was wrapped in silk paper, but was not perhaps quite so conceited as it had been, for, alas and alack! it was now used as a wrapper itself. The ring was inside it. If Grizel wanted to be engaged, absolutely and at once, all she had to do was to slip that ring upon her finger.

It had been hers for a week or more. Tommy had bought it in a certain Scottish town whose merchant princes are so many, and have risen splendidly from such small beginnings, that after you have been there a short time you beg to be introduced to someone who has not got on. When you look at them they slap their trouser pockets. When they look at you they are wondering if you know how much they are worth. Tommy, one day, roaming their streets (in which he was worth incredibly little), and thinking sadly of what could never be, saw the modest little garnet ring in a jeweller's window, and attached to it was a pathetic story. No other person could have seen the story, but it was as plain to him as though it had been beautifully written on the tag of paper which really contained the price. With his hand

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

on the door he paused, overcome by that horror of entering shops without a lady to do the talking, which all men of genius feel (it is the one sure test), hurried away, came back, went to and fro shyly, until he saw that he was yielding once more to the indecision he thought he had so completely mastered, whereupon he entered bravely (though it was one of those detestable doors that ring a bell as they open), and sternly ordered the jeweller, who could have bought and sold our Tommy with one slap on the trouser leg, to hand the ring over to him.

He had no intention of giving it to Grizel. That, indeed, was part of its great tragedy, for this is the story Tommy read into the ring: There was once a sorrowful man of twenty-three, and forty, and sixty. Ah, how gray the beard has grown as we speak! How thin the locks! But still we know him for the same by that garnet ring. Since it became his no other eye has seen it, and yet it is her engagement ring. Never can he give it to her, but must always carry it about with him as the piteous memory of what had never been. How innocent it looked in his hand, and with an innocence that never wore off, not even when he had reached his threescore years. As it aged it took on another kind of innocence only. It looked pitiable now, for there is but a dishonoured age for a lonely little ring which can never see the finger it was made to span.

GRIZEL'S GLORIOUS HOUR

A hair-shirt! Such it was to him, and he put it on willingly, knowing it could be nothing else. Every smart it gave him pleased, even while it pained. If ever his mind roamed again to the world of make-believe, that ring would jerk him back to facts.

Grizel remembered well her finding of it. She had been in his pockets. She loved to rifle them; to pull out his watch herself, instead of asking him for the time; to exclaim "Oh!" at the many things she found there, when they should have been neatly docketed or in the fire, and from his waistcoat pocket she drew the ring. She seemed to understand all about it at once. She was far ahead while he was explaining. It seemed quite strange to her that there had ever been a time when she did not know of her garnet ring.

How her arms rocked! It was delicious to her to remember now with what agony her arms had rocked. She kissed it; she had not been the first to kiss it.

It was "Oh, how I wish I could have saved you this pain!"

"But I love it," she cried, "and I love the pain."

It was "Am I not to see it on your finger once?"

"No, no; we must not."

"Let me, Grizel!"

"Is it right, oh, is it right?"

"Only this once!"

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“Very well!”

“I dare not, Grizel, I can't! What are we to do with it now?”

“Give it to me. It is mine. I will keep it, beside my glove.”

“Let me keep it, Grizel.”

“No; it is mine.”

“Shall I fling it away?”

“How can you be so cruel? It is mine.”

“Let me bury it.”

“It is mine.”

And of course she had got her way. Could he resist her in anything? They had never spoken of it since, it was such a sad little ring. Sad! It was not in the least little bit sad. Grizel wondered as she looked at it now how she could ever have thought it sad.

The object with which she put on her hat was to go to Aaron's cottage, to congratulate Elspeth. So she said to herself. Oh, Grizel!

But first she opened two drawers. They were in a great press and full of beautiful linen woven in Thrums, that had come to Dr. McQueen as a “bad debt.” “Your marriage portion, young lady,” he had said to Grizel, then but a slip of a girl, whereupon, without waiting to lengthen her frock, she rushed rapturously at her work-basket. “Not at all, miss,” he cried ferociously; “you are here to look after this house, not to be preparing

GRIZEL'S GLORIOUS HOUR

for another, and until you are respectably bespoken by some rash crittur of a man, into the drawers with your linen and down with those murderous shears." And she had obeyed; no scissors, the most relentless things in nature when in Grizel's hand, had ever cleaved their way through that snowy expanse; never a stitch had she put into her linen except with her eyes, which became horribly like needles as she looked at it.

And now at last she could begin! Oh, but she was anxious to begin; it is almost a fact that, as she looked at those drawers, she grudged the time that must be given to-day to Tommy and his ring.

Do you see her now, ready to start? She was wearing her brown jacket with the fur collar, over which she used to look so searchingly at Tommy. To think there was a time when that serene face had to look searchingly at him! It nearly made her sad again. She paused to bring out the ring and take another exultant look at it. It was attached now to a ribbon round her neck. Sweet ring! She put it to her eyes. That was her way of letting her eyes kiss it. Then she rubbed them and it, in case the one had left a tear upon the other.

And then she went out, joy surging in her heart. For this was Grizel's glorious hour, the end of it.

CHAPTER XXIII

TOMMY LOSES GRIZEL

IT was not Aaron's good fortune to find Tommy. He should have looked for him in the Den.

In that haunt of happier lovers than he, Tommy walked slowly, pondering. He scarce noticed that he had the Den to himself, or that, since he was last here, autumn had slipped away, leaving all her garments on the ground. By this time, undoubtedly, Elspeth had said her gentle No; but he was not railing against Fate, not even for striking the final blow at him through that innocent medium. He had still too much to do for that—to help others. There were three of them at present, and by some sort of sympathetic jugglery he had an arm for each.

“Lean on me, Grizel — dear sister Elspeth, you little know the harm you have done — David, old friend, your hand.”

Thus loaded, he bravely returned at the fitting time to the cottage. His head was not even bent.

Had you asked Tommy what Elspeth would probably do when she dismissed David, he might

TOMMY LOSES GRIZEL

have replied that she would go up to his room and lock herself into it, so that no one should disturb her for a time. And this he discovered, on returning home, was actually what had happened. How well he knew her! How distinctly he heard every beat of her tender heart, and how easy to him to tell why it was beating! He did not go up; he waited for little Elspeth to come to him, all in her own good time. And when she came, looking just as he knew she would look, he had a brave, bright face for her.

She was shaking after her excitement, or perhaps she had ceased to shake and begun again as she came down to him. He pretended not to notice it; he would notice it the moment he was sure she wanted him to, but perhaps that would not be until she was in bed and he had come to say good-night and put out her light, for, as we know, she often kept her great confidences till then, when she discovered that he already knew them.

“The doctor has been in.”

She began almost at once, and in a quaking voice and from a distance, as if in hope that the bullet might be spent before it reached her brother.

“I am sorry I missed him,” he replied cautiously. “What a fine fellow he is!”

“You always liked him,” said Elspeth, clinging eagerly to that.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

‘No one could help liking him, Elspeth, he has such winning ways,’ said Tommy, perhaps a little in the voice with which at funerals we refer to the departed. She loved his words, but she knew she had a surprise for him this time, and she tried to blurt it out.

‘He said something to me. He — oh, what a high opinion he has of you!’ (She really thought he had.)

‘Was that the something?’ Tommy asked, with a smile that helped her, as it was meant to do.

‘You understand, don’t you?’ she said, almost in a whisper.

‘Of course I do, Elspeth,’ he answered reassuringly; but somehow she still thought he didn’t.

‘No one could have been more manly and gentle and humble,’ she said beseechingly.

‘I am sure of it,’ said Tommy.

‘He thinks nothing of himself,’ she said.

‘We shall always think a great deal of him,’ replied Tommy.

‘Yes, but ——’ Elspeth found the strangest difficulty in continuing, for, though it would have surprised him to be told so, Tommy was not helping her nearly as much as he imagined.

‘I told him,’ she said, shaking, ‘that no one could be to me what you were. I told him ——’ and then timid Elspeth altogether broke down.

TOMMY LOSES GRIZEL

Tommy drew her to him, as he had so often done since she was the smallest child, and pressed her head against his breast, and waited. So often he had waited thus upon Elspeth.

“There is nothing to cry about, dear,” he said tenderly, when the time to speak came. “You have, instead, the right to be proud that so good a man loves you. I am very proud of it, Elspeth.”

“If I could be sure of that!” she gasped.

“Don’t you believe me, dear?”

“Yes, but—that is not what makes me cry. Tommy, don’t you see?”

“Yes,” he assured her, “I see. You are crying because you feel so sorry for him. But I don’t feel sorry for him, Elspeth. If I know anything at all, it is this: that no man needs pity who sincerely loves; whether that love be returned or not, he walks in a new and more beautiful world for evermore.”

She clutched his hand. “I don’t understand how you know those things,” she whispered.

Please God, was Tommy’s reflection, she should never know. He saw most vividly the pathos of his case, but he did not break down under it; it helped him, rather, to proceed.

“It will be the test of Gemmell,” he said, “how he bears this. No man, I am very sure, was ever told that his dream could not come true more kindly and tenderly than you told it to him.” He

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

was in the middle of the next sentence (a fine one) before her distress stopped him.

“Tommy,” she cried, “you don’t understand. That is not what I told him at all!”

It was one of the few occasions on which the expression on the face of T. Sandys perceptibly changed.

“What did you tell him?” he asked, almost sharply.

“I accepted him,” she said guiltily, backing away from this alarming face.

“What!”

“If you only knew how manly and gentle and humble he was,” she cried quickly, as if something dire might happen if Tommy were not assured of this at once.

“You — said you would marry him, Elspeth?”

“Yes!”

“And leave me?”

“Oh, oh!” She flung her arms around his neck.

“Yes, but that is what you are prepared to do!” said he, and he held her away from him and stared at her, as if he had never seen Elspeth before. “Were you not afraid?” he exclaimed, in amazement.

“I am not the least bit afraid,” she answered. “Oh Tommy, if you knew how manly ——” And then she remembered that she had said that already.

TOMMY LOSES GRIZEL

“You did not even say that you would — consult me?”

“Oh, oh!”

“Why didn’t you, Elspeth?”

“I—I forgot!” she moaned. “Tommy, you are angry!” She hugged him, and he let her do it, but all the time he was looking over her head fixedly, with his mouth open.

“And I was always so sure of you!” were the words that came to him at last, with a hard little laugh at the end of them.

“Can you think it makes me love you less,” she sobbed, “because I love him, too? Oh, Tommy, I thought you would be so glad!”

He kissed her; he put his hand fondly upon her head.

“I am glad,” he said, with emotion. “When that which you want has come to you, Elspeth, how can I but be glad? But it takes me aback, and if for a moment I felt forlorn, if, when I should have been rejoicing only in your happiness, the selfish thought passed through my mind, ‘What is to become of me?’ I hope — I hope——” Then he sat down and buried his face in the table.

And he might have been telling her about Grizel! Has the shock stunned you, Tommy? Elspeth thinks it has been a shock of pain. May we lift your head to show her your joyous face?

“I am so proud,” she was saying, “that at last,

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

after you have done so much for me, I can do a little thing for you. For it is something to free you, Tommy. You have always pretended, for my sake, that we could not do without each other, but we both knew all the time that it was only I who was unable to do without you. You can't deny it."

He might deny it, but it was true. Ah, Tommy, you bore with her with infinite patience, but did it never strike you that she kept you to the earth? If Elspeth could be happy without you! You were sure she could not, but if she could!—had that thought never made you flap your wings?

"I often had a pain at my heart," she told him, "which I kept from you. It was a feeling that your solicitude for me, perhaps, prevented your caring for any other woman. It seemed terrible and unnatural that I should be a bar to that. I felt that I was starving you, and not you only, but an unknown woman as well."

"So long as I had you, Elspeth," he said reproachfully, "was not that enough?"

"It seemed to be enough," she answered gravely, "but even while I comforted myself with that, I knew that it should not be enough, and still I feared that if it was, the blame was mine. Now I am no longer in the way, and I hope, so ardently, that you will fall in love, like other people. If you never do, I shall always have the fear that

TOMMY LOSES GRIZEL

I am the cause, that you lost the capacity in the days when I let you devote yourself too much to me."

Oh, blind Elspeth! Now is the time to tell her, Tommy, and fill her cup of happiness to the brim.

But it is she who is speaking still, almost gaily now, yet with a full heart. "What a time you have had with me, Tommy! I told David all about it, and what he has to look forward to, but he says he is not afraid. And when you find someone you can love," she continued sweetly, though she had a sigh to stifle, "I hope she will be someone quite unlike me, for oh, my dear, good brother, I know you need a change."

Not a word said Tommy.

She said, timidly, that she had begun to hope of late that Grizel might be the woman, and still he did not speak. He drew Elspeth closer to him, that she might not see his face and the horror of himself that surely sat on it. To the very marrow of him he was in such cold misery that I wonder his arms did not chill her.

This poor devil of a Sentimental Tommy! He had wakened up in the world of facts, where he thought he had been dwelling of late, to discover that he had not been here for weeks, except at meal-times. During those weeks he had most honestly thought that he was in a passion to be

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

married. What do you say to pitying instead of cursing him? It is a sudden idea of mine, and we must be quick, for joyous Grizel is drawing near, and this, you know, is the chapter in which her heart breaks.

It was Elspeth who opened the door to Grizel. "Does she know?" said Elspeth to herself, before either of them spoke.

"Does she know?" It was what Grizel was saying also.

"Oh, Elspeth, I am so glad! David has told me."

"She does know," Elspeth told herself, and she thought it was kind of Grizel to come so quickly. She said so.

"She doesn't know!" thought Grizel, and then these two kissed for the first time. It was a kiss of thanks from each.

"But why does she not know?" Grizel wondered a little as they entered the parlour, where Tommy was; he had been standing with his teeth knit since he heard the knock. As if in answer to the question, Elspeth said: "I have just broken it to Tommy. He has been in a few minutes only, and he is so surprised he can scarcely speak."

Grizel laughed happily, for that explained it. Tommy had not had time to tell her yet. She laughed again at Elspeth, who had thought she

TOMMY LOSES GRIZEL

had so much to tell and did not know half the story.

Elspeth begged Tommy to listen to the beautiful things Grizel was saying about David, but, truth to tell, Grizel scarcely heard them herself. She had given Tommy a shy, rapturous glance. She was wondering when he would begin. What a delicious opening when he shook hands! Suppose he had kissed her instead! Or, suppose he casually addressed her as darling! He might do it at any moment now! Just for once she would not mind though he did it in public. Perhaps as soon as this new remark of Elspeth's was finished, he meant to say: "You are not the only engaged person in the room, Miss Elspeth; I think I see another two!" Grizel laughed as if she had heard him say it. And then she ceased laughing suddenly, for some little duty had called Elspeth into the other room, and as she went out she stopped the movement of the earth.

These two were alone with their great joy.

Elspeth had said that she would be back in two minutes. Was Grizel wasting a moment when she looked only at him, her eyes filmy with love, the crooked smile upon her face so happy that it could not stand still? Her arms made a slight gesture towards him; her hands were open; she was giving herself to him. She could not see. For a fraction of time the space between them

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

seemed to be annihilated. His arms were closing round her. Then she knew that neither of them had moved.

“Grizel!”

He tried to be true to her by deceiving her. It was the only way. “At last, Grizel,” he cried, “at last!” and he put joyousness into his voice. “It has all come right, dear one!” he cried like an ecstatic lover. Never in his life had he tried so hard to deceive at the sacrifice of himself. But he was fighting something as strong as the instinct of self-preservation, and his usually expressionless face gave the lie to his joyous words. Loud above his voice his ashen face was speaking to her, and she cried in terror, “What is wrong?” Even then he attempted to deceive her, but suddenly she knew the truth.

“You don’t want to be married!”

I think the room swam round with her. When it was steady again, “You did not say that, did you?” she asked. She was sure he had not said it. She was smiling again tremulously to show him that he had not said it.

“I want to be married above all else on earth,” he said imploringly; but his face betrayed him still, and she demanded the truth, and he was forced to tell it.

A little shiver passed through her, that was all.

TOMMY LOSES GRIZEL

“Do you mean that you don’t love me?” she said. “You must tell me what you mean.”

“That is how others would put it, I suppose,” he replied. “I believe they would be wrong. I think I love you in my own way; but I thought I loved you in their way, and it is the only way that counts in this world of theirs. It does not seem to be my world. I was given wings, I think, but I am never to know that I have left the earth until I come flop upon it with an arrow through them. I crawl and wriggle here, and yet” — he laughed harshly — “I believe I am rather a fine fellow when I am flying!”

She nodded. “You mean you want me to let you off?” she asked. “You must tell me what you mean.” And as he did not answer instantly, “Because I think I have some little claim upon you,” she said, with a pleasant smile.

“I am as pitiful a puzzle to myself as I can be to you,” he replied. “All I know is that I don’t want to marry anyone. And yet I am sure I could die for you, Grizel.”

It was quite true. A burning house and Grizel among the flames, and he would have been the first on the ladder. But there is no such luck for you, Tommy.

“You are free,” was what she said. “Don’t look so tragic,” she added, again with the pleasant smile. “It must be very distressing to you, but —

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

you will soon fly again." Her lips twitched tremulously. "I can't fly," she said.

She took the ring from her neck. She took it off its ribbon.

"I brought it," she said, "to let you put it on my finger. I thought you would want to do that," she said.

"Grizel," he cried, "can we not be as we have been?"

"No," she answered.

"It would all come right, Grizel. I am sure it would. I don't know why I am as I am; but I shall try to change myself. You have borne with me since we were children. Won't you bear with me for a little longer?"

She shook her head, but did not trust herself to speak.

"I have lost you," he said, and she nodded.

"Then I am lost indeed!" said he, and he knew it, too; but with a gesture of the hand she begged him not to say that.

"Without your love to help me ——" he began.

"You shall always have that," she told him with shining eyes, "always, always." And what could he do but look at her with the wonder and the awe that come to every man who, for one moment in his life, knows a woman well?

"You can love me still, Grizel!" His voice was shaky.

TOMMY LOSES GRIZEL

“Just the same,” she answered, and I suppose he looked uplifted. “But you should be sorry,” she said gravely, and it was then that Elspeth came back. She had not much exceeded her two minutes.

It was always terrible to Tommy not to have the feelings of a hero. At that moment he could not endure it. In a splendid burst of self-sacrifice he suddenly startled both Grizel and himself by crying, “Elspeth, I love Grizel, and I have just asked her to be my wife.”

Yes, the nobility of it amazed himself, but bewitched him, too, and he turned gloriously to Grizel, never doubting but that she would have him still.

He need not have spoken so impulsively, nor looked so grand. She swayed for an instant and then was erect again. “You must forgive me, Elspeth,” she said, “but I have refused him”; and that was the biggest surprise Tommy ever got in his life.

“You don’t care for him!” Elspeth blurted out.

“Not in the way he cares for me,” Grizel replied quietly, and when Elspeth would have said more she begged her to desist. “The only thing for me to do now, Elspeth,” she said, smiling, “is to run away, but I want you first to accept a little wedding-gift from me. I wish you and David so much happiness; you won’t refuse it, will you?”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

Elsbeth, still astounded, took the gift. It was a little garnet ring.

“It will have to be cut,” Grizel said. “It was meant, I think, for a larger finger. I have had it some time, but I never wore it.”

Elsbeth said she would always treasure her ring, and that it was beautiful.

“I used to think it—rather sweet,” Grizel admitted, and then she said good-bye to them both and went away.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MONSTER

TOMMY'S new character was that of a monster. He always liked the big parts.

Concealed, as usual, in the garments that clung so oddly to him, modesty, generosity, indifference to applause and all the nobler impulses, he could not strip himself of them, try as he would, and so he found, to his scornful amusement, that he still escaped the public fury. In the two months that preceded Elspeth's marriage there was positively scarce a soul in Thrums who did not think rather well of him. "If they knew what I really am," he cried with splendid bitterness, "how they would run from me!"

Even David could no longer withhold the hand of fellowship, for Grizel would tell him nothing, except that, after all, and for reasons sufficient to herself, she had declined to become Mrs. Sandys. He sought in vain to discover how Tommy could be to blame. "And now," Tommy said grimly to Grizel, "our doctor thinks you have used me badly, and that I am a fine fellow to bear no resent-

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

ment! Elspeth told me that he admires the gentle and manly dignity with which I submit to the blow, and I have no doubt that, as soon as I heard that, I made it more gentle and manly than ever!

“I have forbidden Elspeth,” he told her, “to up-braid you for not accepting me, with the result that she thinks me too good to live! Ha, ha! what do you think, Grizel?”

It became known in the town that she had refused him. Everybody was on Tommy's side. They said she had treated him badly. Even Aaron was staggered at the sight of Tommy accepting his double defeat in such good part. “And all the time I am the greatest cur unhung,” says Tommy. “Why don't you laugh, Grizel?”

Never, they said, had there been such a generous brother. The town was astir about this poor man's gifts to the lucky bride. There were rumours that among the articles was a silver coal-scuttle, but it proved to be a sugar-bowl in that pattern. Three bandboxes came for her to select from; somebody discovered who was on the watch, but may I be struck dead if more than one went back. Yesterday it was bonnets; to-day she is at Tilliedrum again, trying on her going-away dress. And she really was to go away in it, a noticeable thing, for in Thrums society, though they usually get a going-away dress, they are too canny to go away in it. The local shops were not ignored, but the

THE MONSTER

best of the trousseau came from London. "That makes the second box this week, as I'm a living sinner," cries the lady on the watch again. When boxes arrived at the station Corp wheeled them up to Elspeth without so much as looking at the label.

Ah, what a brother! They said it openly to their own brothers, and to Tommy in the way they looked at him.

"There has been nothing like it," he assured Grizel, "since Red Riding-hood and the wolf. Why can't I fling off my disguise and cry, 'The better to eat you with!'"

He always spoke to her now in this vein of magnificent bitterness, but Grizel seldom rewarded him by crying, "Oh, oh!" She might, however, give him a patient, reproachful glance instead, and it had the irritating effect of making him feel that perhaps he was under life-size, instead of over it.

"I daresay you are right," says Tommy, savagely.

"I said nothing."

"You don't need to say it. What a grand capacity you have for knocking me off my horse, Grizel!"

"Are you angry with me for that?"

"No; it is delicious to pick one's self out of the mud, especially when you find it is a baby you are picking up, instead of a brute. Am I a baby only, Grizel?"

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“ I think it is childish of you,” she replied, “ to say you are a brute.”

“ There is not to be even that satisfaction left to me! You are hard on me, Grizel.”

“ I am trying to help you. How can you be angry with me?”

“ The instinct of self-preservation, I suppose. I see myself dwindling so rapidly under your treatment that soon there will be nothing of me left.”

It was said cruelly, for he knew that the one thing Grizel could not bear now was the implication that she saw his faults only. She always went down under that blow with pitiful surrender, showing the woman suddenly, as if under a physical knocking.

He apologized contritely. “ But, after all, it proves my case,” he said, “ for I could not hurt you in this way, Grizel, if I were not a pretty well-grown specimen of a monster.”

“ Don't,” she said; but she did not seek to help him by drawing him away to other subjects, which would have been his way. “ What is there monstrous,” she asked, “ in your being so good to Elspeth? It is very kind of you to give her all these things.”

“ Especially when by rights they are yours, Grizel!”

“ No, not when you did not want to give them to me.”

THE MONSTER

He dared say nothing to that; there were some matters on which he must not contradict Grizel now.

“It is nice of you,” she said, “not to complain, though Elspeth is deserting you. It must have been a blow.”

“You and I only know why,” he answered. “But for her, Grizel, I might be whining sentiment to you at this moment.”

“That,” she said, “would be the monstrous thing.”

“And it is not monstrous, I suppose, that I should let Gemmell press my hand under the conviction that, after all, I am a trump.”

“You don’t pose as one.”

“That makes them think the more highly of me! Nothing monstrous, Grizel, in my standing quietly by while you are showing Elspeth how to furnish her house—I, who know why you have the subject at your finger-tips!”

For Grizel had given all her sweet ideas to Elspeth. Heigh-ho! how she had guarded them once, confiding them half reluctantly even to Tommy; half reluctantly, that is, at the start, because they were her very own, but once she was embarked on the subject talking with such rapture that every minute or two he had to beg her to be calm. She was the first person in that part of the world to think that old furniture need not be

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

kept in the dark corners, and she knew where there was an oak bedstead that was looked upon as a disgrace, and where to obtain the dearest cupboards, one of them in use as the retiring-chamber of a rabbit-hutch, and stately clocks made in the town a hundred years ago, and quaint old-farrant lamps and cogeys and sand-glasses that apologized if you looked at them, and yet were as willing to be loved again as any old lady in a mutch. You will not buy them easily now, the people will not chuckle at you when you bid for them now. We have become so cute in Thrums that when the fender breaks we think it may have increased in value, and we preserve any old board lest the worms have made it artistic. Grizel, however, was in advance of her time. She could lay her hands on all she wanted, and she did, but it was for Elspeth's house.

“And the table-cloths and the towels and the sheets,” said Tommy. “Nothing monstrous in my letting you give Elspeth them?”

The linen, you see, was no longer in Grizel's press.

“I could not help making them,” she answered, “they were so longing to be made. I did not mean to give them to her. I think I meant to put them back in the press, but when they were made it was natural that they should want to have something to do. So I gave them to Elspeth.”

THE MONSTER

“With how many tears on them?”

“Not many. But with some kisses.”

“All which,” says Tommy, “goes to prove that I have nothing with which to reproach myself!”

“No, I never said that,” she told him. “You have to reproach yourself with wanting me to love you.”

She paused a moment to let him say, if he dared, that he had not done that, when she would have replied instantly, “You know you did.” He could have disabused her, but it would have been cruel, and so on this subject, as ever, he remained silent.

“But that is not what I have been trying to prove,” she continued. “You know as well as I that the cause of this unhappiness has been — what you call your wings.”

He was about to thank her for her delicacy in avoiding its real name, when she added, “I mean your sentiment,” and he laughed instead.

“I flatter myself that I no longer fly, at all events,” he said. “I know what I am at last, Grizel.”

“It is flattery only,” she replied with her old directness. “This thing you are regarding with a morbid satisfaction is not you at all.”

He groaned. “Which of them all is me, Grizel?” he asked gloomily.

“We shall see,” she said, “when we have got the wings off.”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“They will have to come off a feather at a time.”

“That,” she declared, “is what I have been trying to prove.”

“It will be a weary task, Grizel.”

“I won’t weary at it,” she said, smiling.

Her cheerfulness was a continual surprise to him. “You bear up wonderfully well yourself,” he sometimes said to her, almost reproachfully, and she never replied that, perhaps, that was one of her ways of trying to help him.

She is not so heartbroken, after all, you may be saying, and I had promised to break her heart. But, honestly, I don’t know how to do it more thoroughly, and you must remember that we have not seen her alone yet.

She tried to be very little alone. She helped David in his work more than ever; not a person, for instance, managed to escape the bath because Grizel’s heart was broken. You could never say that she was alone when her needle was going, and the linen became sheets and the like, in what was probably record time. Yet they could have been sewn more quickly; for at times the needle stopped and she did not know it. Once a bed-ridden old woman, with whom she had been sitting up, lay watching her instead of sleeping, and finally said: “What makes you sit staring at a cauld fire, and speaking to yourself?” And there was a strange day when she had been too long in

THE MONSTER

the Den. When she started for home she went in the direction of Double Dykes, her old home, instead.

She could bear everything except doubt. She had told him so, when he wondered at her calmness; she often said it to herself. She could tread any path, however drearily it stretched before her, so long as she knew whither it led, but there could be no more doubt. Oh, he must never again disturb her mind with hope! How clearly she showed him that, and yet they had perhaps no more than parted when it seemed impossible to bear for the next hour the desolation she was sentenced to for life. She lay quivering and tossing on the hearth-rug of the parlour, beating it with her fists, rocking her arms, and calling to him to give her doubt again, that she might get through the days.

“Let me doubt again!” Here was Grizel starting to beg it of him. More than once she got half-way to Aaron’s house before she could turn; but she always did turn, with the words unspoken; never did Tommy hear her say them, but always that she was tranquil now. Was it pride that supported her in the trying hour? Oh, no, it was not pride. That is an old garment, which once became Grizel well, but she does not wear it now; she takes it out of the closet, perhaps, at times to look at it. What gave her strength when he was by was her promise to help

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

him. It was not by asking for leave to dream herself that she could make him dream the less. All done for you, Tommy! It might have helped you to loosen a few of the feathers.

Sometimes she thought it might not be Tommy, but herself, who was so unlike other people; that it was not he who was unable to love, but she who could not be loved. This idea did not agitate her as a terrible thing; she could almost welcome it. But she did not go to him with it. While it might be but a fancy, that was no way to help a man who was overfull of them. It was the bare truth only that she wanted him to see, and so she made elaborate inquiries into herself, to discover whether she was quite unlovable. I suppose it would have been quaint, had she not been quite so much in earnest. She examined herself in the long mirror most conscientiously, and with a determinedly open mind, to see whether she was too ugly for any man to love. Our beautiful Grizel really did.

She had always thought that she was a nice girl, but was she? No one had ever loved her, except the old doctor, and he began when she was so young that perhaps he had been inveigled into it, like a father. Even David had not loved her. Was it because he knew her so well? What was it in women that made men love them? She asked it of David in such a way that he never

THE MONSTER

knew she was putting him to the question. He merely thought that he and she were having a pleasant chat about Elspeth, and, as a result, she decided that he loved Elspeth because she was so helpless. His head sat with uncommon pride on his shoulders while he talked of Elspeth's timidity. There was a ring of boastfulness in his voice as he paraded the large number of useful things that Elspeth could not do. And yet David was a sensible and careful man.

Was it helplessness that man loved in woman, then? It seemed to be Elspeth's helplessness that had made Tommy such a brother, and how it had always appealed to Aaron! No woman could be less helpless than herself, Grizel knew. She thought back and back, and she could not come to a time when she was not managing somebody. Women, she reflected, fall more or less deeply in love with every baby they see, while men, even the best of them, can look calmly at other people's babies. But when the helplessness of the child is in the woman, then other women are unmoved; but the great heart of man is stirred — woman is his baby. She remembered that the language of love is in two sexes — for the woman superlatives, for the man diminutives. The more she loves the bigger he grows, but in an ecstasy he could put her in his pocket. Had not Tommy taught her this? His little one, his child! Perhaps he really had loved

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

her in the days when they both made believe that she was infantile; but soon she had shown with fatal clearness that she was not. Instead of needing to be taken care of, she had obviously wanted to take care of him: their positions were reversed. Perhaps, said Grizel to herself, I should have been a man.

If this was the true explanation, then, though Tommy, who had tried so hard, could not love her, he might be able to love — what is the phrase? — a more womanly woman, or, more popular phrase still, a very woman. Some other woman might be the right wife for him. She did not shrink from considering this theory, and she considered so long that I, for one, cannot smile at her for deciding ultimately, as she did, that there was nothing in it.

The strong like to be leaned upon and the weak to lean, and this irrespective of sex. This was the solution she woke up with one morning, and it seemed to explain not only David's and Elspeth's love, but her own, so clearly that in her desire to help she put it before Tommy. It implied that she cared for him because he was weak, and he drew a very long face.

“You don't know how the feathers hurt as they come out,” he explained.

“But so long as we do get them out!” she said.

“Every other person who knows me thinks that

THE MONSTER

strength is my great characteristic," he maintained, rather querulously.

"But when you know it is not," said Grizel. "You do know, don't you?" she asked anxiously. "To know the truth about one's self, that is the beginning of being strong."

"You seem determined," he retorted, "to prevent my loving you."

"Why?" she asked.

"You are to make me strong in spite of myself, I understand. But, according to your theory, the strong love the weak only. Are you to grow weak, Grizel, as I grow strong?"

She had not thought of that, and she would have liked to rock her arms. But she was able to reply: "I am not trying to help you in order to make you love me; you know, quite well, that all that is over and done with. I am trying only to help you to be what a man should be."

She could say that to him, but to herself? Was she prepared to make a man of him at the cost of his possible love? This faced her when she was alone with her passionate nature, and she fought it, and with her fists clenched she cried: "Yes, yes, yes!"

Do we know all that Grizel had to fight? There were times when Tommy's mind wandered to excuses for himself; he knew what men were, and he shuddered to think of the might have been,

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

had a girl who could love as Grizel did loved such a man as her father. He thanked his Maker, did Tommy, that he, who was made as those other men, had avoided raising passions in her. I wonder how he was so sure. Do we know all that Grizel had to fight ?

They spoke much during those days of the coming parting, and she always said that she could bear it if she saw him go away more of a man than he had come.

“Then anything I have suffered or may suffer,” she told him, “will have been done to help you, and perhaps in time that will make me proud of my poor little love-story. It would be rather pitiful, would it not, if I have gone through so much for no end at all ?”

She spoke, he said, almost reproachfully, as if she thought he might go away on his wings, after all.

“We can’t be sure,” she murmured, she was so eager to make him watchful.

“Yes,” he said, humbly but firmly, “I may be a scoundrel, Grizel, I am a scoundrel, but one thing you may be sure of, I am done with sentiment.” But even as he said it, even as he felt that he could tear himself asunder for being untrue to Grizel, a bird was singing at his heart because he was free again, free to go out into the world

THE MONSTER

and play as if it were but a larger den. Ah, if only Tommy could always have remained a boy!

Elsbeth's marriage day came round, and I should like to linger in it, and show you Elspeth in her wedding-gown, and Tommy standing behind to catch her if she fainted, and Ailie weeping, and Aaron Latta rubbing his gleeful hands, and a smiling bridesmaid who had once thought she might be a bride. But that was a day in Elspeth's story, not in Tommy's and Grizel's. Only one incident in their story crept into that happy day. There were speeches at the feast, and the Rev. Mr. Dishart referred to Tommy in the kindest way, called him "my young friend," quoted (inaccurately) from his book, and expressed an opinion, formed, he might say, when Mr. Sandys was a lad at school (cheers), that he had a career before him. Tommy bore it well, all except the quotation, which he was burning to correct, but sighed to find that it had set the dominies on his left talking about precocity. "To produce such a graybeard of a book at two and twenty, Mr. Sandys," said Cathro, "is amazing. It partakes, sir, of the nature of the miraculous; it's onchancey, by which we mean a deviation from the normal." And so on. To escape this kind of flattery (he had so often heard it said by ladies, who could say it so much better), Tommy turned to his neighbours on the right.

Oddly enough, they also were discussing devia-

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

tions from the normal. On the table was a plant in full flower, and Ailie, who had lent it, was expressing surprise that it should bloom so late in the season.

“So early in its life, I should rather say,” the doctor remarked after examining it. “It is a young plant, and in the ordinary course would not have come to flower before next year. But it is afraid that it will never see next year. It is one of those poor little plants that bloom prematurely because they are diseased.”

Tommy was a little startled. He had often marvelled over his own precocity, but never guessed that this might be the explanation why he was in flower at twenty-two. “Is that a scientific fact?” he asked.

“It is a law of nature,” the doctor replied gravely, and if anything more was said on the subject our Tommy did not hear it. What did he hear? He was a child again, in miserable lodgings, and it was sometime in the long middle of the night, and what he heard from his bed was his mother coughing away her life in hers. There was an angry knock, knock, knock, from somewhere near, and he crept out of bed to tell his mother that the people through the wall were complaining because she would not die more quietly; but when he reached her bed it was not his mother he saw lying there, but himself, aged twenty-four

THE MONSTER

or thereabouts. For Tommy had inherited his mother's cough; he had known it every winter, but he remembered it as if for the first time now.

Did he hear anything else? I think he heard his wings slipping to the floor.

He asked Ailie to give him the plant, and he kept it in his room very lovingly, though he forgot to water it. He sat for long periods looking at it, and his thoughts were very deep, but all he actually said aloud was, "There are two of us." Aaron sometimes saw them together, and thought they were an odd pair, and perhaps they were.

Tommy did not tell Grizel of the tragedy that was hanging over him. He was determined to save her that pain. He knew that most men in his position would have told her, and was glad to find that he could keep it so gallantly to himself. She was brave; perhaps some day she would discover that he had been brave also. When she talked of wings now, what he seemed to see was a green grave. His eyes were moist, but he held his head high. All this helped him.

Ah, well, but the world must jog along though you and I be damned. Elspeth was happily married, and there came the day when Tommy and Grizel must say good-bye. He was returning to London. His luggage was already in Corp's barrow, all but the insignificant part of it, which yet

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

made a bulky package in its author's pocket, for it was his new manuscript, for which he would have fought a regiment, yes, and beaten them. Little cared Tommy what became of the rest of his luggage so long as that palpitating package was safe.

"And little you care," Grizel said, in a moment of sudden bitterness, "whom you leave behind, so long as you take it with you."

He forgave her with a sad smile. She did not know, you see, that this manuscript might be his last.

And it was the only bitter thing she said. Even when he looked very sorry for her, she took advantage of his emotion to help him only. "Don't be too sorry for me," she said calmly; "remember, rather, that there is one episode in a woman's life to which she must always cling in memory, whether it was a pride to her or a shame, and that it rests with you to make mine proud or shameful."

In other words, he was to get rid of his wings. How she harped on that!

He wanted to kiss her on the brow, but she would not have it. He was about to do it, not to gratify any selfish desire, but of a beautiful impulse that if anything happened she would have this to remember as the last of him. But she drew back almost angrily. Positively, she was putting

THE MONSTER

it down to sentiment, and he forgave her even that.

But she kissed the manuscript. "Wish it luck," he had begged of her; "you were always so fond of babies, and this is my baby." So Grizel kissed Tommy's baby, and then she turned away her face.

CHAPTER XXV

MR. T. SANDYS HAS RETURNED TO TOWN

IT is disquieting to reflect that we have devoted so much paper (this is the third shilling's worth) to telling what a real biographer would almost certainly have summed up in a few pages. "Caring nothing for glory, engrossed in his work alone, Mr. Sandys, soon after the publication of the 'Letters,' sought the peace of his mother's native village, and there, alike undisturbing and undisturbed, he gave his life, as ever, to laborious days and quiet contemplation. The one vital fact in these six months of lofty endeavour is that he was making progress with the new book. Fishing and other distractions were occasionally indulged in, but merely that he might rise fresher next morning to a book which absorbed," etc.

One can see exactly how it should be done, it has been done so often before. And there is a deal to be said for this method. His book was what he had been at during nearly the whole of that time; comparatively speaking, the fishing and "other distractions" (a neat phrase) had got an occasional hour

T. SANDYS HAS RETURNED

only. But while we admire, we can't do it in that way. We seem fated to go on taking it for granted that you know the "vital facts" about Tommy, and devoting our attention to the things that the real biographer leaves out.

Tommy arrived in London with little more than ten pounds in his pockets. All the rest he had spent on Elspeth.

He looked for furnished chambers in a fashionable quarter, and they were much too expensive. But the young lady who showed them to him asked if it was *the* Mr. Sandys, and he at once took the rooms. Her mother subsequently said that she understood he wrote books, and would he deposit five pounds?

Such are the ups and downs of the literary calling.

The book, of course, was "Unrequited Love," and the true story of how it was not given to the world by his first publishers has never been told. They had the chance, but they weighed the manuscript in their hands as if it were butter, and said it was very small.

"If you knew how much time I have spent in making it smaller," replied Tommy, haughtily.

The madmen asked if he could not add a few chapters, whereupon, with a shudder, he tucked baby under his wing and flew away. That is how Goldie & Goldie got the book.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

For one who had left London a glittering star, it was wonderful how little he brightened it by returning. At the club they did not know that he had been away. In society they seemed to have forgotten to expect him back.

He had an eye for them — with a touch of red in it; but he bided his time. It was one of the terrible things about Tommy that he could bide his time. Pym was the only person he called upon. He took Pym out to dinner and conducted him home again. His kindness to Pym, the delicacy with which he pretended not to see that poor old Pym was degraded and done for — they would have been pretty even in a woman, and we treat Tommy unfairly in passing them by with a bow.

Pym had the manuscript to read, and you may be as sure he kept sober that night as that Tommy lay awake. For when literature had to be judged, who could be so grim a critic as this usually lenient toper? He could forgive much, could Pym. You had run away without paying your rent, was it? Well, well, come in and have a drink. Broken your wife's heart, have you? Poor chap, but you will soon get over it. But if it was a split infinitive, "Go to the devil, sir."

"Into a cocked hat," was the verdict of Pym, meaning thereby that thus did Tommy's second work beat his first. Tommy broke down and wept.

T. SANDYS HAS RETURNED

Presently Pym waxed sentimental and confided to Tommy that he, too, had once loved in vain. The sad case of those who love in vain, you remember, is the subject of the book. The saddest of autobiographies, it has been called.

An odd thing, this, I think. Tearing home (for the more he was engrossed in mind the quicker he walked), Tommy was not revelling in Pym's praise; he was neither blanching nor smiling at the thought that he of all people had written as one who was unloved; he was not wondering what Grizel would say to it; he had even forgotten to sigh over his own coming dissolution (indeed, about this time the flower-pot began to fade from his memory). What made him cut his way so excitedly through the streets was this: Pym had questioned his use of the word "untimely" in chapter eight. And Tommy had always been uneasy about that word.

He glared at every person he passed, and ran into perambulators. He rushed past his chambers like one who no longer had a home. He was in the park now, and did not even notice that the Row was empty, that mighty round a deserted circus; management, riders, clowns, all the performers gone on their provincial tour, or nearly all, for a lady on horseback sees him, remembers to some extent who he is, and gives chase. It is our dear Mrs. Jerry.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“You wretch,” she said, “to compel me to pursue you! Nothing could have induced me to do anything so unwomanly except that you are the only man in town.”

She shook her whip so prettily at him that it was as seductive as a smile. It was also a way of gaining time while she tried to remember what it was he was famous for.

“I believe you don’t know me!” she said, with a little shriek, for Tommy had looked bewildered. “That would be too mortifying. Please pretend you do!”

Her look of appeal, the way in which she put her plump little hands together, as if about to say her prayers, brought it all back to Tommy. The one thing he was not certain of was whether he had proposed to her.

It was the one thing of which she was certain.

“You think I can forget so soon,” he replied reproachfully, but carefully.

“Then tell me my name,” said she; she thought it might lead to his mentioning his own.

“I don’t know what it is now. It was Mrs. Jerry once.”

“It is Mrs. Jerry still.”

“Then you did not marry him, after all?”

No wild joy had surged to his face, but when she answered yes, he nodded his head with gentle melancholy three times. He had not the smallest

T. SANDYS HAS RETURNED

desire to deceive the lady; he was simply an actor who had got his cue and liked his part.

“But my friends still call me Mrs. Jerry,” she said softly. “I suppose it suits me somehow.”

“You will always be Mrs. Jerry to me,” he replied huskily. Ah, those meetings with old loves!

“If you minded so much,” Mrs. Jerry said, a little tremulously (she had the softest heart, though her memory was a trifle defective), “you might have discovered whether I had married him or not.”

“Was there no reason why I should not seek to discover it?” Tommy asked with tremendous irony, but not knowing in the least what he meant.

It confused Mrs. Jerry. They always confused her when they were fierce, and yet she liked them to be fierce when she re-met them, so few of them were.

But she said the proper thing. “I am glad you have got over it.”

Tommy maintained a masterly silence. No wonder he was a power with women.

“I say I am glad you have got over it,” murmured Mrs. Jerry again. Has it ever been noticed that the proper remark does not always gain in propriety with repetition?

It is splendid to know that right feeling still kept Tommy silent.

Yet she went on briskly as if he had told her

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

something: "Am I detaining you? You were walking so quickly that I thought you were in pursuit of someone."

It brought Tommy back to earth, and he could accept her now as an old friend he was glad to meet again. "You could not guess what I was in pursuit of, Mrs. Jerry," he assured her, and with confidence, for words are not usually chased down the Row.

But, though he made the sound of laughter, that terrible face which Mrs. Jerry remembered so well, but could not give a name to, took no part in the revelry; he was as puzzling to her as those irritating authors who print their jokes without a note of exclamation at the end of them. Poor Mrs. Jerry thought it must be a laugh of horrid bitterness, and that he was referring to his dead self or something dreadful of that sort, for which she was responsible.

"Please don't tell me," she said, in such obvious alarm that again he laughed that awful laugh. He promised, with a profound sigh, to carry his secret unspoken to the grave, also to come to her "At Home" if she sent him a card.

He told her his address, but not his name, and she could not send the card to "Occupier."

"Now tell me about yourself," said Mrs. Jerry, with charming cunning. "Did you go away?"

"I came back a few days ago only."

"Had you any shooting?" (They nearly

T. SANDYS HAS RETURNED

always threatened to make for a distant land where there was big game.)

Tommy smiled. He had never "had any shooting" except once in his boyhood, when he and Corp acted as beaters, and he had wept passionately over the first bird killed, and harangued the murderer.

"No," he replied; "I was at work all the time."

This, at least, told her that his work was of a kind which could be done out of London. An inventor?

"When are we to see the result?" asked artful Mrs. Jerry.

"Very soon. Everything comes out about this time. It is our season, you know."

Mrs. Jerry pondered while she said: "How too entrancing!" What did come out this month? Oh, plays! And whose season was it? The actor's, of course! He could not be an actor with that beard, but — ah, she remembered now!

"Are they really clever this time?" she asked roguishly — "for you must admit that they are usually sticks."

Tommy blinked at this. "I really believe, Mrs. Jerry," he said slowly, "it is you who don't know who I am!"

"You prepare the aristocracy for the stage, don't you?" she said plaintively.

"I!" he thundered.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“He had a beard,” she said, in self-defence.

“Who?”

“Oh, I don’t know! Please forgive me! I do remember, of course, who you are — I remember too well!” said Mrs. Jerry, generously.

“What is my name?” Tommy demanded.

She put her hands together again, beseechingly. “Please, please!” she said. “I have such a dreadful memory for names, but — oh, please!”

“What am I?” he insisted.

“You are the — the man who invents those delightful thingumbobs,” she cried with an inspiration.

“I never invented anything, except two books,” said Tommy, looking at her reproachfully.

“I know them by heart,” she cried.

“One of them is not published yet,” he informed her.

“I am looking forward to it so excitedly,” she said at once.

“And my name is Sandys,” said he.

“Thomas Sandys,” she said, correcting him triumphantly. “How is that dear, darling little Agnes — Elspeth?”

“You have me at last,” he admitted.

“‘Sandys on Woman!’” exclaimed Mrs. Jerry, all rippling smiles once more. “Can I ever forget it!”

“I shall never pretend to know anything about

T. SANDYS HAS RETURNED

women again," Tommy answered dolefully, but with a creditable absence of vindictiveness.

"Please, please!" said the little hands again.

"It is a nasty jar, Mrs. Jerry."

"Please!"

"Oh that I could forget so quickly!"

"Please!"

"I forgive you, if that is what you want."

She waved her whip. "And you will come and see me?"

"When I have got over this. It needs—a little time." He really said this to please her.

"You shall talk to me of the new book," she said, confident that this would fetch him, for he was not her first author. "By the way, what is it about?"

"Can you ask, Mrs. Jerry?" replied Tommy, passionately. "Oh, woman, woman, can you ask?"

This puzzled her at the time, but she understood what he had meant when the book came out, dedicated to Pym. "Goodness gracious!" she said to herself as she went from chapter to chapter, and she was very self-conscious when she heard the book discussed in society, which was not quite as soon as it came out, for at first the ladies seemed to have forgotten their Tommy.

But the journals made ample amends. He had invented, they said, something new in literature, a

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

story that was yet not a story, told in the form of essays which were no mere essays. There was no character mentioned by name, there was not a line of dialogue, essays only, they might say, were the net result, yet a human heart was laid bare, and surely that was fiction in its highest form. Fiction founded on fact, no doubt (for it would be ostrich-like to deny that such a work must be the outcome of a painful personal experience), but in those wise and penetrating pages Mr. Sandys called no one's attention to himself; his subject was an experience common to humanity, to be borne this way or that; and without vainglory he showed how it should be borne, so that those looking into the deep waters of the book (made clear by his pellucid style) might see, not the author, but themselves.

A few of the critics said that if the book added nothing to his reputation, it detracted nothing from it, but probably their pen added this mechanically when they were away. What annoyed him more was the two or three who stated that, much as they liked "Unrequited Love," they liked the "Letters" still better. He could not endure hearing a good word said for the "Letters" now.

The great public, I believe, always preferred the "Letters," but among important sections of it the new book was a delight, and for various reasons. For instance, it was no mere story. That

T. SANDYS HAS RETURNED

got the thoughtful public. Its style, again, got the public which knows it is the only public that counts.

Society still held aloof (there was an African traveller on view that year), but otherwise everything was going on well, when the bolt came, as ever, from the quarter whence it was least expected. It came in a letter from Grizel, so direct as to be almost as direct as this: "I think it is a horrid book. The more beautifully it is written the more horrid it seems. No one was ever loved more truly than you. You can know nothing about unrequited love. Then why do you pretend to know? I see why you always avoided telling me anything about the book, even its title. It was because you knew what I should say. It is nothing but sentiment. You were on your wings all the time you were writing it. That is why you could treat me as you did. Even to the last moment you deceived me. I suppose you deceived yourself also. Had I known what was in the manuscript I would not have kissed it, I would have asked you to burn it. Had you not had the strength, and you would not, I should have burned it for you. It would have been a proof of my love. I have ceased to care whether you are a famous man or not. I want you to be a real man. But you will not let me help you. I have cried all day.

GRIZEL."

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

Fury. Dejection. The heroic. They came in that order.

“This is too much!” he cried at first. “I can stand a good deal, Grizel, but there was once a worm that turned at last, you know. Take care, madam, take care. Oh, but you are a charming lady; you can decide everything for everybody, can’t you! What delicious letters you write, something unexpected in everyone of them! There are poor dogs of men, Grizel, who open their letters from their loves knowing exactly what will be inside—words of cheer, words of love, of confidence, of admiration, which help them as they sit into the night at their work, fighting for fame that they may lay it at their loved one’s feet. Discouragement, obloquy, scorn, they get in plenty from others, but they are always sure of her,—do you hear, my original Grizel?—those other dogs are always sure of her. Hurrah! Grizel, I was happy, I was actually honoured, it was helping me to do better and better, when you quickly put an end to all that. Hurrah, hurrah!”

I feel rather sorry for him. If he had not told her about his book it was because she did not and never could understand what compels a man to write one book instead of another. “I had no say in the matter; the thing demanded of me that I should do it, and I had to do it. Some must write from their own experience, they can make

T. SANDYS HAS RETURNED

nothing of anything else; but it is to me like a chariot that won't budge; I have to assume a character, Grizel, and then away we go. I don't attempt to explain how I write, I hate to discuss it; all I know is that those who know how it should be done can never do it. London is overrun with such, and everyone of them is as cock-sure as you. You have taken everything else, Grizel; surely you might leave me my books."

Yes, everything else, or nearly so. He put upon the table all the feathers he had extracted since his return to London, and they did make some little show, if less than it seemed to him. That little adventure in the park; well, if it started wrongly, it but helped to show the change in him, for he had determinedly kept away from Mrs. Jerry's house. He had met her once since the book came out, and she had blushed exquisitely when referring to it, and said: "How you have suffered! I blame myself dreadfully." Yes, and there was an unoccupied sofa near by, and he had not sat down on it with her and continued the conversation. Was not that a feather? And there were other ladies, and, without going into particulars, they were several feathers between them. How doggedly, to punish himself, he had stuck to the company of men, a sex that never interested him!

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“But all that is nothing. I am beyond the pale. I did so monstrous a thing that I must die for it. What was this dreadful thing? When I saw you with that glove I knew you loved me, and that you thought I loved you, and I had not the heart to dash your joy. You don’t know it, but that was the crime for which I must be exterminated, fiend that I am!”

Gusts of fury came at intervals all the morning. He wrote her appalling letters and destroyed them. He shook his fist and snapped his fingers at her, and went out for drink (having none in the house), and called a hansom to take him to Mrs. Jerry’s, and tore round the park again and glared at everybody. He rushed on and on. “But the one thing you shall never do, Grizel, is to interfere with my work; I swear it, do you hear? In all else I am yours to mangle at your will, but touch it, and I am a beast at bay.”

And still saying such things, he drew near the publishing offices of Goldie & Goldie, and circled round them, less like a beast at bay than a bird that is taking a long way to its nest. And about four of the afternoon what does this odd beast or bird or fish do but stalk into Goldie & Goldie’s and order “Unrequited Love” to be withdrawn from circulation.

“Madam, I have carried out your wishes, and the man is hanged.”

T. SANDYS HAS RETURNED

Not thus, but in words to that effect, did Tommy announce his deed to Grizel.

“I think you have done the right thing,” she wrote back, “and I admire you for it.” But he thought she did not admire him sufficiently for it, and he did not answer her letter, so it was the last that passed between them.

Such is the true explanation (now first published) of an affair that at the time created no small stir. “Why withdraw the book?” Goldie & Goldie asked of Tommy, but he would give no reason. “Why?” the public asked of Goldie & Goldie, and they had to invent several. The public invented the others. The silliest were those you could know only by belonging to a club.

I swear that Tommy had not foreseen the result. Quite unwittingly the favoured of the gods had found a way again. The talk about his incomprehensible action was the turning-point in the fortunes of the book. There were already a few thousand copies in circulation, and now many thousand people wanted them. Sandys, Sandys, Sandys! where had the ladies heard that name before? Society woke up, Sandys was again its hero; the traveller had to go lecturing in the provinces.

The ladies! Yes, and their friends, the men. There was a Tommy society in Mayfair that winter, nearly all of the members eminent or beautiful, and they held each other's hands. Both sexes

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

were eligible, married or single, and the one rule was something about sympathy. It afterwards became the Souls, but those in the know still call them the Tommies.

They blackballed Mrs. Jerry (she was rather plump), but her married stepdaughter, Lady Pippinworth (who had been a Miss Ridge-Fulton), was one of them. Indeed, the Ridge-Fultons are among the thinnest families in the country.

T. Sandys was invited to join the society, but declined, and thus never quite knew what they did, nor can any outsider know, there being a regulation among the Tommies against telling. I believe, however, that they were a brotherhood, with sisters. You had to pass an examination in unrequited love, showing how you had suffered, and after that either the men or the women (I forget which) dressed in white to the throat, and then each got some other's old love's hand to hold, and you all sat on the floor and thought hard. There may have been even more in it than this, for one got to know Tommies at sight by a sort of care-worn halo round the brow, and it is said that the House of Commons was several times nearly counted out because so many of its middle-aged members were holding the floor in another place.

Of course there were also the Anti-Tommies, who called themselves (rather vulgarly) the Tum-mies. Many of them were that shape. They held

T. SANDYS HAS RETURNED

that, though you had loved in vain, it was no such mighty matter to boast of; but they were poor in argument, and their only really strong card was that Mr. Sandys was stoutish himself.

Their organs in the press said that he was a man of true genius, and slightly inclined to *embonpoint*.

This maddened him, but on the whole his return was a triumph, and despite thoughts of Grizel he was very, very happy, for he was at play again. He was a boy, and all the ladies were girls. Perhaps the lady he saw most frequently was Mrs. Jerry's stepdaughter. Lady Pippinworth was a friend of Lady Rintoul, and had several times visited her at the Spittal, but that was not the sole reason why Tommy so frequently drank tea with her. They had met first at a country house, where, one night after the ladies had retired to rest, Lady Pippinworth came stealing into the smoking-room with the tidings that there were burglars in the house. As she approached her room she had heard whispers, and then, her door being ajar, she had peeped upon the miscreants. She had also seen a pile of her jewellery on the table, and a pistol keeping guard on top of it. There were several men in the house, but that pistol cowed all of them save Tommy. "If we could lock them in!" someone suggested, but the key was on the wrong side of the door. "I shall put it on the right side," Tommy said pluckily, "if you others will prevent their

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

escaping by the window"; and with characteristic courage he set off for her Ladyship's room. His intention was to insert his hand, whip out the key, and lock the door on the outside, a sufficiently hazardous enterprise; but what does he do instead? Locks the door on the inside, and goes for the burglars with his fists! A happy recollection of Corp's famous one from the shoulder disposed at once of the man who had seized the pistol; with the other gentleman Tommy had a stand-up fight in which both of them took and gave, but when support arrived, one burglar was senseless on the floor and T. Sandys was sitting on the other. Courageous of Tommy, was it not? But observe the end. He was left in the dining-room to take charge of his captives until morning, and by and by he was exhorting them in such noble language to mend their ways that they took the measure of him, and so touching were their family histories that Tommy wept and untied their cords and showed them out at the front door and gave them ten shillings each, and the one who begged for the honour of shaking hands with him also took his watch. Thus did Tommy and Lady Pippinworth become friends, but it was not this that sent him so often to her house to tea. She was a beautiful woman, with a reputation for having broken many hearts without damaging her own. He thought it an interesting case.

CHAPTER XXVI

GRIZEL ALL ALONE

IT was Tommy who was the favoured of the gods, you remember, not Grizel.

Elsbeth wondered to see her, after the publication of that book, looking much as usual. "You know how he loved you now," she said, perhaps a little reproachfully.

"Yes," Grizel answered, "I know; I knew before the book came out."

"You must be sorry for him?"

Grizel nodded.

"But proud of him also," Elspeth said. "You have a right to be proud."

"I am as proud," Grizel replied, "as I have a right to be."

Something in her voice touched Elspeth, who was so happy that she wanted everyone to be happy. "I want you to know, Grizel," she said warmly, "that I don't blame you for not being able to love him; we can't help those things. Nor need you blame yourself too much, for I have often

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

heard him say that artists must suffer in order to produce beautiful things.”

“But I cannot remember,” Elspeth had to admit, with a sigh, to David, “that she made any answer to that, except ‘Thank you.’”

Grizel was nearly as reticent to David himself. Once only did she break down for a moment in his presence. It was when he was telling her that the issue of the book had been stopped.

“But I see you know already,” he said. “Perhaps you even know why — though he has not given any sufficient reason to Elspeth.”

David had given his promise, she reminded him, not to ask her any questions about Tommy.

“But I don’t see why I should keep it,” he said bluntly.

“Because you dislike him,” she replied.

“Grizel,” he declared, “I have tried hard to like him. I have thought and thought about it, and I can’t see that he has given me any just cause to dislike him.”

“And that,” said Grizel, “makes you dislike him more than ever.”

“I know that you cared for him once,” David persisted, “and I know that he wanted to marry you——”

But she would not let him go on. “David,” she said, “I want to give up my house, and I want you to take it. It is the real doctor’s house

GRIZEL ALL ALONE

of Thrums, and people in need of you still keep ringing me up of nights. The only door to your surgery is through my passage; it is I who should be in lodgings now."

"Do you really think I would, Grizel!" he cried indignantly.

"Rather than see the dear house go into another's hands," she answered steadily; "for I am determined to leave it. Dr. McQueen won't feel strange when he looks down, David, if it is only you he sees moving about the old rooms, instead of me."

"You are doing this for me, Grizel, and I won't have it."

"I give you my word," she told him, "that I am doing it for myself alone. I am tired of keeping a house, and of all its worries. Men don't know what they are."

She was smiling, but his brows wrinkled in pain. "Oh, Grizel!" he said, and stopped. And then he cried, "Since when has Grizel ceased to care for housekeeping?"

She did not say since when. I don't know whether she knew; but it was since she and Tommy had ceased to correspond. David's words showed her too suddenly how she had changed, and it was then that she broke down before him—because she had ceased to care for housekeeping.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

But she had her way, and early in the new year David and his wife were established in their new home, with all Grizel's furniture, except such as was needed for the two rooms rented by her from Gavinia. She would have liked to take away the old doctor's chair, because it was the bit of him left behind when he died, and then for that very reason she did not. She no longer wanted him to see her always. "I am not so nice as I used to be, and I want to keep it from you," she said to the chair when she kissed it good-bye.

Was Grizel not as nice as she used to be? How can I answer, who love her the more only? There is one at least, Grizel, who will never desert you.

Ah, but was she?

I seem again to hear the warning voice of Grizel, and this time she is crying: "You know I was not."

She knew it so well that she could say it to herself quite calmly. She knew that, with whatever repugnance she drove those passions away, they would come back — yes, and for a space be welcomed back. Why does she leave Gavinia's blue hearth this evening, and seek the solitary Den? She has gone to summon them, and she knows it. They come thick in the Den, for they know the place. It was there that her mother was wont to walk with them. Have they been waiting for you

GRIZEL ALL ALONE

in the Den, Grizel, all this time? Have you found your mother's legacy at last?

Don't think that she sought them often. It was never when she seemed to have anything to live for. Tommy would not write to her, and so did not want her to write to him; but if that bowed her head, it never made her rebel. She still had her many duties. Whatever she suffered, so long as she could say, "I am helping him," she was in heart and soul the Grizel of old. In his fits of remorse, which were many, he tried to produce work that would please her. Thus, in a heroic attempt to be practical, he wrote a political article in one of the reviews, quite in the ordinary style, but so much worse than the average of such things that they would never have printed it without his name. He also contributed to a magazine a short tale,—he who could never write tales,—and he struck all the beautiful reflections out of it, and never referred to himself once, and the result was so imbecile that kindly people said there must be another writer of the same name. "Show them to Grizel," Tommy wrote to Elspeth, inclosing also some of the animadversions of the press, and he meant Grizel to see that he could write in his own way only. But she read those two efforts with delight, and said to Elspeth, "Tell him I am so proud of them."

Elspeth thought it very nice of Grizel to defend

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

the despised in this way (even Elspeth had fallen asleep over the political paper). She did not understand that Grizel loved them because they showed Tommy trying to do without his wings.

Then another trifle by him appeared, shorter even than the others; but no man in England could have written it except T. Sandys. It has not been reprinted, and I forget everything about it except that its subject was love. "Will not the friends of the man who can produce such a little masterpiece as this," the journals said, "save him from wasting his time on lumber for the reviews, and drivelling tales?" And Tommy suggested to Elspeth that she might show Grizel this exhortation also.

Grizel saw she was not helping him at all. If he would not fight, why should she? Oh, let her fall and fall, it would not take her farther from him! These were the thoughts that sent her into solitude, to meet with worse ones. She could not face the morrow. "What shall I do to-morrow?" She never shrank from to-day—it had its duties; it could be got through: but to-morrow was a never-ending road. Oh, how could she get through to-morrow?

Her great friend at this time was Corp; because he still retained his faith in Tommy. She could always talk of Tommy to Corp.

How loyal Corp was! He still referred to

GRIZEL ALL ALONE

Tommy as “him.” Gavinia, much distressed, read aloud to Corp a newspaper attack on the political article, and all he said was, “He’ll find a wy.”

“He’s found it,” he went upstairs to announce to Grizel, when the praises of the “little masterpiece” arrived.

“Yes, I know, Corp,” she answered quietly. She was sitting by the window where the plant was. Tommy had asked her to take care of it, without telling her why.

Something in her appearance troubled the hulking, blundering man. He could not have told what it was. I think it was simply this — that Grizel no longer sat erect in her chair.

“I’m nain easy in my mind about Grizel,” he said that evening to Gavinia. “There’s something queery about her, though I canna bottom ’t.”

“Yea?” said Gavinia, with mild contempt.

He continued pulling at his pipe, grunting as if in pleasant pain, which was the way Corp smoked.

“I could see she’s no pleased, though he has found a wy,” he said.

“What pleasure should she be able to sook out o’ his keeping ding-ding-danging on about that woman?” retorted Gavinia.

“What woman?”

“The London besom that gae him the go-by.”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“Was there sic a woman!” Corp cried.

“Of course there was, and it’s her that he’s aye writing about.”

“Havers, Gavinia! It’s Grizel he’s aye writing about, and it was Grizel that gae him the go-by. It’s town talk.”

But whatever the town might say, Gavinia stuck to her opinion. “Grizel’s no near so neat in her dressing as she was,” she informed Corp, “and her hair is no aye tidy, and that bonnet she was in yesterday didna set her.”

“I’ve noticed it,” cried Corp. “I’ve noticed it this while back, though I didna ken I had noticed it, Gavinia. I wonder what can be the reason?”

“It’s because nobody cares,” Gavinia replied sadly. Trust one woman to know another!

“We a’ care,” said Corp, stoutly.

“We’re a’ as nothing, Corp, when he doesna care. She’s fond o’ him, man.”

“Of course she is, in a wy. Whaur’s the woman that could help it?”

“There’s many a woman that could help it,” said Gavinia, tartly, for the honour of her sex, “but she’s no ane o’ them.” To be candid, Gavinia was not one of them herself. “I’m thinking she’s terrible fond o’ him,” she said, “and I’m nain sure that he has treated her weel.”

“Woman, take care; say a word agin him and I’ll mittle you!” Corp thundered, and she desisted in fear.

GRIZEL ALL ALONE

But he made her re-read the little essay to him in instalments, and at the end he said victoriously, "You blethering crittur, there's no sic woman. It's just another o' his ploys!"

He marched upstairs to Grizel with the news, and she listened kindly. "I am sure you are right," she said; "you understand him better than any of them, Corp," and it was true.

He thought he had settled the whole matter. He was burning to be downstairs to tell Gavinia that these things needed only a man. "And so you'll be yoursel' again, Grizel," he said, with great relief.

She had not seen that he was aiming at her until now, and it touched her. "Am I so different, Corp?"

Not at all, he assured her delicately, but she was maybe no quite so neatly dressed as she used to be, and her hair wasna braided back so smooth, and he didna think that bonnet quite set her.

"Gavinia has been saying that to you!"

"I noticed it mysel', Grizel; I'm a terrible noticher."

"Perhaps you are, right," she said, reflecting, after looking at herself for the first time for some days. "But to think of your caring, Corp!"

"I care most mighty," he replied, with terrific earnestness.

"I must try to satisfy you, then," she said, smil-

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

ing. "But, Corp, please don't discuss me with Gavinia."

This request embarrassed him, for soon again he did not know how to act. There was Grizel's strange behaviour with the child, for instance. "No, I won't come down to see him to-day, Corp," she had said; "somehow children weary me."

Such words from Grizel! His mouth would not shut and he could say nothing. "Forgive me, Corp!" she cried remorsefully, and ran downstairs, and with many a passionate caress asked forgiveness of the child.

Corp followed her, and for the moment he thought he must have been dreaming upstairs. "I wish I saw you wi' bairns o' your ain, Grizel," he said, looking on entranced; but she gave him such a pitiful smile that he could not get it out of his head. Deprived of Gavinia's counsel, and afraid to hurt Elspeth, he sought out the doctor and said bluntly to him, "How is it he never writes to Grizel? She misses him terrible."

"So," David thought, "Grizel's dejection is becoming common talk." "Damn him!" he said, in a gust of fury.

But this was too much for loyal Corp. "Damn you!" he roared.

But in his heart he knew that the doctor was a just man, and henceforth, when he was meaning to

GRIZEL ALL ALONE

comfort Grizel, he was often seeking comfort for himself.

He did it all with elaborate cunning, to prevent her guessing that he was disturbed about her: asked permission to sit with her, for instance, because he was dull downstairs; mentioned as a ludicrous thing that there were people who believed Tommy could treat a woman badly, and waited anxiously for the reply. Oh, he was transparent, was Corp, but you may be sure Grizel never let him know that she saw through him. Tommy could not be blamed, she pointed out, though he did not care for some woman who perhaps cared for him.

“Exac’ly,” said Corp.

And if he seemed, Grizel went on, with momentary bitterness, to treat her badly, it could be only because she had made herself cheap.

“That’s it,” said Corp, cheerfully. Then he added hurriedly, “No, that’s no it ava. She’s the last to mak’ hersel’ cheap.” Then he saw that this might put Grizel on the scent. “Of course there’s no sic woman,” he said artfully, “but if there was, he would mak’ it a’ right. She mightna see how it was to be done, but kennin’ what a crittur he is, she maun be sure he would find a wy. She would never lose hope, Grizel.”

And then, if Grizel did not appease him instantly, he would say appealingly, “I canna think

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

less o' him, Grizel; no, it would mak' me just terrible low. Grizel," he would cry sternly, "dinna tell me to think less o' that laddie."

Then, when she had reassured him, he would recall the many instances in which Tommy as a boy had found a way. "Did we ever ken he was finding it, Grizel, till he did find it? Many a time I says to mysel', says I, 'All is over,' and syne next minute that holy look comes ower his face, and he stretches out his legs like as if he was riding on a horse, and all that kens him says, 'He has found a wy.' If I was the woman (no that there is sic a woman) I would say to mysel', 'He was never beat,' I would say, 'when he was a laddie, and it's no likely he'll be beat when he's a man'; and I wouldna sit looking at the fire wi' my hands fauded, nor would I forget to keep my hair neat, and I would wear the frock that set me best, and I would play in my auld bonny wy wi' bairns, for says I to mysel', 'I'm sure to hae bairns o' my ain some day, and ——'"

But Grizel cried, "Don't, Corp, don't!"

"I winna," he answered miserably, "no, I winna. Forgive me, Grizel; I think I'll be stepping"; and then when he got as far as the door he would say, "I canna do 't, Grizel; I'm just terrible wae for the woman (if sic a woman there be), but I canna think ill o' him; you mauna speir it o' me."

He was much brightened by a reflection that

GRIZEL ALL ALONE

came to him one day in church. "Here have I been near blaming him for no finding a wy, and very like he doesna ken we want him to find a wy!"

How to inform Tommy without letting Grizel know? She had tried twice long ago to teach him to write, but he found it harder on the wrists than the heaviest luggage. It was not safe for him even to think of the extra twirl that turned an *n* into an *m*, without first removing any knick-knacks that might be about. Nevertheless, he now proposed a third set-to, and Grizel acquiesced, though she thought it but another of his inventions to keep her from brooding.

The number of words in the English tongue excited him, and he often lost all by not confining the chase to one, like a dog after rabbits. Fortunately, he knew which words he wanted to bag.

"Change at Tilliedrum!" "Tickets! show your tickets!" and the like, he much enjoyed meeting in the flesh, so to speak.

"Let's see 'Find a wy,' Grizel," he would say. "Ay, ay, and is that the crittur!" and soon the sly fellow could write it, or at least draw it.

He affected an ambition to write a letter to his son on that gentleman's first birthday, and so "Let's see what 'I send you these few scrapes' is like, Grizel." She assured him that this is not essential in correspondence, but all the letters he had ever heard read aloud began thus, and he got his way.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

Anon Master Shiach was surprised and gratified to receive the following epistle: "My dear sir, I send you these few scrapes to tell you as you have found a way to be a year of age the morn. All tickets ready in which Gavinia joins so no more at present I am, sir, your obed^t father Corp Shiach."

The fame of this letter went abroad, but not a soul knew of the next. It said: "My dear Sir, I send you these few scrapes to tell you as Grizel needs cheering up. Kindly oblidge by finding a way so no more at present. I am sir your obed^t Serv^t Corp Shiach."

To his bewilderment, this produced no effect, though only because Tommy never got it, and he wrote again, more sternly, requesting his hero to find a way immediately. He was waiting restlessly for the answer at a time when Elspeth called on Grizel to tell her of something beautiful that Tommy had done. He had been very ill for nearly a fortnight, it appeared, but had kept it from her to save her anxiety. "Just think, Grizel; all the time he was in bed with bronchitis he was writing me cheerful letters every other day pretending there was nothing the matter with him. He is better now. I have heard about it from a Mrs. Jerry, a lady whom I knew in London, and who has nursed him in the kindest way." (But this same Mrs. Jerry had opened Corp's letters and destroyed them as of no importance.) "He would

GRIZEL ALL ALONE

never have mentioned it himself. How like him, Grizel! You remember, I made him promise before he went back to London that if he was ill he would let me know at once so that I could go to him, but he is so considerate he would not give me pain. He wrote those letters, Grizel, when he was gasping for breath."

"But she seemed quite unmoved," Elspeth said sadly to her husband afterwards.

Unmoved! Yes; Grizel remained apparently unmoved until Elspeth had gone, but then — the torture she endured! "Oh, cruel, cruel!" she cried, and she could neither stand nor sit; she flung herself down before the fire and rocked this way and that, in a paroxysm of woe. "Oh, cruel, cruel!"

It was Tommy who was cruel. To be ill, near to dying, apparently, and not to send her word! She could never, never have let him go had he not made that promise to Elspeth; and he kept it thus. Oh, wicked, wicked!

"You would have gone to him at once, Elspeth! You! Who are you, that talks of going to him as your right? He is not yours, I tell you; he is mine! He is mine alone; it is I who would go to him. Who is this woman that dares take my place by his side when he is ill!"

She rose to go to him, to drive away all others. I am sure that was what gave her strength to rise;

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

but she sank to the floor again, and her passion lasted for hours. And through the night she was crying to God that she would be brave no more. In her despair she hoped he heard her.

Her mood had not changed when David came to see her next morning, to admit, too, that Tommy seemed to have done an unselfish thing in concealing his illness from them. Grizel nodded, but he thought she was looking strangely reckless. He had a message from Elspeth. Tommy had asked her to let him know whether the plant was flourishing.

“So you and he don’t correspond now?” David said, with his old, puzzled look.

“No,” was all her answer to that. The plant, she thought, was dead; she had not, indeed, paid much attention to it of late; but she showed it to David, and he said it would revive if more carefully tended. He also told her its rather pathetic history, which was new to Grizel, and of the talk at the wedding which had led to Tommy’s taking pity on it. “Fellow-feeling, I suppose,” he said lightly; “you see, they both blossomed prematurely.”

The words were forgotten by him as soon as spoken; but Grizel sat on with them, for they were like a friend—or was it an enemy?—who had come to tell her strange things. Yes, the

GRIZEL ALL ALONE

doctor was right. Now she knew why Tommy had loved this plant. Of the way in which he would sit looking wistfully at it, almost nursing it, she had been told by Aaron; he had himself begged her to tend it lovingly. Fellow-feeling! The doctor was shrewder than he thought.

Well, what did it matter to her? All that day she would do nothing for the plant, but in the middle of the night she rose and ran to it and hugged it, and for a time she was afraid to look at it by lamplight, lest Tommy was dead. Whether she had never been asleep that night, or had awakened from a dream, she never knew, but she ran to the plant, thinking it and Tommy were as one, and that they must die together. No such thought had ever crossed his mind, but it seemed to her that she had been told it by him, and she lit her fire to give the plant warmth, and often desisted, to press it to her bosom, the heat seemed to come so reluctantly from the fire. This idea that his fate was bound up with that of the plant took strange possession of the once practical Grizel; it was as if some of Tommy's nature had passed into her to help her break the terrible monotony of the days.

And from that time there was no ailing child more passionately tended than the plant, and as spring advanced it began once more to put forth new leaves.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

And Grizel also seemed glorified again. She was her old self. Dark shapes still lingered for her in the Den, but she avoided them, and if they tried to enter into her, she struggled with them and cast them out. As she saw herself able to fight and win once more, her pride returned to her, and one day she could ask David, joyously, to give her a present of the old doctor's chair. And she could kneel by its side and say to it, "You can watch me always; I am just as I used to be."

Seeing her once more the incarnation of vigor and content, singing gaily to his child, and as eager to be at her duties betimes as a morning in May, Corp grunted with delight, and was a hero for not telling her that it was he who had passed Tommy the word. For, of course, Tommy had done it all.

"Somebody has found a wy, Grizel!" he would say, chuckling, and she smiled an agreement.

"And yet," says he, puzzled, "I've watched, and you hinna haen a letter frae him. It defies the face o' clay to find out how he has managed it. Oh, the crittur! Ay, I suppose you dinna want to tell me what it is that has lichted you up again?"

She could not tell him, for it was a compact she had made with one who did not sign it. "I shall cease to be bitter and despairing and wicked, and try every moment of my life to be good and do

GRIZEL ALL ALONE

good, so long as my plant flourishes; but if it withers, then I shall go to him — I don't care what happens; I shall go to him."

It was the middle of June when she first noticed that the plant was beginning to droop.

CHAPTER XXVII

GRIZEL'S JOURNEY

Nothing could have been less expected. In the beginning of May its leaves had lost something of their greenness. The plant seemed to be hesitating, but she coaxed it over the hill, and since then it had scarcely needed her hand; almost light-headedly it hurried into its summer clothes, and new buds broke out on it, like smiles, at the fascinating thought that there was to be a tomorrow. Grizel's plant had never been so brave in its little life when suddenly it turned back.

That was the day on which Elspeth and David were leaving for a fortnight's holiday with his relatives by the sea; for Elspeth needed and was getting special devotion just now, and Grizel knew why. She was glad they were going; it was well that they should not be there to ask questions if she also must set forth on a journey.

For more than a week she waited, and everything she could do for her plant she did. She watched it so carefully that she might have deceived herself into believing that it was standing

GRIZEL'S JOURNEY

still only, had there been no night-time. She thought she had not perhaps been sufficiently good, and she tried to be more ostentatiously satisfied with her lot. Never had she forced herself to work quite so hard for others as in those few days, and then when she came home it had drooped a little more.

When she was quite sure that it was dying, she told Corp she was going to London by that night's train. "He is ill, Corp, and I must go to him."

Ill! But how had he let her know?

"He has found a way," she said, with a tremulous smile. He wanted her to telegraph; but no, she would place no faith in telegrams.

At least she could telegraph to Elspeth and the doctor. One of them would go.

"It is I who am going," she said quietly. "I can't wait any longer. It was a promise, Corp. He loves me." They were the only words she said which suggest that there was anything strange about Grizel at this time.

Corp saw how determined she was when she revealed, incidentally, that she had drawn a sum of money out of the bank a week ago, "to be ready."

"What will folk say!" he cried.

"You can tell Gavinia the truth when I am gone," she told him. "She will know better than you what to say to other people." And that was some comfort to him, for it put the burden of in-

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

vention upon his wife. So it was Corp who saw Grizel off. He was in great distress himself about Tommy, but he kept a courageous face for her, and his last words flung in at the carriage window were, "Now dinna be down-hearted; I'm nain down-hearted mysel', for we're very sure he'll find a wy." And Grizel smiled and nodded, and the train turned the bend that shuts out the little town of Thrums. The town vanishes quickly, but the quarry we howked it out of stands grim and red, watching the train for many a mile.

Of Grizel's journey to London there are no particulars to tell. She was wearing her brown jacket and fur cap because Tommy had liked them, and she sat straight and stiff all the way. She had never been in a train since she was a baby, except two or three times to Tilliedrum, and she thought this was the right way to sit. Always, when the train stopped, which was at long intervals, she put her head out at the window and asked if this was the train to London. Every station a train stops at in the middle of the night is the infernal regions, and she shuddered to hear lost souls clanking their chains, which is what a milk-can becomes on its way to the van; but still she asked if this was the train to London. When fellow-passengers addressed her, she was very modest and cautious in her replies. Sometimes a look of extraordinary happiness, of radiance, passed over her face, and

GRIZEL'S JOURNEY

may have puzzled them. It was part of the thought that, however ill he might be, she was to see him now.

She did not see him as soon as she expected, for at the door of Tommy's lodgings they told her that he had departed suddenly for the Continent about a week ago. He was to send an address by and by to which letters could be forwarded. Was he quite well when he went away? Grizel asked, shaking.

The landlady and her daughter thought he was rather peakish, but he had not complained.

He went away for his health, Grizel informed them, and he was very ill now. Oh, could they not tell her where he was? All she knew was that he was very ill. "I am engaged to be married to him," she said with dignity. Without this strange certainty that Tommy loved her at last, she could not have trod the road which faced her now. Even when she had left the house, where at their suggestion she was to call to-morrow, she found herself wondering at once what he would like her to do now, and she went straight to a hotel, and had her box sent to it from the station, and she remained there all day because she thought that this was what he would like her to do. She sat bolt upright on a cane chair in her bedroom, praying to God with her eyes open; she was begging Him to let Tommy tell her where he was, and promising to return home at once if he did not need her.

Next morning they showed her, at his lodgings,

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

two lines in a newspaper, which said that he was ill with bronchitis at the **Hôtel Krone**, Bad-Platten, in Switzerland.

It may have been an answer to her prayer, as she thought, but we know now how the paragraph got into print. On the previous evening the landlady had met Mr. Pym on the ladder of an omnibus, and told him, before they could be plucked apart, of the lady who knew that Mr. Sandys was ill. It must be bronchitis again. Pym was much troubled; he knew that the **Krone** at **Bad-Platten** had been Tommy's destination. He talked that day, and one of the company was a reporter, which accounts for the paragraph.

Grizel found out how she could get to **Bad-Platten**. She left her box behind her at the cloak-room of the railway station, where I suppose it was sold years afterwards. From **Dover** she sent a telegram to Tommy, saying: "I am coming. **GRIZEL.**"

On entering the train at **Calais** she had a railway journey of some thirty hours, broken by two changes only. She could speak a little French, but all the use she made of it was to ask repeatedly if she was in the right train. An English lady who travelled with her for many hours woke up now and again to notice that this quiet, prim-looking girl was always sitting erect, with her hand on her umbrella, as if ready to leave the train at

GRIZEL'S JOURNEY

any moment. The lady pointed out some of the beauties of the scenery to her, and Grizel tried to listen. "I am afraid you are unhappy," her companion said at last.

"That is not why I am crying," Grizel said; "I think I am crying because I am so hungry."

The stranger gave her sandwiches and claret as cold as the rivers that raced the train; and Grizel told her, quite frankly, why she was going to Bad-Platten. She did not tell his name, only that he was ill, and that she was engaged to him, and he had sent for her. She believed it all. The lady was very sympathetic, and gave her information about the diligence by which the last part of Grizel's journey must be made, and also said: "You must not neglect your meals, if only for his sake; for how can you nurse him back to health if you arrive at Bad-Platten ill yourself? Consider his distress if he were to be told that you were in the inn, but not able to go to him."

"Oh!" Grizel cried, rocking her arms for the first time since she knew her plant was drooping. She promised to be very practical henceforth, so as to have strength to take her place by his side at once. It was strange that she who was so good a nurse had forgotten these things, so strange that it alarmed her, as if she feared that, without being able to check herself, she was turning into some other person.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

The station where she alighted was in a hubbub of life; everyone seemed to leave the train here, and to resent the presence of all the others. They were mostly English. The men hung back, as if, now that there was business to be done in some foolish tongue, they had better leave the ladies to do it. Many of them seemed prepared, if there was dissension, to disown their womankind and run for it. They looked haughty and nervous. Such of them as had tried to shave in the train were boasting of it and holding handkerchiefs to their chins. The ladies were moving about in a masterful way, carrying bunches of keys. When they had done everything, the men went and stood by their sides again.

Outside the station buses and carriages were innumerable, and everybody was shouting; but Grizel saw that nearly all her fellow-passengers were hurrying by foot or conveyance to one spot, all desirous of being there first, and she thought it must be the place where the diligence started from, and pressed on with them. It proved to be a hotel where they all wanted the best bedroom, and many of them had telegraphed for it, and they gathered round a man in uniform and demanded that room of him; but he treated them as if they were little dogs and he was not the platter, and soon they were begging for a room on the fourth floor at the back, and swelling with triumph if they got it.

GRIZEL'S JOURNEY

The scrimmage was still going on when Grizel slipped out of the hotel, having learned that the diligence would not start until the following morning. It was still early in the afternoon. How could she wait until to-morrow?

Bad-Platten was forty miles away. The road was pointed out to her. It began to climb at once. She was to discover that for more than thirty miles it never ceased to climb. She sat down, hesitating, on a little bridge that spanned a horrible rushing white stream. Poets have sung the glories of that stream, but it sent a shiver through her. On all sides she was caged in by a ring of splendid mountains, but she did not give them one admiring glance (there is a special spot where the guide-books advise you to stop for a moment to do it); her one passionate desire was to fling out her arms and knock them over.

She had often walked twenty miles in a day, in a hill country too, without feeling tired, and there seemed no reason why she should not set off now. There were many inns on the way, she was told, where she could pass the night. There she could get the diligence next day. This would not bring her any sooner to him than if she waited here until to-morrow; but how could she sit still till to-morrow? She must be moving; she seemed to have been sitting still for an eternity. "I must not do anything rash," she told herself, carefully.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“I must arrive at Bad-Platten able to sit down beside him the moment I have taken off my jacket — oh, without waiting to take off my jacket.” She went into the hotel and ate some food, just to show herself how careful she had become. About three o’clock she set off. She had a fierce desire to get away from that heartless white stream and the crack of whips and the doleful pine woods, and at first she walked very quickly; but she never got away from them, for they marched with her. It was not that day, but the next, that Grizel thought anything was marching with her. That day her head was quite clear, and she kept her promise to herself, and as soon as she felt tired she stopped for the night at a village inn. But when she awoke very early next morning she seemed to have forgotten that she was to travel the rest of the way by diligence; for, after a slight meal, she started off again on foot, and she was walking all day.

She passed through many villages so like each other that in time she thought they might be the same. There was always a monster inn whence one carriage was departing as another drove up, and there was a great stone water-tank in which women drew their washing back and forward, and there was always a big yellow dog that barked fiercely and then giggled, and at the doors of painted houses children stood. You knew they were children by their size only. The one person

GRIZEL'S JOURNEY

she spoke to that day was a child who offered her a bunch of wild flowers. No one was looking, and Grizel kissed her and then hurried on.

The carriage passed and repassed her. There must have been a hundred of them, but in time they became one. No sooner had it disappeared in dust in front of her than she heard the crack of its whip behind.

It was a glorious day of sweltering sun; but she was bewildered now, and did not open the umbrella with which she had shielded her head yesterday. In the foreground was always the same white road, on both sides the same pine wood laughing with wild flowers, the same roaring white stream. From somewhere near came the tinkle of cow-bells. Far away on heights, if she looked up, were villages made of match-boxes. She saw what were surely the same villages if she looked down; or the one was the reflection of the other, in the sky above or in the valley below. They stood out so vividly that they might have been within arm's reach. They were so small that she felt she could extinguish them with her umbrella. Near them was the detestably picturesque castle perched upon a bracket. Everywhere was that loathly waterfall. Here and there were squares of cultivated land that looked like door-mats flung out upon the hillsides. The huge mountains raised their jagged heads through the snow, and

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

were so sharp-edged that they might have been clipped out of cardboard. The sky was blue, without a flaw; but lost clouds crawled like snakes between heaven and earth. All day the sun scorched her, but the night was nipping cold.

From early morn till evening she climbed to get away from them, but they all marched with her. They waited while she slept. She woke up in an inn, and could have cried with delight because she saw nothing but bare walls. But as soon as she reached the door, there they all were, ready for her. An hour after she set off, she again reached that door; and she stopped at it to ask if this was the inn where she had passed the night. Everything had turned with her. Two squalls of sudden rain drenched her that day, and she forced her way through the first, but sought a covering from the second.

It was then afternoon, and she was passing through a village by a lake. Since Grizel's time monster hotels have trampled the village to death, and the shuddering lake reflects all day the most hideous of caravansaries flung together as with a giant shovel in one of the loveliest spots on earth. Even then some of the hotels had found it out. Grizel drew near to two of them, and saw wet halls full of open umbrellas which covered the floor and looked like great beetles. These buildings were too formidable, and she dragged herself

GRIZEL'S JOURNEY

past them. She came to a garden of hops and evergreens. Wet chairs were standing in the deserted walks, and here and there was a little arbour. She went into one of these arbours and sat down, and soon slid to the floor.

The place was St. Gian, some miles from Bad-Platten; but one of the umbrellas she had seen was Tommy's. Others belonged to Mrs. Jerry and Lady Pippinworth.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TWO OF THEM

WHEN Tommy started impulsively on what proved to be his only Continental trip he had expected to join Mrs. Jerry and her stepdaughter at Bad-Platten. They had been there for a fortnight, and "the place is a dream," Mrs. Jerry had said in the letter pressing him to come; but it was at St. Gian that she met the diligence and told him to descend. Bad-Platten, she explained, was a horror.

Her fuller explanation was that she was becoming known there as the round lady.

"Now, am I as round as all that?" she said plaintively to Tommy.

"Mrs. Jerry," he replied, with emotion, "you must not ask me what I think of you." He always treated her with extraordinary respect and chivalry now, and it awed her.

She had looked too, too round because she was in the company of Lady Pippinworth. Everyone seemed to be too round or too large by the side of that gifted lady, who somehow never looked too thin. She knew her power. When there were

TWO OF THEM

women in the room whom she disliked she merely went and stood beside them. In the gyrations of the dance the onlooker would momentarily lose sight of her; she came and went like a blinking candle. Men could not dance with her without its being said that they were getting stout. There is nothing they dislike so much, yet they did dance with her. Tommy, having some slight reason, was particularly sensitive about references to his figure, yet it was Lady Pippinworth who had drawn him to Switzerland. What was her strange attraction?

Calmly considered, she was preposterously thin, but men, at least, could not think merely of her thinness, unless, when walking with her, they became fascinated by its shadow on the ground. She was tall, and had a very clear, pale complexion and light-brown hair. Light brown, too, were her heavy eyelashes, which were famous for being black-tipped, as if a brush had touched them, though it had not. She made play with her eyelashes as with a fan, and sometimes the upper and lower-seemed to entangle for a moment and be in difficulties, from which you wanted to extricate them in the tenderest manner. And the more you wanted to help her the more disdainfully she looked at you. Yet though she looked disdainful she also looked helpless. Now we have the secret of her charm.

This helpless disdain was the natural expression

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

of her face, and I am sure she fell asleep with a curl of the lip. Her scorn of men so maddened them that they could not keep away from her. "Damn!" they said under their breath, and rushed to her. If rumour is to be believed, Sir Harry Pippinworth proposed to her in a fury brought on by the sneer with which she had surveyed his family portraits. I know nothing more of Sir Harry, except that she called him Pips, which seems to settle him.

"They will be calling me the round gentleman," Tommy said ruefully to her that evening, as he strolled with her towards the lake, and indeed he was looking stout. Mrs. Jerry did not accompany them; she wanted to be seen with her trying step-daughter as little as possible, and Tommy's had been the happy proposal that he should attend them alternately — "fling away my own figure to save yours," he had said gallantly to Mrs. Jerry.

"Do you mind?" Lady Pippinworth asked.

"I mind nothing," he replied, "so long as I am with you."

He had not meant to begin so near the point where they had last left off; he had meant to begin much farther back: but an irresistible desire came over him to make sure that she really did permit him to say this sort of thing.

Her only reply was a flutter of the little fans and a most contemptuous glance.

TWO OF THEM

"Alice," said Tommy, in the old way.

"Well?"

"You don't understand what it is to me to say Alice again."

"Many people call me Alice."

"But they have a right to."

"I supposed you thought you had a right to also."

"No," said Tommy. "That is why I do it."

She strolled on, more scornful and helpless than ever. Apparently it did not matter what one said to Lady Pippinworth; her pout kept it within the proprieties.

There was a magnificent sunset that evening, which dyed a snow-topped mountain pink. "That is what I came all the way from London to see," Tommy remarked, after they had gazed at it.

"I hope you feel repaid," she said, a little tartly.

"You mistake my meaning," he replied. "I had heard of these wonderful sunsets, and an intense desire came over me to see you looking disdainfully at them. Yes, I feel amply repaid. Did you notice, Alice, or was it but a fancy of my own, that when he had seen the expression on your face the sun quite slunk away?"

"I wonder you don't do so also," she retorted. She had no sense of humour, and was rather stupid; so it is no wonder that the men ran after her.

"I am more gallant than the sun," said he. "If

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

I had been up there in its place, Alice, and you had been looking at me, I could never have set."

She pouted contemptuously, which meant, I think, that she was well pleased. Yet, though he seemed to be complimenting her, she was not sure of him. She had never been sure of Tommy, nor, indeed, he of her, which was probably why they were so interested in each other still.

"Do you know," Tommy said, "what I have told you is really at least half the truth? If I did not come here to see you disdaining the sun, I think I did come to see you disdaining me. Odd, is it not, if true, that a man should travel so far to see a lip curl up?"

"You don't seem to know what brought you," she said.

"It seems so monstrous," he replied, musing. "Oh, yes, I am quite certain that the curl of the lip is responsible for my being here; it kept sending me constant telegrams; but what I want to know is, do I come for the pleasure of the thing or for the pain? Do I like your disdain, Alice, or does it make me writhe? Am I here to beg you to do it again, or to defy it?"

"Which are you doing now?" she inquired.

"I had hoped," he said with a sigh, "that you could tell me that."

On another occasion they reached the same point in this discussion, and went a little beyond

TWO OF THEM

it. It was on a wet afternoon, too, when Tommy had vowed to himself to mend his ways. "That disdainful look is you," he told her, "and I admire it more than anything in nature; and yet, Alice, and yet ——"

"Well?" she answered coldly, but not moving, though he had come suddenly too near her. They were on a private veranda of the hotel, and she was lolling in a wicker chair.

"And yet," he said intensely, "I am not certain that I would not give the world to have the power to drive that look from your face. That, I begin to think, is what brought me here."

"But you are not sure," she said, with a shrug of the shoulder.

It stung him into venturing further than he had ever gone with her before. Not too gently, he took her head in both his hands and forced her to look up at him. She submitted without a protest. She was disdainful, but helpless.

"Well?" she said again.

He withdrew his hands, and she smiled mockingly.

"If I thought ——" he cried with sudden passion, and stopped.

"You think a great deal, don't you?" she said. She was going now.

"If I thought there was any blood in your veins, you icy woman ——"

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“Or in your own,” said she. But she said it a little fiercely, and he noticed that.

“Alice,” he cried, “I know now. It is to drive that look from your face that I am here.”

She courtesied from the door. She was quite herself again.

But for that moment she had been moved. He was convinced of it, and his first feeling was of exultation as in an achievement. I don't know what you are doing just now, Lady Pippinworth, but my compliments to you, and T. Sandys is swelling.

There followed on this exultation another feeling as sincere — devout thankfulness that he had gone no further. He drew deep breaths of relief over his escape, but knew that he had not himself to thank. His friends, the little sprites, had done it, in return for the amusement he seemed to give them. They had stayed him in the nick of time, but not earlier; it was quite as if they wanted Tommy to have his fun first. So often they had saved him from being spitted, how could he guess that the great catastrophe was fixed for to-night, and that henceforth they were to sit round him counting his wriggles, as if this new treatment of him tickled them even more than the other?

But he was too clever not to know that they might be fattening him for some very special feast, and his thanks took the form of a vow to need

TWO OF THEM

their help no more. To-morrow he would begin to climb the mountains around St. Gian; if he danced attendance on her dangerous Ladyship again, Mrs. Jerry should be there also, and he would walk circumspectly between them, like a man with gyves upon his wrists. He was in the midst of all the details of these reforms, when suddenly he looked at himself thus occupied, and laughed bitterly; he had so often come upon Tommy making grand resolves!

He stopped operations and sat down beside them. No one could have wished more heartily to be anybody else, or have had less hope. He had not even the excuse of being passionately drawn to this woman; he remembered that she had never interested him until he heard of her effect upon other men. Her reputation as a duellist, whose defence none of his sex could pass, had led to his wondering what they saw in her, and he had dressed himself in their sentiments and so approached her. There were times in her company when he forgot that he was wearing borrowed garments, when he went on flame, but he always knew, as now, upon reflection. Nothing seemed easier at this moment than to fling them aside; with one jerk they were on the floor. Obviously it was only vanity that had inspired him, and vanity was satisfied: the easier, therefore, to stop. Would you like to make the woman unhappy, Tommy?

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

You know you would not; you have somewhere about you one of the softest hearts in the world. Then desist; be satisfied that you did thaw her once, and grateful that she so quickly froze again. "I am; indeed I am," he responds. "No one could have himself better in hand for the time being than I, and if a competition in morals were now going on, I should certainly take the medal. But I cannot speak for myself an hour in advance. I make a vow, as I have done so often before, but it does not help me to know what I may be at before the night is out."

When his disgust with himself was at its height he suddenly felt like a little god. His new book had come into view. He flicked a finger at his reflection in a mirror. "That for you!" he said defiantly; "at least I can write; I can write at last!"

The manuscript lay almost finished at the bottom of his trunk. It could not easily have been stolen for one hour without his knowing. Just when he was about to start on a walk with one of the ladies, he would run upstairs to make sure that it was still there; he made sure by feeling, and would turn again at the door to make sure by looking. Miser never listened to the crispness of bank-notes with more avidity; woman never spent more time in shutting and opening her jewel-box.

"I can write at last!" He knew that, comparatively speaking, he had never been able to write

TWO OF THEM

before. He remembered the fuss that had been made about his former books. "Pooh!" he said, addressing them contemptuously.

Once more he drew his beloved manuscript from its hiding-place. He did not mean to read, only to fondle; but his eye chancing to fall on a special passage — two hours afterwards he was interrupted by the dinner-gong. He returned the pages to the box and wiped his eyes. While dressing hurriedly he remembered with languid interest that Lady Pippinworth was staying in the same hotel.

There were a hundred or more at dinner, and they were all saying the same thing: "Where have you been to-day?" "Really! but the lower path is shadier." "Is this your first visit?" "The glacier is very nice." "Were you caught in the rain?" "The view from the top is very nice." "After all, the rain lays the dust." "They give you two sweets at Bad-Platten and an ice on Sunday." "The sunset is very nice." "The poulet is very nice." The hotel is open during the summer months only, but probably the chairs in the dining-room and the knives and forks in their basket make these remarks to each other every evening throughout the winter.

Being a newcomer, Tommy had not been placed beside either of his friends, who sat apart "because," Mrs. Jerry said, "she calls me mamma, and I am not going to stand that." For some time he gave thought to neither of them; he was en-

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

grossed in what he had been reading, and it turned him into a fine and magnanimous character. When gradually her Ladyship began to flit among his reflections, it was not to disturb them, but because she harmonized. He wanted to apologize to her. The apology grew in grace as the dinner progressed; it was so charmingly composed that he was profoundly stirred by it.

The opportunity came presently in the hall, where it is customary after dinner to lounge or stroll if you are afraid of the night air. Or if you do not care for music, you can go into the drawing-room and listen to the piano.

“I am sure mamma is looking for you everywhere,” Lady Pippinworth said, when Tommy took a chair beside her. “It is her evening, you know.”

“Surely you would not drive me away,” he replied with a languishing air, and then smiled at himself, for he was done with this sort of thing. “Lady Pippinworth,” said he, firmly—it needs firmness when of late you have been saying “Alice.”

“Well?”

“I have been thinking——” Tommy began.

“I am sure you have,” she said.

“I have been thinking,” he went on determinedly, “that I played a poor part this afternoon. I had no right to say what I said to you.”

“As far as I can remember,” she answered, “you did not say very much.”

TWO OF THEM

“It is like your generosity, Lady Pippinworth,” he said, “to make light of it; but let us be frank: I made love to you.”

Anyone looking at his expressionless face and her lazy disdain (and there were many in the hall) would have guessed that their talk was of where were you to-day? and what should I do to-morrow?

“You don’t really mean that?” her Ladyship said incredulously. “Think, Mr. Sandys, before you tell me anything more. Are you sure you are not confusing me with mamma?”

“I did it,” said Tommy, remorsefully.

“In my absence?” she asked.

“When you were with me on the veranda.”

Her eyes opened to their widest, so surprised that the lashes had no time for their usual play.

“Was that what you call making love, Mr. Sandys?” she inquired.

“I call a spade a spade.”

“And now you are apologizing to me, I understand?”

“If you can in the goodness of your heart forgive me, Lady Pippinworth——”

“Oh, I do,” she said heartily, “I do. But how stupid you must have thought me not even to know! I feel that it is I who ought to apologize. What a number of ways there seem to be of making love, and yours is such an odd way!”

Now to apologize for playing a poor part is one

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

thing, and to put up with the charge of playing a part poorly is quite another. Nevertheless, he kept his temper.

“You have discovered an excellent way of punishing me,” he said manfully, “and I submit. Indeed, I admire you the more. So I am paying you a compliment when I whisper that I know you knew.”

But she would not have it. “You are so strangely dense to-night,” she said. “Surely, if I had known, I would have stopped you. You forget that I am a married woman,” she added, remembering Pips rather late in the day.

“There might be other reasons why you did not stop me,” he replied impulsively.

“Such as?”

“Well, you — you might have wanted me to go on.”

He blurted it out.

“So,” said she slowly, “you are apologizing to me for not going on?”

“I implore you, Lady Pippinworth,” Tommy said, in much distress, “not to think me capable of that. If I moved you for a moment, I am far from boasting of it; it makes me only the more anxious to do what is best for you.”

This was not the way it had shaped during dinner, and Tommy would have acted wisely had he now gone out to cool his head. “If you moved

TWO OF THEM

me?" she repeated interrogatively; but, with the best intentions, he continued to flounder.

"Believe me," he implored her, "had I known it could be done, I should have checked myself. But they always insist that you are an iceberg, and am I so much to blame if that look of hauteur deceived me with the rest? Oh, dear Lady Disdain," he said warmly, in answer to one of her most freezing glances, "it deceives me no longer. From that moment I knew you had a heart, and I was shamed — as noble a heart as ever beat in woman," he added. He always tended to add generous bits when he found it coming out well.

"Does the man think I am in love with him?" was Lady Disdain's inadequate reply.

"No, no, indeed!" he assured her earnestly. "I am not so vain as to think that, nor so selfish as to wish it; but if for a moment you were moved ——"

"But I was not," said she, stamping her shoe.

His dander began to rise, as they say in the north; but he kept grip of politeness.

"If you were moved for a moment, Lady Pip-pinworth," he went on, in a slightly more determined voice,—"I am far from saying that it was so; but if ——"

"But as I was not ——" she said.

It was no use putting things prettily to her when she snapped you up in this way.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“You know you were,” he said reproachfully.

“I assure you,” said she, “I don’t know what you are talking about, but apparently it is something dreadful; so perhaps one of us ought to go away.”

As he did not take this hint, she opened a tattered Tauchnitz which was lying at her elbow. They are always lying at your elbow in a Swiss hotel, with the first pages missing.

Tommy watched her gloomily. “This is unworthy of you,” he said.

“What is?”

He was not quite sure, but as he sat there misgivings entered his mind and began to gnaw. Was it all a mistake of his? Undeniably he did think too much. After all, had she not been moved? ‘Sdeath!

His restlessness made her look up. “It must be a great load off your mind,” she said, with gentle laughter, “to know that your apology was unnecessary.”

“It is,” Tommy said; “it is.” (‘Sdeath!)

She resumed her book.

So this was how one was rewarded for a generous impulse! He felt very bitter. “So, so,” he said inwardly; also, “Very well, ve-ry well.” Then he turned upon himself. “Serve you right,” he said brutally. “Better stick to your books, Thomas, for you know nothing about women.”

TWO OF THEM

To think for one moment that he had moved her! That streak of marble moved! He fell to watching her again, as if she were some troublesome sentence that needed licking into shape. As she bent impertinently over her book, she was an insult to man. All Tommy's interest in her revived. She infuriated him.

"Alice," he whispered.

"Do keep quiet till I finish this chapter," she begged lazily.

It brought him at once to the boiling-point.

"Alice!" he said fervently.

She had noticed the change in his voice. "People are looking," she said, without moving a muscle.

There was some subtle flattery to him in the warning, but he could not ask for more, for just then Mrs. Jerry came in. She was cloaked for the garden, and he had to go with her, sulkily. At the door she observed that the ground was still wet.

"Are you wearing your goloshes?" said he, brightening. "You must get them, Mrs. Jerry; I insist."

She hesitated. (Her room was on the third floor.) "It is very good of you to be so thoughtful of me," she said, "but ——"

"But I have no right to try to take care of you," he interposed in a melancholy voice. "It is true. Let us go."

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“I sha’n’t be two minutes,” said Mrs. Jerry, in a flutter, and went off hastily for her goloshes, while he looked fondly after her. At the turn of the stair she glanced back, and his eyes were still begging her to hurry. It was a gracious memory to her in the after years, for she never saw him again.

As soon as she was gone he returned to the hall, and taking from a peg a cloak with a Mother Goose hood, brought it to Lady Pippinworth, who had watched her mamma trip upstairs.

“Did I say I was going out?” she asked.

“Yes,” said Tommy, and she rose to let him put the elegant thing round her. She was one of those dangerous women who look their best when you are helping them to put on their cloaks.

“Now,” he instructed her, “pull the hood over your head.”

“Is it so cold as that?” she said, obeying.

“I want you to wear it,” he answered. What he meant was that she never looked quite so impudent as in her hood, and his vanity insisted that she should be armed to the teeth before they resumed hostilities. The red light was in his eyes as he drew her into the garden where Grizel lay.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE RED LIGHT

It was an evening without stars, but fair, sufficient wind to make her Ladyship cling haughtily to his arm as they turned corners. Many of the visitors were in the garden, some grouped round a quartet of gaily attired minstrels, but more sitting in little arbours or prowling in search of an arbour to sit in; the night was so dark that when our two passed beyond the light of the hotel windows they could scarce see the shrubs they brushed against; cigars without faces behind them sauntered past; several times they thought they had found an unoccupied arbour at last, when they heard the clink of coffee-cups.

“I believe the castle dates from the fifteenth century,” Tommy would then say suddenly, though it was not of castles he had been talking.

With a certain satisfaction he noticed that she permitted him, without comment, to bring in the castle thus and to drop it the moment the emergency had passed. But he had little other encouragement.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

Even when she pressed his arm it was only as an intimation that the castle was needed.

“I can’t even make her angry,” he said wrathfully to himself.

“You answer not a word,” he said in great dejection to her.

“I am afraid to speak,” she admitted. “I don’t know who may hear.”

“Alice,” he said eagerly, “what would you say if you were not afraid to speak?”

They had stopped, and he thought she trembled a little on his arm, but he could not be sure. He thought — but he was thinking too much again; at least, Lady Pippinworth seemed to come to that conclusion, for with a galling little laugh she moved on. He saw with amazing clearness that he had thought sufficiently for one day.

On coming into the garden with her, and for some time afterwards, he had been studying her so coolly, watching symptoms rather than words, that there is nothing to compare the man to but a doctor who, while he is chatting, has his finger on your pulse. But he was not so calm now. Whether or not he had stirred the woman, he was rapidly firing himself.

When next he saw her face by the light of a window, she at the same instant turned her eyes on him; it was as if each wanted to know correctly

THE RED LIGHT

how the other had been looking in the darkness, and the effect was a challenge.

Like one retreating a step, she lowered her eyes. "I am tired," she said. "I shall go in."

"Let us stroll round once more."

"No, I am going in."

"If you are afraid ——" he said, with a slight smile.

She took his arm again. "Though it is too bad of me to keep you out," she said, as they went on, "for you are shivering. Is it the night air that makes you shiver?" she asked mockingly.

But she shivered a little herself, as if with a presentiment that she might be less defiant if he were less thoughtful. For a month or more she had burned to teach him a lesson, but there was a time before that when, had she been sure he was in earnest, she would have preferred to be the pupil.

Two ladies came out of an arbour where they had been drinking coffee, and sauntered towards the hotel. It was a tiny building, half concealed in hops and reached by three steps, and Tommy and his companion took possession. He groped in the darkness for a chair for her, and invited her tenderly to sit down. She said she preferred to stand. She was by the open window, her fingers drumming on the sill. Though he could not see her face, he knew exactly how she was looking.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

"Sit down," he said, rather masterfully.

"I prefer to stand," she repeated languidly.

He had a passionate desire to take her by the shoulders, but put his hand on hers instead, and she permitted it, like one disdainful but helpless. She said something unimportant about the stillness.

"Is it so still?" he said in a low voice. "I seem to hear a great noise. I think it must be the beating of my heart."

"I fancy that is what it is," she drawled.

"Do you hear it?"

"No."

"Did you ever hear your own heart beat, Alice?"

"No."

He had both her hands now. "Would you like to hear it?"

She pulled away her hands sharply. "Yes," she replied with defiance.

"But you pulled away your hands first," said he.

He heard her breathe heavily for a moment, but she said nothing. "Yes," he said, as if she had spoken, "it is true."

"What is true?"

"What you are saying to yourself just now — that you hate me."

She beat the floor with her foot.

"How you hate me, Alice!"

"Oh, no."

THE RED LIGHT

“Yes, indeed you do.”

“I wonder why,” she said, and she trembled a little.

“I know why.” He had come close to her again. “Shall I tell you why?”

She said “No,” hurriedly.

“I am so glad you say No.” He spoke passionately, and yet there was banter in his voice, or so it seemed to her. “It is because you fear to be told; it is because you had hoped that I did not know.”

“Tell me why I hate you!” she cried.

“Tell me first that you do.”

“Oh, I do, I do indeed!” She said the words in a white heat of hatred.

Before she could prevent him he had raised her hand to his lips.

“Dear Alice!” he said.

“Why is it?” she demanded.

“Listen!” he said. “Listen to your heart, Alice; it is beating now. It is telling you why. Does it need an interpreter? It is saying you hate me because you think I don’t love you.”

“Don’t you?” she asked fiercely.

“No,” Tommy said.

Her hands were tearing each other, and she could not trust herself to speak. She sat down deadly pale in the chair he had offered her.

“No man ever loved you,” he said, leaning over her with his hand on the back of the chair. “You

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

are smiling at that, I know; but it is true, Lady Disdain. They may have vowed to blow their brains out, and seldom did it; they may have let you walk over them, and they may have become your fetch-and-carry, for you were always able to drive them crazy; but love does not bring men so low. They tried hard to love you, and it was not that they could not love; it was that you were unlovable. That is a terrible thing to a woman. You think you let them try to love you, that you might make them your slaves when they succeeded; but you made them your slaves because they failed. It is a power given to your cold and selfish nature in place of the capacity for being able to be loved, with which women not a hundredth part as beautiful as you are dowered, and you have a raging desire, Alice, to exercise it over me as over the others; but you can't."

Had he seen her face then, it might have warned him to take care; but he heard her words only, and they were not at all in keeping with her face.

"I see I can't," was what she cried, almost in a whisper.

"It is all true, Alice, is it not?"

"I suppose so. I don't know; I don't care." She swung round in her chair and caught his sleeve. Her hands clung to it. "Say you love me now," she said. "I cannot live without your

THE RED LIGHT

love after this. What shall I do to make you love me? Tell me, and I will do it."

He could not stop himself, for he mistrusted her still.

"I will not be your slave," he said, through his teeth. "You shall be mine."

"Yes, yes."

"You shall submit to me in everything. If I say 'come,' you shall come to wheresoever it may be; and if I say 'stay,' and leave you for ever, you shall stay."

"Very well," she said eagerly. She would have her revenge when he was her slave.

"You can continue to be the haughty Lady Disdain to others, but you shall be only obedient little Alice to me."

"Very well." She drew his arm towards her and pressed her lips upon it. "And for that you will love me a little, won't you? You will love me at last, won't you?" she entreated.

He was a masterful man up to a certain point only. Her humility now tapped him in a new place, and before he knew what he was about he began to run pity.

"To humiliate you so, Alice! I am a dastard. I am not such a dastard as you think me. I wanted to know that you would be willing to do all these things, but I would never have let you do them."

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“I am willing to do them.”

“No, no.” It was he who had her hands now. “It was brutal, but I did it for you, Alice — for you. Don’t you see I was doing it only to make a woman of you? You were always adorable, but in a coat of mail that would let love neither in nor out. I have been hammering at it to break it only and free my glorious Alice. We had to fight, and one of us had to give in. You would have flung me away if I had yielded — I had to win to save you.”

“Now I am lost indeed,” he was saying to himself, even as it came rushing out of him, and what appalled him most was that worse had probably still to come. He was astride two horses, and both were at the gallop. He flung out his arms as if seeking for something to check him.

As he did so she had started to her feet, listening. It seemed to her that there was someone near them.

He flung out his arms for help, and they fell upon Lady Pippinworth and went round her. He drew her to him. She could hear no breathing now but his.

“Alice, I love you, for you are love itself; it is you I have been chasing since first love rose like a bird at my feet; I never had a passing fancy for any other woman; I always knew that somewhere in the world there must be you, and sometime this

THE RED LIGHT

starless night and you for me. You were hidden behind walls of ice; no man had passed them; I broke them down and love leaped to love, and you lie here, my beautiful, love in the arms of its lover."

He was in a frenzy of passion now; he meant every word of it; and her intention was to turn upon him presently and mock him, this man with whom she had been playing. Oh, the jeering things she had to say! But she could not say them yet; she would give her fool another moment — so she thought, but she was giving it to herself; and as she delayed she was in danger of melting in his arms.

"What does the world look like to you, my darling? You are in it for the first time. You were born but a moment ago. It is dark, that you may not be blinded before you have used your eyes. These are your eyes, dear eyes that do not yet know their purpose; they are for looking at me, little Alice, and mine are for looking into yours. I cannot see you; I have never seen the face of my love — oh, my love, come into the light that I may see your face."

They did not move. Her head had fallen on his shoulder. She was to give it but a moment, and then — But the moment had passed and still her hair pressed his cheek. Her eyes were closed. He seemed to have found the way to woo her. Neither of them spoke. Suddenly they

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

jumped apart. Lady Pippinworth stole to the door. They held their breath and listened.

It was not so loud now, but it was distinctly heard. It had been heavy breathing, and now she was trying to check it and half succeeding — but at the cost of little cries. They both knew it was a woman, and that she was in the arbour, on the other side of the little table. She must have been there when they came in.

“Who is that?”

There was no answer to him save the checked breathing and another broken cry. She moved, and it helped him to see vaguely the outlines of a girl who seemed to be drawing back from him in terror. He thought she was crouching now in the farthest corner.

“Come away,” he said. But Lady Pippinworth would not let him go. They must know who this woman was. He remembered that a match-stand usually lay on the tables of those arbours, and groped until he found one.

“Who are you?”

He struck a match. They were those French matches that play an infernal interlude before beginning to burn. While he waited he knew that she was begging him, with her hands and with cries that were too little to be words, not to turn its light on her. But he did.

Then she ceased to cower. The girlish dignity

THE RED LIGHT

that had been hers so long came running back to her. As she faced him there was even a crooked smile upon her face.

“I woke up,” she said, as if the words had no meaning to herself, but might have some to him.

The match burned out before he spoke, but his face was terrible. “Grizel!” he said, appalled; and then, as if the discovery was as awful to her as to him, she uttered a cry of horror and sped out into the night. He called her name again, and sprang after her; but the hand of another woman detained him.

“Who is this girl?” Lady Pippinworth demanded fiercely; but he did not answer. He recoiled from her with a shudder that she was not likely to forget, and hurried on. All that night he searched for Grizel in vain.

CHAPTER XXX

THE LITTLE GODS DESERT HIM

AND all next day he searched like a man whose eyes would never close again. She had not passed the night in any inn or village house of St. Gian; of that he made certain by inquiries from door to door. None of the guides had seen her, though they are astir so late and so early, patiently waiting at the hotel doors to be hired, that there seems to be no night for them—darkness only, that blots them out for a time as they stand waiting. At all hours there is in St. Gian the tinkle of bells, the clatter of hoofs, the crack of a whip, dust in retreat; but no coachman brought him news. The streets were thronged with other coachmen on foot looking into every face in quest of some person who wanted to return to the lowlands, but none had looked into her face.

Within five minutes of the hotel she might have been on any of half a dozen roads. He wandered or rushed along them all for a space, and came back. One of them was short and ended in the lake. All through that long and beautiful day this

THE LITTLE GODS DESERT HIM

miserable man found himself coming back to the road that ended in the lake.

There were moments when he cried to himself that it was an apparition he had seen and heard. He had avoided his friends all day; of the English-speaking people in St. Gian one only knew why he was distraught, and she was the last he wished to speak to; but more than once he nearly sought her to say, "Partner in my shame, what did you see? what did you hear?" In the afternoon he had a letter from Elspeth telling him how she was enjoying her holiday by the sea, and mentioning that David was at that moment writing to Grizel in Thrums. But was it, then, all a dream? he cried, nearly convinced for the first time, and he went into the arbour saying determinedly that it was a dream; and in the arbour, standing primly in a corner, was Grizel's umbrella. He knew that umbrella so well! He remembered once being by while she replaced one of its ribs so deftly that he seemed to be looking on at a surgical operation. The old doctor had given it to her, and that was why she would not let it grow old before she was old herself. Tommy opened it now with trembling hands and looked at the little bits of Grizel on it: the beautiful stitching with which she had coaxed the slits to close again; the one patch, so artful that she had clapped her hands over it. And he fell on his knees and kissed these little bits of

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

Grizel, and called her "beloved," and cried to his gods to give him one more chance.

"I woke up." It was all that she had said. It was Grizel's excuse for inconveniencing him. She had said it apologetically and as if she did not quite know how she came to be there herself. There was no look of reproach on her face while the match burned; there had been a pitiful smile, as if she was begging him not to be very angry with her; and then when he said her name she gave that little cry as if she had recognized herself, and stole away. He lived that moment over and over again, and she never seemed to be horror-stricken until he cried "Grizel!" when her recognition of herself made her scream. It was as if she had wakened up, dazed by the terrible things that were being said, and then, by the light of that one word "Grizel," suddenly knew who had been listening to them.

Did he know anything more? He pressed his hands harshly on his temples and thought. He knew that she was soaking wet, that she had probably sought the arbour for protection from the rain, and that, if so, she had been there for at least four hours. She had wakened up. She must have fallen asleep, knocked down by fatigue. What fatigue it must have been to make Grizel lie there for hours he could guess, and he beat his brow in anguish. But why she had come he could not

THE LITTLE GODS DESERT HIM

guess. "Oh, miserable man, to seek for reasons," he cried passionately to himself, "when it is Grizel — Grizel herself — you should be seeking for!"

He walked and ran the round of the lake, and it was not on the bank that his staring eyes were fixed.

At last he came for a moment upon her track. The people of an inn six miles from St. Gian remembered being asked yesterday by an English miss, walking alone, how far she was from Bad-Platten. She was wearing something brown, and her boots were white with dust, and these people had never seen a lady look so tired before; when she stood still she had to lean against the wall. They said she had red-hot eyes.

Tommy was in an einspänner now, the merry conveyance of the country and more intoxicating than its wines, and he drove back through St. Gian to Bad-Platten, where again he heard from Grizel, though he did not find her. What he found was her telegram from London: "I am coming. GRIZEL." Why had she come? why had she sent that telegram? what had taken her to London? He was not losing time when he asked himself distractedly these questions, for he was again in his gay carriage and driving back to the wayside inn. He spent the night there, afraid to go farther lest he should pass her in the darkness; for he had decided that, if alive, she was on this

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

road. That she had walked all those forty miles uphill seemed certain, and apparently the best he could hope was that she was walking back. She had probably no money to enable her to take the diligence. Perhaps she had no money with which to buy food. It might be that while he lay tossing in bed she was somewhere near, dying for want of a franc.

He was off by morning light, and several times that day he heard of her, twice from people who had seen her pass both going and coming, and he knew it must be she when they said she rocked her arms as she walked. Oh, he knew why she rocked her arms! Once he thought he had found her. He heard of an English lady who was lying ill in the house of a sawmiller, whose dog (we know the dogs of these regions, but not the people) had found her prostrate in the wood, some distance from the highroad. Leaving his einspänner in a village, Tommy climbed down the mountain-side to this little house, which he was long in discovering. It was by the side of a roaring river, and he arrived only an hour too late. The lady had certainly been Grizel; but she was gone. The sawyer's wife described to him how her husband had brought her in, and how she seemed so tired and bewildered that she fell asleep while they were questioning her. She held her hands over her ears to shut out the noise of the river, which seemed to

THE LITTLE GODS DESERT HIM

terrify her. So far as they could understand, she told them that she was running away from the river. She had been sleeping there for three hours, and was still asleep when the good woman went off to meet her husband; but when they returned she was gone.

He searched the wood for miles around, crying her name. The sawyer and some of his fellow-workers left the trees they were stripping of bark to help him, and for hours the wood rang with "Grizel, Grizel!" All the mountains round took up the cry; but there never came an answer. This long delay prevented his reaching the railway terminus until noon of the following day, and there he was again too late. But she had been here. He traced her to that hotel whence we saw her setting forth, and the portier had got a ticket for her for London. He had talked with her for some little time, and advised her, as she seemed so tired, to remain there for the night. But she said she must go home at once. She seemed to be passionately desirous to go home, and had looked at him suspiciously, as if fearing he might try to hold her back. He had been called away, and on returning had seen her disappearing over the bridge. He had called to her, and then she ran as if afraid he was pursuing her. But he had observed her afterwards in the train.

So she was not without money, and she was on

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

her way home! The relief it brought him came to the surface in great breaths, and at first every one of them was a prayer of thankfulness. Yet in time they were triumphant breaths. Translated into words, they said that he had got off cheaply for the hundredth time. His little gods had saved him again, as they had saved him in the arbour by sending Grizel to him. He could do as he liked, for they were always there to succour him; they would never desert him — never. In a moment of fierce elation he raised his hat to them, then seemed to see Grizel crying “I woke up,” and in horror of himself clapped it on again. It was but a momentary aberration, and is recorded only to show that, however remorseful he felt afterwards, there was life in our Tommy still.

The train by which he was to follow her did not leave until evening, and through those long hours he was picturing, with horrible vividness and pain, the progress of Grizel up and down that terrible pass. Often his shoulders shook in agony over what he saw, and he shuddered to the teeth. He would have walked round the world on his knees to save her this long anguish! And then again it was less something he saw than something he was writing, and he altered it to make it more dramatic. “I woke up.” How awful that was! but in this new scene she uttered no words. Lady Pippinworth was in his arms when they heard a

THE LITTLE GODS DESERT HIM

little cry, so faint that a violin string makes as much moan when it snaps. In a dread silence he lit a match, and as it flared the figure of a girl was seen upon the floor. She was dead; and even as he knew that she was dead he recognized her. "Grizel!" he cried. The other woman who had lured him from his true love uttered a piercing scream and ran towards the hotel. When she returned with men and lanterns there was no one in the harbour, but there were what had been a man and a girl. They lay side by side. The startled onlookers unbared their heads. A solemn voice said, "In death not divided."

He was not the only occupant of the hotel reading-room as he saw all this, and when his head fell forward and he groaned, the others looked up from their papers. A lady asked if he was unwell.

"I have had a great shock," he replied in a daze, pulling his hand across his forehead.

"Something you have seen in your paper?" inquired a clergyman who had been complaining that there was no news.

"People I knew," said Tommy, not yet certain which world he was in.

"Dead?" the lady asked sympathetically.

"I knew them well," he said, and staggered into the fresh air.

Poor dog of a Tommy! He had been a total abstainer from sentiment, as one may say, for sixty

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

hours, and this was his only glass. It was the nobler Tommy, sternly facing facts, who by and by stepped into the train. He even knew why he was going to Thrums. He was going to say certain things to her; and he said them to himself again and again in the train, and heard her answer. The words might vary, but they were always to the same effect.

“Grizel, I have come back!”

He saw himself say these words, as he opened her door in Gavinia’s little house. And when he had said them he bowed his head.

At his sudden appearance she started up; then she stood pale and firm.

“Why have you come back?”

“Not to ask your forgiveness,” he replied hoarsely; “not to attempt to excuse myself; not with any hope that there remains one drop of the love you once gave me so abundantly. I want only, Grizel, to put my life into your hands. I have made a sorry mess of it myself. Will you take charge of what may be left of it? You always said you were ready to help me. I have come back, Grizel, for your help. What you were once willing to do for love, will you do for pity now?”

She turned away her head, and he went nearer her. “There was always something of the mother in your love, Grizel; but for that you would never



HE HEARD THEIR SEDUCTIVE VOICES

From a Drawing by Bernard Partridge.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

hours, and this was his only glass. It was the nobler Tommy, sternly facing facts, who by and by stepped into the train. He even knew why he was going to Thrums. He was going to say certain things to her; and he said them to himself again and again in the train, and heard her answer. The words might vary, but they were always to the same effect.

“Grizel, I have come back!”

He saw himself say these words, as he opened her door in Gavin's little house. And when he had said them he bowed his head.

At his sudden appearance she started up; then she stood pale and firm.

“Why have you come back?”

“Not to ask your forgiveness,” he replied hoarsely; “not to attempt to excuse myself; not with any hope that there remains one drop of the love you once gave me so abundantly. I want only, Grizel, to put my life into your hands. I have made a sorry mess of it myself. Will you take charge of what may be left of it? You always said you were ready to help me. I have come back, Grizel, for your help. What you were once willing to do for love, will you do for pity now?”

She turned away her head, and he went nearer her. “There are always something of the mother in your loves, Grizel; but for that you would never



THE LITTLE GODS DESERT HIM

have borne with me so long. A mother, they say, can never quite forget her boy — oh, Grizel, is it true? I am the prodigal come back. Grizel, beloved, I have sinned and I am unworthy, but I am still your boy, and I have come back. Am I to be sent away?"

At the word "beloved" her arms rocked impulsively. "You must not call me that," she said.

"Then I am to go," he answered with a shudder, "for I must always call you that; whether I am with you or away, you shall always be beloved to me."

"You don't love me!" she cried. "Oh, do you love me at last!" And at that he fell upon his knees.

"Grizel, my love, my love!"

"But you don't want to be married," she said.

"Beloved, I have come back to ask you on my knees to be my wife."

"That woman ——"

"She was a married woman, Grizel."

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"And now you know the worst of me. It is the whole truth at last. I don't know why you took that terrible journey, dear Grizel, but I do know that you were sent there to save me. Oh, my love, you have done so much, will you do no more?"

And so on, till there came a time when his head

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

was on her lap and her hand caressing it, and she was whispering to her boy to look up and see her crooked smile again.

He passed on to the wedding. All the time between seemed to be spent in his fond entreaties to hasten the longed-for day. How radiant she looked in her bridal gown! "Oh, beautiful one, are you really mine? Oh, world, pause for a moment and look at the woman who has given herself to me!"

"My wife — this is my wife!" They were in London now; he was showing her to London. How he swaggered! There was a perpetual apology on her face; it begged people to excuse him for looking so proudly at her. It was a crooked apology, and he hurried her into dark places and kissed it.

Do you see that Tommy was doing all this for Grizel and pretending to her that it was for himself? He was passionately desirous of making amends, and he was to do it in the most generous way. Perhaps he believed when he seemed to enter her room saying, "Grizel, I have come back," that she loved him still; perhaps he knew that he did not love in the way he said; perhaps he saw a remorseful man making splendid atonement: but never should she know these things; tenderly as he had begun he would go on to the end. Here at last is a Tommy worth looking at, and he looked.

Yet as he drew near Thrums, after almost ex-

THE LITTLE GODS DESERT HIM

actly two days of continuous travel, many a shiver went down his back, for he could not be sure that he should find Grizel here; he sometimes seemed to see her lying ill at some wayside station in Switzerland, in France; everything that could have happened to her he conceived, and he moved restlessly in the carriage. His mouth went dry.

“Has she come back?”

The train had stopped for the taking of tickets, and his tremulous question checked the joy of Corp at sight of him.

“She ’s back,” Corp answered in an excited whisper; and oh, the relief to Tommy! “She came back by the afternoon train; but I had scarce a word wi’ her, she was so awid to be hame. ‘I am going home,’ she cried, and hurried away up the brae. Ay, and there ’s one queer thing.”

“What?”

“Her luggage wasna in the van.”

Tommy could smile at that. “But what sent her,” he asked eagerly, “on that journey?”

Corp told him the little he knew. “But nobody kens except me and Gavinia,” he said. “We pretend she gaed to London to see her father. We said he had wrote to her, wanting her to go to him. Gavinia said it would never do to let folk ken she had gaen to see you, and even Elspeth doesna ken.”

“Is Elspeth back?”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“They came back yesterday.”

Did David know the truth from Grizel? was what Tommy was asking himself now as he strode up the brae. But again he was in luck, for when he had explained away his abrupt return to Elspeth, and been joyfully welcomed by her, she told him that her husband had been in one of the glens all day. “He does not know that Grizel has come back,” she said. “Oh,” she exclaimed, “but you don’t even know that she has been away! Grizel has been in London.”

“Corp told me,” said Tommy.

“And did he tell you why she had gone?”

“Yes.”

“She came back an hour or two ago. Maggy Ann saw her go past. Fancy her seeing her father at last! It must have been an ordeal for her. I wonder what took place.”

“I think I had better go and ask her,” Tommy said. He was mightily relieved for Grizel’s sake. No one need ever know now what had called her away except Corp and Gavinia, and even they thought she had merely been to London. How well the little gods were managing the whole affair! As he walked to Grizel’s lodgings to say what he had been saying in the train, the thought came to him for a moment that as no one need ever know where she had been there was less reason why he should do this generous thing. But

THE LITTLE GODS DESERT HIM

he put it from him with lofty disdain. Any effect it had was to make him walk more firmly to his sacrifice, as if to show all ignoble impulses that they could find no home in that swelling breast. He was pleased with himself, was Tommy.

"Grizel, I have come back." He said it to the night, and bowed his head. He said it with head accompaniment to Grizel's lighted window. He said it to himself as he reached the door. He never said it again.

For Gavinia's first words were: "It's you, Mr. Sandys! Wherever is she? For mercy's sake, dinna say you've come without her!" And when he blinked at this, she took him roughly by the arm and cried, "Wherever's Grizel?"

"She is here, Gavinia."

"She's no here."

"I saw her light."

"You saw my light."

"Gavinia, you are torturing me. She came back to-day."

"What makes you say that? You're dreaming. She hasna come back."

"Corp saw her come in by the afternoon train. He spoke to her."

Gavinia shook her head incredulously. "You're just imagining that," she said.

"He told me. Gavinia, I must see for myself." She stared after him as he went up the stairs.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“You are very cruel, Gavinia,” he said, when he came down. “Tell me where she is.”

“May I be struck, Mr. Sandys, if I’ve seen or heard o’ her since she left this house eight days syne.” He knew she was speaking the truth. He had to lean against the door for support. “It canna be so bad as you think,” she cried in pity. “If you’re sure Corp said he saw her, she maun hae gone to the doctor’s house.”

“She is not there. But Elspeth knew she had come back. Others have seen her besides Corp. My God, Gavinia! what can have happened?”

In little more than an hour he knew what had happened. Many besides himself, David among them towards the end, were engaged in the search. And strange stories began to fly about like night-birds; you will not search for a missing woman without rousing them. Why had she gone off to London without telling anyone? Had Corp concocted that story about her father to blind them? Had she really been as far as London? Have you seen Sandys? — he’s back. It’s said Corp telegraphed to him to Switzerland that she had disappeared. It’s weel kent Corp telegraphed. Sandys came at once. He is in a terrible state. Look how white he is aneath that lamp. What garred them telegraph for him? How is it he is in sic a state? Fond o’ her, was he? Yea, yea,

THE LITTLE GODS DESERT HIM

even after she gave him the go-by. Then it's a weary Sabbath for him, if half they say be true. What do they say? They say she was queer when she came back. Corp doesna say that. Maybe no; but Francie Crabb does. He says he met her on the station brae and spoke to her, and she said never a word, but put up her hands like as if she feared he was to strike her. The Dundas lassies saw her frae their window, and her hands were at her ears as if she was trying to drown the sound o' something. Do you mind o' her mother? They say she was looking terrible like her mother.

It was only between the station and Gavinia's house that she had been seen, but they searched far afield. Tommy, accompanied by Corp, even sought for her in the Den. Do you remember the long, lonely path between two ragged little dykes that led from the Den to the house of the Painted Lady? It was there that Grizel had lived with her mamma. The two men went down that path, which is oppressed with trees. Elsewhere the night was not dark, but, as they had known so well when they were boys, it is always dark after evenfall in the Double Dykes. That is the legacy of the Painted Lady. Presently they saw the house — scarcely the house, but a lighted window. Tommy remembered the night when as a boy, Elspeth crouching beside him, he had peered in fearfully at that corner window on Grizel and her mamma,

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

and the shuddersome things he had seen. He shuddered at them again.

“Who lives there now?” he asked.

“Nobody. It’s toom.”

“There is a light.”

“Some going-about body. They often tak’ bilbie in toom houses, and that door is without a lock; it’s keepit close wi’ slipping a stick aneath it. Do you mind how feared we used to be at that house?”

“She was never afraid of it.”

“It was her hame.”

He meant no more than he said, but suddenly they both stopped dead.

“It’s no possible,” Corp said, as if in answer to a question. “It’s no possible,” he repeated beseechingly.

“Wait for me here, Corp.”

“I would rather come wi’ you.”

“Wait here!” Tommy said almost fiercely, and he went on alone to that little window. It had needed an effort to make him look in when he was here before, and it needed a bigger effort now. But he looked.

What light there was came from the fire, and whether she had gathered the logs or found them in the room no one ever knew. A vagrant stated afterwards that he had been in the house some days before and left his match-box in it.

THE LITTLE GODS DESERT HIM

By this fire Grizel was crouching. She was comparatively tidy and neat again; the dust was gone from her boots, even. How she had managed to do it no one knows, but you remember how she loved to be neat. Her hands were extended to the blaze, and she was busy talking to herself.

His hand struck the window heavily, and she looked up and saw him. She nodded, and put her finger to her lips as a sign that he must be cautious. She had often, in the long ago, seen her mother signing thus to an imaginary face at the window — the face of the man who never came.

Tommy went into the house, and she was so pleased to see him that she quite simpered. He put his arms round her, and she lay there with a little giggle of contentment. She was in a plot of heat.

“Grizel! Oh, my God!” he said, “why do you look at me in that way?”

She passed her hand across her eyes, like one trying to think.

“I woke up,” she said at last. Corp appeared at the window now, and she pointed to him in terror. Thus had she seen her mother point, in the long ago, at faces that came there to frighten her.

“Grizel,” Tommy entreated her, “you know who I am, don’t you?”

She said his name at once, but her eyes were on

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

the window. "They want to take me away," she whispered.

"But you must come away, Grizel. You must come home."

"This is home," she said. "It is sweet."

After much coaxing, he prevailed upon her to leave. With his arm round her, and a terrible woe on his face, he took her to the doctor's house. She had her hands over her ears all the way. She thought the white river and the mountains and the villages and the crack of whips were marching with her still.

CHAPTER XXXI

“THE MAN WITH THE GREETIN’ EYES”

FOR many days she lay in a fever at the doctor’s house, seeming sometimes to know where she was, but more often not, and night after night a man with a drawn face sat watching her. They entreated, they forced him to let them take his place; but from his room he heard her moan or speak, or he thought he heard her, or he heard a terrible stillness, and he stole back to listen; they might send him away, but when they opened the door he was there, with his drawn face. And often they were glad to see him, for there were times when he alone could interpret her wild demands and soothe those staring eyes.

Once a scream startled the house. Someone had struck a match in the darkened chamber, and she thought she was in an arbour in St. Gian. They had to hold her in her bed by force at times; she had such a long way to walk before night, she said.

She would struggle into a sitting posture and put her hands over her ears.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

Her great desire was not to sleep. "I should wake up," she explained fearfully.

She took a dislike to Elspeth, and called her "Alice."

These ravings, they said to each other, must have reference to what happened to her when she was away, and as they thought he knew no more of her wanderings than they, everyone marvelled at the intuition with which he read her thoughts. It was he who guessed that the striking of matches somehow terrified her; he who discovered that it was a horrid roaring river she thought she heard, and he pretended he heard it too, and persuaded her that if she lay very still it would run past. Nothing she said or did puzzled him. He read the raving of her mind, they declared admiringly, as if he held the cipher to it.

"And the cipher is his love," Mrs. McLean said, with wet eyes. In the excitement of those days Elspeth talked much to her of Tommy's love for Grizel, and how she had refused him, and it went round the town with embellishments. It was generally believed now that she really had gone to London to see her father, and that his heartless behaviour had unhinged her mind.

By David's advice, Corp and Gavinia did not contradict this story. It was as good as another, he told them, and better than the truth.

But what was the truth? they asked greedily.

“THE MAN WITH THE EYES”

“Oh, that he is a noble fellow,” David replied grimly.

They knew that, but ——

He would tell them no more, however, though he knew all. Tommy had made full confession to the doctor, even made himself out worse than he was, as had to be his way when he was not making himself out better.

“And I am willing to proclaim it all from the market-place,” he said hoarsely, “if that is your wish.”

“I daresay you would almost enjoy doing that,” said David, rather cruelly.

“I daresay I should,” Tommy said, with a gulp, and went back to Grizel’s side. It was not, you may be sure, to screen him that David kept the secret; it was because he knew what many would say of Grizel if the nature of her journey were revealed. He dared not tell Elspeth, even; for think of the woe to her if she learned that it was her wonderful brother who had brought Grizel to this pass! The Elspeths of this world always have some man to devote himself to them. If the Tommies pass away, the Davids spring up. For my own part, I think Elspeth would have found some excuse for Tommy. He said so himself to the doctor, for he wanted her to be told.

“Or you would find the excuse for her in time,” David responded.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“Very likely,” Tommy said. He was humble enough now, you see. David could say one thing only which would rouse him, namely, that Grizel was not to die in this fever; and for long it seemed impossible to say that.

“Would you have her live if her mind remains affected?” he asked; and Tommy said firmly, “Yes.”

“You think, I suppose, that then you would have less for which to blame yourself!”

“I suppose that is it. But don’t waste time on me, Gemmell, when you have her life to save, if you can.”

Well, her life was saved, and Tommy’s nursing had more to do with it than David’s skill. David admitted it; the town talked of it. “I aye kent he would find a wy,” Corp said, though he had been among the most anxious. He and Aaron Latta were the first admitted to see her, when she was able once more to sit in a chair. They had been told to ask her no questions. She chatted pleasantly to them, and they thought she was quite her old self. They wondered to see Tommy still so sad-eyed. To Ailie she spoke freely of her illness, though not of what had occasioned it, and told her almost gleefully that David had promised to let her sew a little next week. There was one thing only that surprised Ailie. Grizel had said that as soon as she was a little stronger she was going home.

“THE MAN WITH THE EYES”

“Does she mean to her father’s house?” Ailie asked.

This was what started the report that, touched no doubt by her illness, Grizel’s unknown father had, after all, offered her a home. They discovered, however, what Grizel meant by home when, one afternoon, she escaped, unseen, from the doctor’s house, and was found again at Double Dykes, very indignant because someone had stolen the furniture.

She seemed to know all her old friends except Elspeth, who was still Alice to her. Seldom now did she put her hands over her ears, or see horrible mountains marching with her. She no longer remembered, save once or twice when she woke up, that she had ever been out of Thrums. To those who saw her casually she was Grizel — gone thin and pale and weak intellectually, but still the Grizel of old, except for the fixed idea that Double Dykes was her home.

“You must not humour her in that delusion,” David said sternly to Tommy; “when we cease to fight it we have abandoned hope.”

So the weapon he always had his hand on was taken from Tommy, for he would not abandon hope. He fought gallantly. It was always he who brought her back from Double Dykes. She would not leave it with any other person, but she came away with him.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“It’s because she’s so fond o’ him,” Corp said.

But it was not. It was because she feared him, as all knew who saw them together. They were seen together a great deal when she was able to go out. Driving seemed to bring back the mountains to her eyes, so she walked, and it was always with the help of Tommy’s arm. “It’s a most pitiful sight,” the people said. They pitied him even more than her, for though she might be talking gaily to him and leaning heavily on him, they could see that she mistrusted him. At the end of a sweet smile she would give him an ugly, furtive look.

“She’s like a cat you’ve forced into your lap,” they said, “and it lies quiet there, ready to jump the moment you let go your grip.”

They wondered would he never weary. He never wearied. Day after day he was saying the same things to her, and the end was always as the beginning. They came back to her entreaty that she should be allowed to go home as certainly as they came back to the doctor’s house.

“It is a long time, you know, Grizel, since you lived at Double Dykes—not since you were a child.”

“Not since I was a child,” she said as if she quite understood.

“Then you went to live with your dear, kind doctor, you remember. What was his name?”

“THE MAN WITH THE EYES”

“Dr. McQueen. I love him.”

“But he died, and he left you his house to live in. It is your home, Grizel. He would be so grieved if he thought you did not make it your home.”

“It is my home,” she said proudly; but when they returned to it she was loath to go in. “I want to go home!” she begged.

One day he took her to her rooms in Corp’s house, thinking her old furniture would please her; and that was the day when she rocked her arms joyously again. But it was not the furniture that made her so happy; it was Corp’s baby.

“Oh, oh!” she cried in rapture, and held out her arms; and he ran into them, for there was still one person in Thrums who had no fear of Grizel.

“It will be a damned shame,” Corp said huskily, “if that woman never has no bairns o’ her ain.”

They watched her crooning over the child, playing with him for a long time. You could not have believed that she required to be watched. She told him with hugs that she had come back to him at last; it was her first admission that she knew she had been away, and a wild hope came to Tommy that along the road he could not take her she might be drawn by this little child.

She discovered a rent in the child’s pinafore and must mend it at once. She ran upstairs, as a matter of course, to her work-box, and brought down a

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

needle and thread. It was quite as if she was at home at last.

“But you don’t live here now, Grizel,” Tommy said, when she drew back at his proposal that they should go away; “you live at the doctor’s house.”

“Do I, Gavinia?” she said beseechingly.

“Is it here you want to bide?” Corp asked, and she nodded her head several times.

“It would be so much more convenient,” she said, looking at the child.

“Would you take her back, Gavinia,” Tommy asked humbly, “if she continues to want it?”

Gavinia did not answer.

“Woman!” cried Corp.

“I’m mortal wae for her,” Gavinia said slowly, “but she needs to be waited on hand and foot.”

“I would come and do the waiting on her hand and foot, Gavinia,” Tommy said.

And so it came about that a week afterwards Grizel was reinstalled in her old rooms. Every morning when Tommy came to see her she asked him, icily how Alice was. She seemed to think that Alice, as she called her, was his wife. He always replied, “You mean Elspeth,” and she assented, but only, it was obvious, because she feared to contradict him. To Corp and Gavinia she would still say passionately, “I want to go home!” and probably add fearfully, “Don’t tell him.”

Yet though this was not home to her, she seemed

“THE MAN WITH THE EYES”

to be less unhappy here than in the doctor's house, and she found a great deal to do. All her old skill in needlework came back to her, and she sewed for the child such exquisite garments that she clapped her hands over them.

One day Tommy came with a white face and asked Gavinia if she knew whether a small brown parcel had been among the things brought by Grizel from the doctor's house.

“It was in the box sent after me from Switzerland,” he told her, “and contained papers.”

Gavinia had seen no such package.

“She may have hidden it,” he said, and they searched, but fruitlessly. He questioned Grizel gently, but questions alarmed her, and he desisted.

“It does not matter, Gavinia,” he said, with a ghastly smile; but on the following Sunday, when Corp called at the doctor's house, the thought “Have they found it?” leaped in front of all thought of Grizel. This was only for the time it takes to ask a question with the eyes, however, for Corp was looking very miserable.

“I'm sweer to say it,” he announced to Tommy and David, “but it has to be said. We canna keep her.”

Evidently something had happened, and Tommy rose to go to Grizel without even asking what it was. “Wait,” David said, wrinkling his eye-

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

brows, "till Corp tells us what he means by that. I knew it might come, Corp. Go on."

"If it hadna been for the bairn," said Corp, "we would hae tholed wi' her, however queer she was; but wi' the bairn I tell you it's no mous. You'll hae to tak' her awa'."

"Whatever she has been to others," Tommy said, "she is always an angel with the child. His own mother could not be fonder of him."

"That's it," Corp replied emphatically. "She's no the mother o' him, but there's whiles when she thinks she is. We kept it frae you as long as we could."

"As long as she is so good to him ——" David began.

"But at thae times she's not," said Corp. "She begins to shiver most terrible, as if she saw fearful things in her mind, and syne we see her looking at him like as if she wanted to do him a mischief. She says he's her brat; she thinks he's hers, and that he hasna been well come by."

Tommy's hands rose in agony, and then he covered his face with them.

"Go on, Corp," David said hoarsely; "we must have it all."

"Sometimes," Corp went on painfully, "she canna help being fond o' him, though she thinks she shouldna hae had him. I've heard her saying, 'My brat!' and syne birsing him closer to her, as

“THE MAN WITH THE EYES”

though her shame just made him mair to her. Women are so queer about thae things. I’ve seen her sitting by his cradle, moaning to hersel’, ‘I did so want to be good! It would be sweet to be good!’ and never stopping rocking the cradle, and a’ the time the tears were rolling down.”

Tommy cried, “If there is any more to tell, Corp, be quick.”

“There’s what I come here to tell you. It was no langer syne than jimply an hour. We thocht the bairn was playing at the gavle-end, and that Grizel was up the stair. But they werena, and I gaed straight to Double Dykes. She wasna there, but the bairn was, lying greetin’ on the floor. We found her in the Den, sitting by the burn-side, and she said we should never see him again, for she had drowned him. We’re sweer, but you’ll need to tak’ her awa’.”

“We shall take her away,” David said, and when he and Tommy were left together he asked: “Do you see what it means?”

“It means that the horrors of her early days have come back to her, and that she is confusing her mother with herself.”

David’s hands were clenched. “That is not what I am thinking of. We have to take her away; they have done far more than we had any right to ask of them. Sandys, where are we to take her to?”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“Do even you grow tired of her?” Tommy cried.

David said between his teeth: “We hope there will soon be a child in this house, also. God forgive me, but I cannot bring her back here.”

“She cannot be in a house where there is a child!” said Tommy, with a bitter laugh. “Gem-mell, it is Grizel we are speaking of! Do you remember what she was?”

“I remember.”

“Well, where are we to send her?”

David turned his pained eyes full on Tommy.

“No!” Tommy cried vehemently.

“Sandys,” said David, firmly, “that is what it has come to. They will take good care of her.” He sat down with a groan. “Have done with heroics,” he said savagely, when Tommy would have spoken. “I have been prepared for this; there is no other way.”

“I have been prepared for it, too,” Tommy said, controlling himself; “but there is another way: I can marry her, and I am going to do it.”

“I don’t know that I can countenance that,” David said, after a pause. “It seems an infernal shame.”

“Don’t trouble about me,” replied Tommy, hoarsely; “I shall do it willingly.”

And then it was the doctor’s turn to laugh. “You!” he said with a terrible scorn as he looked

“THE MAN WITH THE EYES”

Tommy up and down. “I was not thinking of you. All my thoughts were of her. I was thinking how cruel to her if some day she came to her right mind and found herself tied for life to the man who had brought her to this pass.”

Tommy winced and walked up and down.

“Desire to marry her gone?” asked David, savagely.

“No,” Tommy said. He sat down. “You have the key to me, Gemmell,” he went on quietly. “I gave it to you. You know I am a man of sentiment only; but you are without a scrap of it yourself, and so you will never quite know what it is. It has its good points. We are a kindly people. I was perhaps pluming myself on having made an heroic proposal, and though you have made me see it just now as you see it, as you see it I shall probably soon be putting on the same grand airs again. Lately I discovered that the children who see me with Grizel call me ‘the Man with the Greetin’ Eyes.’ If I have greetin’ eyes it was real grief that gave them to me; but when I heard what I was called it made me self-conscious, and I have tried to look still more lugubrious ever since. It seems monstrous to you, but that, I believe, is the kind of thing I shall always be doing. But it does not mean that I feel no real remorse. They were greetin’ eyes before I knew it, and though I may pose grotesquely as a fine fellow for

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

finding Grizel a home where there is no child and can never be a child, I shall not cease, night nor day, from tending her. It will be a grim business, Gemmell, as you know, and if I am Sentimental Tommy through it all, why grudge me my comic little strut ?”

David said, “You can’t take her to London.”

“I shall take her to wherever she wants to go.”

“There is one place only she wants to go to, and that is Double Dykes.”

“I am prepared to take her there.”

“And your work ?”

“It must take second place now. I must write ; it is the only thing I can do. If I could make a living at anything else I would give up writing altogether.”

“Why ?”

“She would be pleased if she could understand, and writing is the joy of my life — two reasons.”

But the doctor smiled.

“You are right,” said Tommy. “I see I was really thinking what a fine picture of self-sacrifice I should make sitting in Double Dykes at a loom !”

They talked of ways and means, and he had to admit that he had little money. But the new book would bring in a good deal, David supposed.

“The manuscript is lost,” Tommy replied, crushing down his agitation.

“Lost ! When ? Where ?”

“THE MAN WITH THE EYES”

“I don’t know. It was in the bag I left behind at St. Gian, and I supposed it was still in it when the bag was forwarded to me here. I did not look for more than a month. I took credit to myself for neglecting my manuscript, and when at last I looked it was not there. I telegraphed and wrote to the innkeeper at St. Gian, and he replied that my things had been packed at his request in presence of my friends there, the two ladies you know of. I wrote to them, and they replied that this was so, and said they thought they remembered seeing in the bottom of the bag some such parcel in brown paper as I described. But it is not there now, and I have given up all hope of ever seeing it again. No, I have no other copy. Every page was written half a dozen times, but I kept the final copy only.”

“It is scarcely a thing anyone would steal.”

“No; I suppose they took it out of the bag at St. Gian, and forgot to pack it again. It was probably flung away as of no account.”

“Could it have been taken out on the way here?”

“The key was tied to the handle so that the custom officials might be able to open the bag. Perhaps they are fonder of English manuscripts than one would expect, or more careless of them.”

“You can think of no other way in which it might have disappeared?”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“None,” Tommy said; and then the doctor faced him squarely.

“Are you trying to screen Grizel?” he asked. “Is it true, what people are saying?”

“What are they saying?”

“That she destroyed it. I heard that yesterday, and told them your manuscript was in my house, as I thought it was. Was it she?”

“No, no. Gavinia must have started that story. I did look for the package among Grizel’s things.”

“What made you think of that?”

“I had seen her looking into my bag one day. And she used to say I loved my manuscripts too much ever to love her. But I am sure she did not do it.”

“Be truthful, Sandys. You know how she always loved the truth.”

“Well, then, I suppose it was she.”

After a pause the doctor said: “It must be about as bad as having a limb lopped off.”

“If only I had been offered that alternative!” Tommy replied.

“And yet,” David mused, better pleased with him, “you have not cried out.”

“Have I not! I have rolled about in agony, and invoked the gods, and cursed and whimpered; only I take care that no one shall see me.”

“And that no one should know poor Grizel had done this thing. I admire you for that, Sandys.”

“THE MAN WITH THE EYES”

“But it has leaked out, you see,” Tommy said; “and they will all be admiring me for it at the wedding, and no doubt I shall be cocking my greetin’ eyes at them to note how much they are admiring.”

But when the wedding-day came he was not doing that. While he and Grizel stood up before Mr. Dishart, in the doctor’s parlour, he was thinking of her only. His eyes never left her, not even when he had to reply “I do.” His hand pressed hers all the time. He kept giving her reassuring little nods and smiles, and it was thus that he helped Grizel through.

Had Mr. Dishart understood what was in her mind he would not have married them. To her it was no real marriage; she thought they were tricking the minister, so that she should be able to go home. They had rehearsed the ceremony together many times, and oh, she was eager to make no mistake.

“If they were to find out!” she would say apprehensively, and then perhaps giggle at the slyness of it all. Tommy had to make merry with her, as if it was one of his boyish plays. If he was overcome with the pain of it, she sobbed at once and wrung her hands.

She was married in gray silk. She had made the dress herself, as beautifully as all her things were made. Tommy remembered how once, long

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

ago, she had told him, as a most exquisite secret, that she had decided on gray silk.

Corp and Gavinia and Ailie and Aaron Latta were the only persons asked to the wedding, and when it was over, they said they never saw anyone stand up by a woman's side looking so anxious to be her man; and I am sure that in this they did Tommy no more than justice.

It was a sad day to Elspeth. Could she be expected to smile while her noble brother did this great deed of sacrifice? But she bore up bravely, partly for his sake, partly for the sake of one unborn.

The ring was no plain hoop of gold; it was garnets all the way round. She had seen it on Elspeth's finger, and craved it so greedily that it became her wedding-ring. And from the moment she had it she ceased to dislike Elspeth, and pitied her very much, as if she thought happiness went with the ring. "Poor Alice!" she said when she saw Elspeth crying at the wedding, and having started to go away with Tommy, she came back to say again, "Poor, poor Alice!"

Corp flung an old shoe after them.

CHAPTER XXXII

TOMMY'S BEST WORK

AND thus was begun a year and a half of as great devotion as remorseful man ever gave to woman. When she was asleep and he could not write, his mind would sometimes roam after abandoned things; it sought them in the night as a savage beast steals forth for water to slake the thirst of many days. But if she stirred in her sleep they were all dispelled; there was not a moment in that eighteen months when he was twenty yards from Grizel's side.

He would not let himself lose hope. All the others lost it. "The only thing you can do is to humour her," even David was reduced in time to saying; but Tommy replied cheerily, "Not a bit of it." Every morning he had to begin at the same place as on the previous morning, and he was always as ready to do it, and as patient, as if this were the first time.

"I think she is a little more herself to-day," he would say determinedly, till David wondered to hear him.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“She makes no progress, Sandys.”

“I can at least keep her from slipping back.”

And he did, and there is no doubt that this was what saved Grizel in the end. How he strove to prevent her slipping back! The morning was the time when she was least troubled, and had he humoured her then they would often have been easy hours for him. But it was the time when he tried most doggedly, with a gentleness she could not ruffle, to teach her the alphabet of who she was. She coaxed him to let her off those mental struggles; she turned petulant and sulky; she was willing to be good and sweet if he would permit her to sew or to sing to herself instead, or to sit staring at the fire: but he would not yield; he promised those things as the reward, and in the end she stood before him like a child at lessons.

“What is your name?” The catechism always began thus.

“Grizel,” she said obediently, if it was a day when she wanted to please him.

“And my name?”

“Tommy.” Once, to his great delight, she said, “Sentimental Tommy.” He quite bragged about this to David.

“Where is your home?”

“Here.” She was never in doubt about this, and it was always a pleasure to her to say it.

“Did you live here long ago?”

TOMMY'S BEST WORK

She nodded.

“And then did you live for a long time somewhere else?”

“Yes.”

“Where was it?”

“Here.”

“No, it was with the old doctor. You were his little housekeeper; don't you remember? Try to remember, Grizel; he loved you so much.”

She tried to think. Her face was very painful when she tried to think. “It hurts,” she said.

“Do you remember him, Grizel?”

“Please let me sing,” she begged, “such a sweet song!”

“Do you remember the old doctor who called you his little housekeeper? He used to sit in that chair.”

The old chair was among Grizel's many possessions that had been brought to Double Dykes, and her face lit up with recollection. She ran to the chair and kissed it.

“What was his name, Grizel?”

“I should love to know his name,” she said wistfully.

He told her the name many times, and she repeated it docilely.

Or perhaps she remembered her dear doctor quite well to-day, and thought Tommy was some one in need of his services.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“He has gone into the country,” she said, as she had so often said to anxious people at the door; “but he won’t be long, and I shall give him your message the moment he comes in.”

But Tommy would not pass that. He explained to her again and again that the doctor was dead, and perhaps she would remember, or perhaps, without remembering, she said she was glad he was dead.

“Why are you glad, Grizel?”

She whispered, as if frightened she might be overheard: “I don’t want him to see me like this.” It was one of the pathetic things about her that she seemed at times to have some vague understanding of her condition, and then she would sob. Her tears were anguish to him, but it was at those times that she clung to him as if she knew he was trying to do something for her, and that encouraged him to go on. He went over, step by step, the time when she lived alone in the doctor’s house, the time of his own coming back, her love for him and his treatment of her, the story of the garnet ring, her coming to Switzerland, her terrible walk, her return; he would miss out nothing, for he was fighting for her. Day after day, month by month, it went on, and to-morrow, perhaps, she would insist that the old doctor and this man who asked her so many questions were one. And Tommy argued with her until he had driven that notion

TOMMY'S BEST WORK

out, to make way for another, and then he fought it, and so on and on all round the circle of her delusions, day by day and month by month.

She knew that he sometimes wrote while she was asleep, for she might start up from her bed or from the sofa, and there he was, laying down his pen to come to her. Her eyes were never open for any large fraction of a minute without his knowing, and immediately he went to her, nodding and smiling lest she had wakened with some fear upon her. Perhaps she refused to sleep again unless he promised to put away those horrid papers for the night, and however intoxicating a point he had reached in his labours, he always promised, and kept his word. He was most scrupulous in keeping any promise he made her, and one great result was that she trusted him implicitly. Whatever others promised, she doubted them.

There were times when she seemed to be casting about in her mind for something to do that would please him, and then she would bring pieces of paper to him, and pen and ink, and tell him to write. She thought this very clever of her, and expected to be praised for it.

But she might also bring him writing materials at times when she hated him very much. Then there would be sly smiles, even pretended affection, on her face, unless she thought he was not looking, when she cast him ugly glances. Her intention

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

was to trick him into forgetting her so that she might talk to herself or slip out of the room to the Den, just as her mother had done in the days when it was Grizel who had to be tricked. He would not let her talk to herself until he had tried endless ways of exorcising that demon by interesting her in some sort of work, by going out with her, by talking of one thing and another till at last a subject was lit upon that made her forget to brood.

But sometimes it seemed best to let her go to the Den, she was in such a quiver of desire to go. She hurried to it, so that he had to stride to keep up with her; and he said little until they got there, for she was too excited to listen. She was very like her mother again; but it was not the man who never came that she went in search of—it was a lost child. I have not the heart to tell of the pitiful scenes in the Den while Grizel searched for her child. They always ended in those two walking silently home, and for a day or two Grizel would be ill, and Tommy tended her, so that she was soon able to hasten to the Den again, holding out her arms as she ran.

“She makes no progress,” David said.

“I can keep her from slipping back,” Tommy still replied. The doctor marvelled, but even he did not know the half of all her husband did for Grizel. None could know half who was not there by night. Here, at least, was one day ending

TOMMY'S BEST WORK

placidly, they might say when she was in a tractable mood,—so tractable that she seemed to be one of themselves,—and Tommy assented brightly, though he knew, and he alone, that you could never be sure the long day had ended till the next began.

Often the happiest beginning had the most painful ending. The greatest pleasure he could give her was to take her to see Elspeth's baby girl, or that sturdy rogue, young Shiach, who could now count with ease up to seven, but swayed at eight, and toppled over on his way to ten; or their mothers brought them to her, and Grizel understood quite well who her visitors were, sometimes even called Elspeth by her right name, and did the honours of her house irreproachably, and presided at the teatable, and was rapture personified when she held the baby Jean (called after Tommy's mother), and sat gaily on the floor, ready to catch little Corp when he would not stop at seven. But Tommy, whom nothing escaped, knew with what depression she might pay for her joy when they had gone. Despite all his efforts, she might sit talking to herself, at first of pleasant things and then of things less pleasant. Or she stared at her reflection in the long mirror and said: "Isn't she sweet!" or "She is not really sweet, and she did so want to be good!" Or instead of that she would suddenly go upon her knees and say, with clasped hands,

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

the childish prayer, "Save me from masterful men," which Jean Myles had told Tommy to teach Elspeth. No one could have looked less masterful at those times than Tommy, but Grizel did not seem to think so. And probably they had that night once more to search the Den.

"The children do her harm; she must not see them again," he decided.

"They give her pleasure at the time," David said. "It lightens your task now and then."

"It is the future I am thinking of, Gemmell. If she cannot progress, she shall not fall back. As for me, never mind me."

"Elspeth is in a sad state about you, though! And you can get through so little work."

"Enough for all our wants." (He was writing magazine papers only.)

"The public will forget you."

"They have forgotten me."

David was openly sorry for him now. "If only your manuscript had been saved!"

"Yes; I never thought the little gods would treat me so scurvily as that."

"Who?"

"Did I never tell you of my little gods? I so often emerged triumphant from my troubles, and so undeservedly, that I thought I was especially looked after by certain tricky spirits in return for the entertainment I gave them. My little gods, I called

TOMMY'S BEST WORK

them, and we had quite a bowing acquaintance. But you see at the critical moment they flew away laughing."

He always knew that the lost manuscript was his great work. "My seventh wave," he called it; "and though all the conditions were favourable," he said, "I know that I could run to nothing more than little waves at present. As for rewriting that book, I can't; I have tried."

Yet he was not asking for commiseration. "Tell Elspeth not to worry about me. If I have no big ideas just now, I have some very passable little ones, and one in particular that ——" He drew a great breath. "If only Grizel were better," that breath said, "I think Tommy Sandys could find a way of making the public remember him again."

So David interpreted it, and though he had been about to say, "How changed you are!" he did not say it.

And Tommy, who had been keeping an eye on her all this time, returned to Grizel. As she had been through that long year, so she was during the first half of the next; and day by day and night by night he tended her, and still the same scenes were enacted in infinite variety, and still he would not give in. Everything seemed to change with the seasons, except Grizel, and Tommy's devotion to her.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

Yet you know that she recovered, ever afterwards to be herself again; and though it seemed to come in the end as suddenly as the sight may be restored by the removal of a bandage, I suppose it had been going on all the time, and that her reason was given back to her on the day she had strength to make use of it. Tommy was the instrument of her recovery. He had fought against her slipping backward so that she could not do it; it was as if he had built a wall behind her, and in time her mind accepted that wall as impregnable and took a forward movement. And with every step she took he pushed the wall after her, so that still if she moved it must be forward. Thus Grizel progressed imperceptibly as along a dark corridor towards the door that shut out the light, and on a day in early spring the door fell.

Many of them had cried for a shock as her only chance. But it came most quietly. She had lain down on the sofa that afternoon to rest, and when she woke she was Grizel again. At first she was not surprised to find herself in that room, nor to see that man nodding and smiling reassuringly; they had come out of the long dream with her, to make the awakening less abrupt.

He did not know what had happened. When he knew, a terror that this could not last seized him. He was concealing it while he answered her puzzled questions. All the time he was telling

TOMMY'S BEST WORK

her how they came to be there, he was watching in agony for the change.

She remembered everything up to her return to Thrums; then she walked into a mist.

“The truth,” she begged of him, when he would have led her off by pretending that she had been ill only. Surely it was the real Grizel who begged for the truth. She took his hand and held it when he told her of their marriage. She cried softly, because she feared that she might again become as she had been; but he said that was impossible, and smiled confidently, and all the time he was watching in agony for the change.

“Do you forgive me, Grizel? I have always had a dread that when you recovered you would cease to care for me.” He knew that this would please her if she was the real Grizel, and he was so anxious to make her happy for evermore.

She put his hand to her lips and smiled at him through her tears. Hers was a love that could never change. Suddenly she sat up. “Whose baby was it?” she asked.

“I don’t know what you mean, Grizel,” he said uneasily.

“I remember vaguely,” she told him, “a baby in white whom I seemed to chase, but I could never catch her. Was it a dream only?”

“You are thinking of Elspeth’s little girl, perhaps. She was often brought to see you.”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“Has Elspeth a baby?” She rose to go exultantly to Elspeth.

“But too small a baby, Grizel, to run from you, even if she wanted to.”

“What is she like?”

“She is always laughing.”

“The sweet!” Grizel rocked her arms in rapture and smiled her crooked smile at the thought of a child who was always laughing. “But I don’t remember her,” she said. “It was a sad little baby I seemed to see.”

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE LITTLE GODS RETURN WITH A LADY

GRIZEL'S clear, searching eyes, that were always asking for the truth, came back to her, and I seem to see them on me now, watching lest I shirk the end.

Thus I can make no pretence (to please you) that it was a new Tommy at last. We have seen how he gave his life to her during those eighteen months, but he could not make himself anew. They say we can do it, so I suppose he did not try hard enough; but God knows how hard he tried.

He went on trying. In those first days she sometimes asked him, "Did you do it out of love, or was it pity only?" And he always said it was love. He said it adoringly. He told her all that love meant to him, and it meant everything that he thought Grizel would like it to mean. When she ceased to ask this question he thought it was because he had convinced her.

They had a honeymoon by the sea. He insisted upon it with boyish eagerness, and as they walked

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

on the links or sat in their room he would exclaim ecstatically: "How happy I am! I wonder if there were ever two people quite so happy as you and I!"

And if he waited for an answer, as he usually did, she might smile lightly and say: "Few people have gone through so much."

"Is there any woman in the world, Grizel, with whom you would change places?"

"No, none," she said at once; and when he was sure of it, but never until he was sure, he would give his mind a little holiday; and then, perhaps, those candid eyes would rest searchingly upon him, but always with a brave smile ready should he chance to look up.

And it was just the same when they returned to Double Dykes, which they added to and turned into a comfortable home — Tommy trying to become a lover by taking thought, and Grizel not letting on that it could not be done in that way. She thought it was very sweet of him to try so hard — sweeter of him than if he really had loved her, though not, of course, quite so sweet to her. He was a boy only. She knew that, despite all he had gone through, he was still a boy. And boys cannot love. Oh, who would be so cruel as to ask a boy to love?

That Grizel's honeymoon should never end was his grand ambition, and he took elaborate precau-

THE LITTLE GODS RETURN

tions against becoming a matter-of-fact husband. Every morning he ordered himself to gaze at her with rapture, as if he had wakened to the glorious thought that she was his wife.

“I can’t help it, Grizel; it comes to me every morning with the same shock of delight, and I begin the day with a song of joy. You make the world as fresh and interesting to me as if I had just broken like a chicken through the egg-shell.” He rose at the earliest hours. “So that I can have the longer day with you,” he said gaily.

If when sitting at his work he forgot her for an hour or two he reproached himself for it afterwards, and next day he was more careful. “Grizel,” he would cry, suddenly flinging down his pen, “you are my wife! Do you hear me, madam? You hear, and yet you can sit there calmly darning socks! Excuse me,” he would say to his work, “while I do a dance.”

He rose impulsively and brought his papers nearer her. With a table between them she was several feet away from him, which was more, he said, than he could endure.

“Sit down for a moment, Grizel, and let me look at you. I want to write something most splendiferous to-day, and I am sure to find it in your face. I have ceased to be an original writer; all the purple patches are cribbed from you.”

He made a point of taking her head in his

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

hands and looking long at her with thoughts too deep for utterance; then he would fall on his knees and kiss the hem of her dress, and so back to his book again.

And in time it was all sweet to Grizel. She could not be deceived, but she loved to see him playing so kind a part, and after some sadness to which she could not help giving way, she put all vain longings aside. She folded them up and put them away like the beautiful linen, so that she might see more clearly what was left to her and how best to turn it to account.

He did not love her. "Not as I love him," she said to herself,— "not as married people ought to love; but in the other way he loves me dearly." By the "other way" she meant that he loved her as he loved Elspeth, and loved them both just as he had loved them when all three played in the Den.

"He would love me if he could." She was certain of that. She decided that love does not come to all people, as is the common notion; that there are some who cannot fall in love, and that he was one of them. He was complete in himself, she decided.

"Is it a pity for him that he married me? It would be a pity if he could love some other woman, but I am sure he could never do that. If he could love anyone it would be me, we both want it so much. He does not need a wife, but he needs

THE LITTLE GODS RETURN

someone to take care of him — all men need that; and I can do it much better than any other person. Had he not married me he never would have married; but he may fall ill, and then how useful I shall be to him! He will grow old, and perhaps it won't be quite so lonely to him when I am there. It would have been a pity for him to marry me if I had been a foolish woman who asked for more love than he can give; but I shall never do that, so I think it is not a pity.

“Is it a pity for me? Oh, no, no, no!”

“Is he sorry he did it? At times, is he just a weeny bit sorry?” She watched him, and decided rightly that he was not sorry the weeniest bit. It was a sweet consolation to her. “Is he really happy? Yes, of course he is happy when he is writing; but is he quite contented at other times? I do honestly think he is. And if he is happy now, how much happier I shall be able to make him when I have put away all my selfish thoughts and think only of him.”

“The most exquisite thing in human life is to be married to one who loves you as you love him.” There could be no doubt of that. But she saw also that the next best thing was the kind of love this boy gave to her, and she would always be grateful for the second best. In her prayers she thanked God for giving it to her, and promised Him to try to merit it; and all day and every day

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

she kept her promise. There could not have been a brighter or more energetic wife than Grizel. The amount of work she found to do in that small house which his devotion had made so dear to her that she could not leave it! Her gaiety! Her masterful airs when he wanted something that was not good for him! The artfulness with which she sought to help him in various matters without his knowing! Her satisfaction when he caught her at it, as clever Tommy was constantly doing! "What a success it has turned out!" David would say delightedly to himself; and Grizel was almost as jubilant because it was so far from being a failure. It was only sometimes in the night that she lay very still, with little wells of water on her eyes, and through them saw one — the dream of woman — whom she feared could never be hers. That boy Tommy never knew why she did not want to have a child. He thought that for the present she was afraid; but the reason was that she believed it would be wicked when he did not love her as she loved him. She could not be sure — she had to think it all out for herself. With little wells of sadness on her eyes, she prayed in the still night to God to tell her; but she could never hear His answer.

She no longer sought to teach Tommy how he should write. That quaint desire was abandoned from the day when she learned that she had

THE LITTLE GODS RETURN

destroyed his greatest work. She had not destroyed it, as we shall see; but she presumed she had, as Tommy thought so. He had tried to conceal this from her to save her pain, but she had found it out, and it seemed to Grizel, grown distrustful of herself, that the man who could bear such a loss as he had borne it was best left to write as he chose.

“It was not that I did not love your books,” she said, “but that I loved you more, and I thought they did you harm.”

“In the days when I had wings,” he answered, and she smiled. “Any feathers left, do you think, Grizel?” he asked jocularly, and turned his shoulders to her for examination.

“A great many, sir,” she said, “and I am glad. I used to want to pull them all out, but now I like to know that they are still there, for it means that you remain among the facts not because you can’t fly, but because you won’t.”

“I still have my little fights with myself,” he blurted out boyishly, though it was a thing he had never meant to tell her, and Grizel pressed his hand for telling her what she already knew so well.

The new book, of course, was “The Wandering Child.” I wonder whether any of you read it now? Your fathers and mothers thought a great deal of that slim volume, but it would make little stir in an age in which all the authors are trying who can

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

say "damn" loudest. It is but a reverie about a child who is lost, and his parents' search for him in terror of what may have befallen. But they find him in a wood singing joyfully to himself because he is free; and he fears to be caged again, so runs farther from them into the wood, and is running still, singing to himself because he is free, free, free. That is really all, but T. Sandys knew how to tell it. The moment he conceived the idea (we have seen him speaking of it to the doctor), he knew that it was the idea for him. He forgot at once that he did not really care for children. He said reverently to himself, "I can pull it off," and, as was always the way with him, the better he pulled it off the more he seemed to love them.

"It is myself who is writing at last, Grizel," he said, as he read it to her.

She thought (and you can guess whether she was right) that it was the book he loved rather than the children. She thought (and you can guess again) that it was not his ideas about children that had got into the book, but hers. But she did not say so; she said it was the sweetest of his books to her.

I have heard of another reading he gave. This was after the publication of the book. He had gone into Corp's house one Sunday, and Gavinia was there reading the work to her lord and master, while little Corp disported on the floor. She read

THE LITTLE GODS RETURN

as if all the words meant the same thing, and it was more than Tommy could endure. He read for her, and his eyes grew moist as he read, for it was the most exquisite of his chapters about the lost child. You would have said that no one loved children quite so much as T. Sandys. But little Corp would not keep quiet, and suddenly Tommy jumped up and boxed his ears. He then proceeded with the reading, while Gavia glowered and Corp senior scratched his head.

On the way home he saw what had happened, and laughed at the humour of it, then grew depressed, then laughed recklessly. "Is it Sentimental Tommy still?" he said to himself, with a groan. Seldom a week passed without his being reminded in some such sudden way that it was Sentimental Tommy still. "But she shall never know!" he vowed, and he continued to be half a hero.

His name was once more in many mouths. "Come back and be made of more than ever!" cried that society which he had once enlivened. "Come and hear the pretty things we are saying about you. Come and make the prettier replies that are already on the tip of your tongue; for oh, Tommy, you know they are! Bring her with you if you must; but don't you think that the nice, quiet country with the thingumbobs all in bloom would suit her best? It is essential that you

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

should run up to see your publisher, is it not? The men have dinners for you if you want them, but we know you don't. Your yearning eyes are on the ladies, Tommy; we are making up theatre-parties of the old entrancing kind; you should see our new gowns; please come back and help us to put on our cloaks, Tommy; there is a dance on Monday—come and sit it out with us. Do you remember the garden-party where you said— Well, the laurel walk is still there; the beauties of two years ago are still here, and there are new beauties, and their noses are slightly tilted, but no man can move them; ha, do you pull yourself together at that? We were always the reward for your labours, Tommy; your books are move one in the game of making love to us; don't be afraid that we shall forget it is a game; we know it is, and that is why we suit you. Come and play in London as you used to play in the Den. It is all you need of women; come and have your fill, and we shall send you back refreshed. We are not asking you to be disloyal to her, only to leave her happy and contented and take a holiday."

He heard their seductive voices. They danced around him in numbers, for they knew that the more there were of them the better he would be pleased; they whispered in his ear and then ran away looking over their shoulders. But he would not budge.

THE LITTLE GODS RETURN

There was one more dangerous than the rest. Her he saw before the others came and after they had gone. She was a tall, incredibly slight woman, with eyelashes that needed help, and a most disdainful mouth and nose, and she seemed to look scornfully at Tommy and then stand waiting. He was in two minds about what she was waiting for, and often he had a fierce desire to go to London to find out. But he never went. He played the lover to Grizel as before — not to intoxicate himself, but always to make life sunnier to her; if she stayed longer with Elspeth than the promised time, he became anxious and went in search of her. “I have not been away an hour!” she said, laughing at him, holding little Jean up to laugh at him. “But I cannot do without you for an hour,” he answered ardently. He still laid down his pen to gaze with rapture at her and cry, “My wife!”

She wanted him to go to London for a change, and without her, and his heart leaped into his mouth to prevent his saying No; yet he said it, though in the Tommy way.

“Without you!” he exclaimed. “Oh, Grizel, do you think I could find happiness apart from you for a day? And could you let me go?” And he looked with agonized reproach at her, and sat down, clutching his head.

“It would be very hard to me,” she said softly; “but if the change did you good ——”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

“A change from you! Oh, Grizel, Grizel!”

“Or I could go with you?”

“When you don't want to go!” he cried huskily. “You think I could ask it of you!”

He quite broke down, and she had to comfort him. She was smiling divinely at him all the time, as if sympathy had brought her to love even the Tommy way of saying things. “I thought it would be sweet to you to see how great my faith in you is now,” she said.

This was the true reason why generous Grizel had proposed to him to go. She knew he was more afraid than she of Sentimental Tommy, and she thought her faith would be a helping hand to him, as it was.

He had no regard for Lady Pippinworth. Of all the women he had dallied with, she was the one he liked the least, for he never liked where he could not esteem. Perhaps she had some good in her, but the good in her had never appealed to him, and he knew it, and refused to harbour her in his thoughts now; he cast her out determinedly when she seemed to enter them unbidden. But still he was vain. She came disdainfully and stood waiting. We have seen him wondering what she waited for; but though he could not be sure, and so was drawn to her, he took it as acknowledgment of his prowess and so was helped to run away.

To walk away would be the more exact term,

THE LITTLE GODS RETURN

for his favourite method of exorcising this lady was to rise from his chair and take a long walk with Grizel. Occasionally if she was occupied (and a number of duties our busy Grizel found to hand!) he walked alone, and he would not let himself brood. Someone had once walked from Thrums to the top of the Law and back in three hours, and Tommy made several gamesome attempts to beat the record, setting out to escape that willowy woman, soon walking her down and returning in a glow of animal spirits. It was on one of these occasions, when there was nothing in his head but ambition to do the fifth mile within the eleven minutes, that he suddenly met her Ladyship face to face.

We have now come to the last fortnight of Tommy's life.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

THE moment for which he had tried to prepare himself was come, and Tommy gulped down his courage, which had risen suddenly to his mouth, leaving his chest in a panic. Outwardly he seemed unmoved, but within he was beating to arms. "This is the test of us!" all that was good in him cried as it answered his summons.

They began by shaking hands, as is always the custom in the ring. Then, without any preliminary sparring, Lady Pippinworth immediately knocked him down; that is to say, she remarked, with a little laugh: "How very stout you are getting!"

I swear by all the gods that it was untrue. He had not got very stout, though undeniably he had got stouter. "How well you are looking!" would have been a very ladylike way of saying it, but his girth was best not referred to at all. Those who liked him had learned this long ago, and Grizel always shifted the buttons without comment.

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

Her malicious Ladyship had found his one weak spot at once. He had a reply ready for every other opening in the English tongue, but now he could writhe only.

Who would have expected to meet her here? he said at last feebly. She explained, and he had guessed it already, that she was again staying with the Rintouls; the castle, indeed, was not half a mile from where they stood.

“But I think I really came to see you,” she informed him, with engaging frankness.

It was very good of her, he intimated stiffly; but the stiffness was chiefly because she was still looking in an irritating way at his waist.

Suddenly she looked up. To Tommy it was as if she had raised the siege. “Why aren’t you nice to me?” she asked prettily.

“I want to be,” he replied.

She showed him a way. “When I saw you steaming towards the castle so swiftly,” she said, dropping badinage, “the hope entered my head that you had heard of my arrival.”

She had come a step nearer, and it was like an invitation to return to the harbour. “This is the test of us!” all that was good in Tommy cried once more to him.

“No, I had not heard,” he replied, bravely if baldly. “I was taking a smart walk only.”

“Why so smart as that?”

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

He hesitated, and her eyes left his face and travelled downward.

“Were you trying to walk it off?” she asked sympathetically.

He was stung, and replied in words that were regretted as soon as spoken: “I was trying to walk you off.”

A smile of satisfaction crossed her impudent face.

“I succeeded,” he added sharply.

“How cruel of you to say so, when you had made me so very happy! Do you often take smart walks, Mr. Sandys?”

“Often.”

“And always with me?”

“I leave you behind.”

“With Mrs. Sandys?”

Had she seemed to be in the least affected by their meeting it would have been easy to him to be a contrite man at once; any sign of shame on her part would have filled him with desire to take all the blame upon himself. Had she cut him dead, he would have begun to respect her. But she smiled disdainfully only, and stood waiting. She was still, as ever, a cold passion, inviting his warm ones to leap at it. He shuddered a little, but controlled himself and did not answer her.

“I suppose she is the lady of the arbour?” Lady Pippinworth inquired, with mild interest.

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

"She is the lady of my heart," Tommy replied valiantly.

"Alas!" said Lady Pippinworth, putting her hand over her own.

But he felt himself more secure now, and could even smile at the woman for thinking she was able to provoke him.

"Look upon me," she requested, "as a deputation sent north to discover why you have gone into hiding."

"I suppose a country life does seem exile to you," he replied calmly, and suddenly his bosom rose with pride in what was coming. Tommy always heard his finest things coming a moment before they came. "If I have retired," he went on windily, "from the insincerities and glitter of life in town," — but it was not his face she was looking at, it was his waist, — "the reason is obvious," he rapped out.

She nodded assent without raising her eyes.

Yet he still controlled himself. His waist, like some fair tortured lady of romance, was calling to his knighthood for defence, but with the truer courage he affected not to hear. "I am in hiding, as you call it," he said doggedly, "because my life here is such a round of happiness as I never hoped to find on earth, and I owe it all to my wife. If you don't believe me, ask Lord or Lady

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

Rintoul, or any other person in this countryside who knows her."

But her Ladyship had already asked, and been annoyed by the answer.

She assured Tommy that she believed he was happy. "I have often heard," she said musingly, "that the stout people are the happiest."

"I am not so stout," he barked.

"Now I call that brave of you," said she, admiringly. "That is so much the wisest way to take it. And I am sure you are right not to return to town after what you were; it would be a pity. Somehow it"—and again her eyes were on the wrong place—"it does not seem to go with the books. And yet," she said philosophically, "I daresay you feel just the same?"

"I feel very much the same," he replied warningly.

"That is the tragedy of it," said she.

She told him that the new book had brought the Tommy Society to life again. "And it could not hold its meetings with the old enthusiasm, could it," she asked sweetly, "if you came back? Oh, I think you act most judiciously. Fancy how melancholy if they had to announce that the society had been wound up, owing to the stoutness of the Master."

Tommy's mouth opened twice before any words could come out. "Take care!" he cried.

"Of what?" said she, curling her lip.

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

He begged her pardon. "You don't like me, Lady Pippinworth," he said, watching himself, "and I don't wonder at it; and you have discovered a way of hurting me of which you make rather unmerciful use. Well, I don't wonder at that, either. If I am — stoutish, I have at least the satisfaction of knowing that it gives you entertainment, and I owe you that amend and more." He was really in a fury, and burning to go on — "For I did have the whip-hand of you once, madam," etc., etc.; but by a fine effort he held his rage a prisoner, and the admiration of himself that this engendered lifted him into the sublime.

"For I so far forgot myself," said Tommy, in a glow, "as to try to make you love me. You were beautiful and cold; no man had ever stirred you; my one excuse is that to be loved by such as you was no small ambition; my fitting punishment is that I failed." He knew he had not failed, and so could be magnanimous. "I failed utterly," he said, with grandeur. "You were laughing at me all the time; if proof of it were needed, you have given it now by coming here to mock me. I thought I was stronger than you, but I was ludicrously mistaken, and you taught me a lesson I richly deserved; you did me good, and I thank you for it. Believe me, Lady Pippinworth, when I say that I admit my discomfiture, and remain your very humble and humbled servant."

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

Now was not that good of Tommy? You would think it still better were I to tell you what part of his person she was looking at while he said it.

He held out his hand generously (there was no noble act he could not have performed for her just now), but, whatever her Ladyship wanted, it was not to say good-bye. "Do you mean that you never cared for me?" she asked, with the tremor that always made Tommy kind.

"Never cared for you!" he exclaimed fervently. "What were you not to me in those golden days!" It was really a magnanimous cry, meant to help her self-respect, nothing more; but it alarmed the good in him, and he said sternly: "But of course that is all over now. It is only a sweet memory," he added, to make these two remarks mix.

The sentiment of this was so agreeable to him that he was half thinking of raising her hand chivalrously to his lips when Lady Pippinworth said:

"But if it is all over now, why have you still to walk me off?"

"Have you never had to walk me off?" said Tommy, forgetting himself, and, to his surprise, she answered, "Yes."

"But this meeting has cured me," she said, with dangerous graciousness.

"Dear Lady Pippinworth," replied Tommy, ar-

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

dently, thinking that his generosity had touched her, "if anything I have said ——"

"It is not so much what you have said," she answered, and again she looked at the wrong part of him.

He gave way in the waist, and then drew himself up. "If so little a thing as that helps you ——" he began haughtily.

"Little!" she cried reproachfully.

He tried to go away. He turned. "There was a time," he thundered.

"It is over," said she.

"When you were at my feet," said Tommy.

"It is over," she said.

"It could come again!"

She laughed a contemptuous No.

"Yes!" Tommy cried.

"Too stout," said she, with a drawl.

He went closer to her. She stood waiting disdainfully, and his arms fell.

"Too stout," she repeated.

"Let us put it in that way, since it pleases you," said Tommy, heavily. "I am too stout." He could not help adding, "And be thankful, Lady Pippinworth, let us both be thankful, that there is some reason to prevent my trying."

She bowed mockingly as he raised his hat. "I wish you well," he said, "and these are my last words to you"; and he retired, not without distinc-

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

tion. He retired, shall we say, as conscious of his waist as if it were some poor soldier he was supporting from a stricken field. He said many things to himself on the way home, and he was many Tommies, but all with the same waist. It intruded on his noblest reflections, and kept ringing up the worst in him like some devil at the telephone.

No one could have been more thankful that on the whole he had kept his passions in check. It made a strong man of him. It turned him into a joyous boy, and he tingled with hurrahs. Then suddenly he would hear that jeering bell clanging, "Too stout, too stout." "Take care!" he roared. Oh, the vanity of Tommy!

He did not tell Grizel that he had met her Ladyship. All she knew was that he came back to her more tender and kind, if that were possible, than he had gone away. His eyes followed her about the room until she made merry over it, and still they dwelt upon her. "How much more beautiful you are than any other woman I ever saw, Grizel!" he said. And it was not only true, but he knew it was true. What was Lady Pippinworth beside this glorious woman? what was her damnable coldness compared to the love of Grizel? Was he unforgivable, or was it some flaw in the making of him for which he was not responsible? With clenched hands he asked himself these questions. This love that all his books were about —

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

what was it? Was it a compromise between affection and passion countenanced by God for the continuance of the race, made beautiful by Him where the ingredients are in right proportion, a flower springing from a soil that is not all divine? Oh, so exquisite a flower! he cried, for he knew his Grizel. But he could not love her. He gave her all his affection, but his passion, like an outlaw, had ever to hunt alone.

Was it that? And if it was, did there remain in him enough of humanity to give him the right to ask a little sympathy of those who can love? So Tommy in his despairing moods, and the question ought to find some place in his epitaph, which, by the way, it is almost time to write.

On the day following his meeting with Lady Pippinworth came a note from Lady Rintoul inviting Grizel and him to lunch. They had been to Rintoul once or twice before, but this time Tommy said decisively, "We sha'n't go." He guessed who had prompted the invitation, though her name was not mentioned in it.

"Why not?" Grizel asked. She was always afraid that she kept Tommy too much to herself.

"Because I object to being disturbed during the honeymoon," he replied lightly. Their honeymoon, you know, was never to end. "They would separate us for hours, Grizel. Think of it! But, pooh! the thing is not to be thought of.

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

Tell her Ladyship courteously that she must be mad."

But though he could speak thus to Grizel, there came to him tempestuous desires to be by the side of the woman who could mock him and then stand waiting.

Had she shown any fear of him all would have been well with Tommy; he could have kept away from her complacently. But she had flung down the glove, and laughed to see him edge away from it. He knew exactly what was in her mind. He was too clever not to know that her one desire was to make him a miserable man; to remember how he had subdued and left her would be gall to Lady Pippinworth until she achieved the same triumph over him. How confident she was that he could never prove the stronger of the two again! What were all her mockings but a beckoning to him to come on? "Take care!" said Tommy between his teeth.

And then again horror of himself would come to his rescue. The man he had been a moment ago was vile to him, and all his thoughts were now heroic. You may remember that he had once taken Grizel to a seaside place; they went there again. It was Tommy's proposal, but he did not go to flee from temptation; however his worse nature had been stirred and his vanity pricked, he was too determinedly Grizel's to fear that in any

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

fierce hour he might rush into danger. He wanted Grizel to come away from the place where she always found so much to do for him, so that there might be the more for him to do for her. And that week was as the time they had spent there before. All that devotion which had to be planned could do for woman he did. Grizel saw him planning it and never admitted that she saw. In the after years it was sweet to her to recall that week and the hundred laboriously lover-like things Tommy had done in it. She knew by this time that Tommy had never tried to make her love him, and that it was only when her love for him revealed itself in the Den that desire to save her pride made him pretend to be in love with her. This knowledge would have been a great pain to her once, but now it had more of pleasure in it, for it showed that even in those days he had struggled a little for her.

We must hasten to the end. Those of you who took in the newspapers a quarter of a century ago know what it was, but none of you know why he climbed the wall.

They returned to Thrums in a week. They had meant to stay longer, but suddenly Tommy wanted to go back. Yes, it was Lady Pippinworth who recalled him, but don't think too meanly of Tommy. It was not that he yielded to one of those fierce desires to lift the gauntlet;

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

he had got rid of them in fair fight when her letter reached him, forwarded from Thrums. "Did you really think your manuscript was lost?" it said. That was what took Tommy back. Grizel did not know the reason; he gave her another. He thought very little about her that day. He thought still less about Lady Pippinworth. How could he think of anything but it? She had it, evidently she had it; she must have stolen it from his bag. He could not even spare time to denounce her. It was alive—his manuscript was alive, and every moment brought him nearer to it. He was a miser, and soon his hands would be deep among the gold. He was a mother whose son, mourned for dead, is knocking at the door. He was a swain, and his beloved's arms were outstretched to him. Who said that Tommy could not love?

The ecstasies that came over him and would not let him sit still made Grizel wonder. "Is it a book?" she asked; and he said it was a book—such a book, Grizel! When he started for the castle next morning, she thought he wanted to be alone to think of the book. "Of it and you," he said; and having started, he came back to kiss her again; he never forgot to have an impulse to do that. But all the way to the Spittal it was of his book he thought, it was his book he was kissing. His heart sang within him, and the songs were sonnets

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

to his beloved. To be worthy of his beautiful manuscript — he prayed for that as lovers do; that his love should be his, his alone, was as wondrous to him as to any of them.

But we are not noticing what proved to be the chief thing. Though there was some sun, the air was shrewd, and he was wearing the old doctor's coat. Should you have taken it with you, Tommy? It loved Grizel, for it was a bit of him; and what, think you, would the old doctor have cared for your manuscript had he known that you were gone out to meet that woman? It was cruel, no, not cruel, but thoughtless, to wear the old doctor's coat.

He found no one at the Spittal. The men were out shooting, and the ladies had followed to lunch with them on the moors. He came upon them, a gay party, in the hollow of a hill where was a spring suddenly converted into a wine-cellar; and soon the men, if not the ladies, were surprised to find that Tommy could be the gayest of them all. He was in hilarious spirits, and had a gallantly forgiving glance for the only one of them who knew why his spirits were hilarious. But he would not consent to remain to dinner. "The wretch is so hopelessly in love with his wife," Lady Rintoul said, flinging a twig of heather at him. It was one of the many trivial things said on that occasion and long remembered; the only person who after-

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

wards professed her inability to remember what Tommy said to her that day, and she to him, was Lady Pippinworth. "And yet you walked back to the castle with him," they reminded her.

"If I had known that anything was to happen," she replied indolently, "I should have taken more note of what was said. But as it was, I think we talked of our chance of finding white heather. We were looking for it, and that is why we fell behind you."

That was not why Tommy and her Ladyship fell behind the others, and it was not of white heather that they talked. "You know why I am here, Alice," he said, as soon as there was no one but her to hear him.

She was in as great tension at that moment as he, but more anxious not to show it. "Why do you call me that?" she replied, with a little laugh.

"Because I want you to know at once," he said, and it was the truth, "that I have no vindictive feelings. You have kept my manuscript from me all this time, but, severe though the punishment has been, I deserved it, yes, every day of it."

Lady Pippinworth smiled.

"You took it from my bag, did you not?" said Tommy.

"Yes."

"Where is it, Alice? Have you got it here?"

"No."

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

“But you know where it is?”

“Oh, yes,” she said graciously, and then it seemed that nothing could ever disturb him again. She enjoyed his boyish glee; she walked by his side listening airily to it.

“Had there been a fire in the room that day I should have burned the thing,” she said without emotion.

“It would have been no more than my deserts,” Tommy replied cheerfully.

“I did burn it three months afterwards,” said she, calmly.

He stopped, but she walked on. He sprang after her. “You don’t mean that, Alice!”

“I do mean it.”

With a gesture fierce and yet imploring, he compelled her to stop. “Before God, is this true?” he cried.

“Yes,” she said, “it is true”; and, indeed, it was the truth about his manuscript at last.

“But you had a copy of it made first. Say you had!”

“I had not.”

She seemed to have no fear of him, though his face was rather terrible. “I meant to destroy it from the first,” she said coldly, “but I was afraid to. I took it back with me to London. One day I read in a paper that your wife was supposed to have burned it while she was insane. She was

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

insane, was she not? Ah, well, that is not my affair; but I burned it for her that afternoon."

They were moving on again. He stopped her once more.

"Why have you told me this?" he cried. "Was it not enough for you that I should think she did it?"

"No," Lady Pippinworth answered, "that was not enough for me. I always wanted you to know that I had done it."

"And you wrote that letter, you filled me with joy, so that you should gloat over my disappointment?"

"Horrid of me, was it not!" said she.

"Why did you not tell me when we met the other day?"

"I bided my time, as the tragedians say."

"You would not have told me," Tommy said, staring into her face, "if you had thought I cared for you. Had you thought I cared for you a little jot ——"

"I should have waited," she confessed, "until you cared for me a great deal, and then I should have told you. That, I admit, was my intention."

She had returned his gaze smilingly, and as she strolled on she gave him another smile over her shoulder; it became a protesting pout almost when she saw that he was not accompanying her.

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

Tommy stood still for some minutes, his hands, his teeth, every bit of him that could close, tight clenched. When he made up on her, the devil was in him. She had been gathering a nosegay of wild flowers. "Pretty, are they not?" she said to him. He took hold of her harshly by both wrists. She let him do it, and stood waiting disdainfully; but she was less unprepared for a blow than for what came.

"How you love me, Alice!" he said in a voice shaking with passion.

"How I have proved it!" she replied promptly.

"Love or hate," he went on in a torrent of words, "they are the same thing with you. I don't care what you call it; it has made you come back to me. You tried hard to stay away. How you fought, Alice! but you had to come. I knew you would come. All this time you have been longing for me to go to you. You have stamped your pretty feet because I did not go. You have cried, 'He shall come!' You have vowed you would not go one step of the way to meet me. I saw you, I heard you, and I wanted you as much as you wanted me; but I was always the stronger, and I could resist. It is I who have not gone a step towards you, and it is my proud little Alice who has come all the way. Proud little Alice!—but she is to be my obedient little Alice now."

His passion hurled him along, and it had its

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

effect on her. She might curl her mouth as she chose, but her bosom rose and fell.

“Obedient?” she cried, with a laugh.

“Obedient!” said Tommy, quivering with his intensity. “Obedient, not because I want it, for I prefer you as you are, but because you are longing for it, my lady — because it is what you came here for. You have been a virago only because you feared you were not to get it. Why have you grown so quiet, Alice? Where are the words you want to torment me with? Say them! I love to hear them from your lips. I love the demon in you — the demon that burned my book. I love you the more for that. It was your love that made you do it. Why don’t you scratch and struggle for the last time? I am half sorry that little Alice is to scratch and struggle no more.”

“Go on,” said little Alice; “you talk beautifully.” But though her tongue could mock him, all the rest of her was enchained.

“Whether I shall love you when you are tamed,” he went on with vehemence, “I don’t know. You must take the risk of that. But I love you now. We were made for one another, you and I, and I love you, Alice — I love you and you love me. You love me, my peerless Alice, don’t you? Say you love me. Your melting eyes are saying it. How you tremble, sweet Alice! Is that your way of saying it? I want to hear you say it. You

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

have been longing to say it for two years. Come, love, say it now!"

It was not within this woman's power to resist him. She tried to draw away from him, but could not. She was breathing quickly. The mocking light quivered on her face only because it had been there so long. If it went out she would be helpless. He put his hands on her shoulders, and she was helpless. It brought her mouth nearer his. She was offering him her mouth.

"No," said Tommy, masterfully. "I won't kiss you until you say it."

If there had not been a look of triumph in his eyes, she would have said it. As it was, she broke from him, panting. She laughed next minute, and with that laugh his power fell among the heather.

"Really," said Lady Pippinworth, "you are much too stout for this kind of thing." She looked him up and down with a comic sigh. "You talk as well as ever," she said condolingly, "but heigh-ho, you don't look the same. I have done the best I could for you for the sake of old times, but I forgot to shut my eyes. Shall we go on?"

And they went on silently, one of them very white. "I believe you are blaming me," her Ladyship said, making a face, just before they overtook the others, "when you know it was your own fault

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

for"—she suddenly rippled—"for not waiting until it was too dark for me to see you!"

They strolled with some others of the party to the flower-garden, which was some distance from the house, and surrounded by a high wall studded with iron spikes and glass. Lady Rintoul cut him some flowers for Grizel, but he left them on a garden-seat—accidentally, everyone thought afterwards in the drawing-room when they were missed; but he had laid them down, because how could those degraded hands of his carry flowers again to Grizel? There was great remorse in him, but there was a shrieking vanity also, and though the one told him to be gone, the other kept him lagging on. They had torn him a dozen times from each other's arms before he was man enough to go.

It was gloaming when he set off, waving his hat to those who had come to the door with him. Lady Pippinworth was not among them; he had not seen her to bid her good-bye, nor wanted to, for the better side of him had prevailed—so he thought. It was a man shame-stricken and determined to kill the devil in him that went down that long avenue—so he thought.

A tall, thin woman was standing some twenty yards off, among some holly-trees. She kissed her hand mockingly to him, and beckoned and laughed when he stood irresolute. He thought he heard her cry, "Too stout!" He took some fierce steps

A WAY IS FOUND FOR TOMMY

towards her. She ran on, looking over her shoulder, and he forgot all else and followed her. She darted into the flower-garden, pulling the gate to after her. It was a gate that locked when it closed, and the key was gone. Lady Pippinworth clapped her hands because he could not reach her. When she saw that he was climbing the wall she ran farther into the garden.

He climbed the wall, but, as he was descending, one of the iron spikes on the top of it pierced his coat, which was buttoned to the throat, and he hung there by the neck. He struggled as he choked, but he could not help himself. He was unable to cry out. The collar of the old doctor's coat held him fast.

They say that in such a moment a man reviews all his past life. I don't know whether Tommy did that; but his last reflection before he passed into unconsciousness was "Serves me right!" Perhaps it was only a little bit of sentiment for the end.

Lady Disdain came back to the gate, by and by, to see why he had not followed her. She screamed and then hid in the recesses of the garden. He had been dead for some time when they found him. They left the gate creaking in the evening wind. After a long time a terrified woman stole out by it.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE PERFECT LOVER

TOMMY has not lasted. More than once since it became known that I was writing his life I have been asked whether there ever really was such a person, and I am afraid to inquire for his books at the library lest they are no longer there. A recent project to bring out a new edition, with introductions by some other Tommy, received so little support that it fell to the ground. It must be admitted that, so far as the great public is concerned, Thomas Sandys is done for.

They have even forgotten the manner of his death, though probably no young writer with an eye on posterity ever had a better send-off. We really thought at the time that Tommy had found a way.

The surmise at Rintoul, immediately accepted by the world as a fact, was that he had been climbing the wall to obtain for Grizel the flowers accidentally left in the garden, and it at once tipped the tragedy with gold. The newspapers, which were in the middle of the dull season, thanked

THE PERFECT LOVER

their gods for Tommy, and enthusiastically set to work on him. Great minds wrote criticisms of what they called his life-work. The many persons who had been the first to discover him said so again. His friends were in demand for the most trivial reminiscences. Unhappy Pym cleared £11 10s.

Shall we quote? It is nearly always done at this stage of the biography, so now for the testimonials to prove that our hero was without a flaw. A few specimens will suffice if we select some that are very like many of the others. It keeps Grizel waiting, but Tommy, as you have seen, was always the great one; she existed only that he might show how great he was. "Busy among us of late," says one, "has been the grim visitor who knocks with equal confidence at the doors of the gifted and the ungifted, the pauper and the prince, and twice in one short month has he taken from us men of an eminence greater perhaps than that of Mr. Sandys; but of them it could be said their work was finished, while his sun sinks tragically when it is yet day. Not by what his riper years might have achieved can this pure spirit now be judged, and to us, we confess, there is something infinitely pathetic in that thought. We would fain shut our eyes, and open them again at twenty years hence, with Mr. Sandys in the fulness of his powers. It is not to be. What he might have become is hidden

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

from us; what he was we know. He was little more than a stripling when he ‘burst upon the town’ to be its marvel—and to die; a ‘marvellous boy’ indeed; yet how unlike in character and in the nobility of his short life, as in the mournful yet lovely circumstances of his death, to that other **Might-Have-Been** who ‘perished in his pride.’ Our young men of letters have travelled far since the days of Chatterton. Time was when a riotous life was considered part of their calling—when they shunned the domestic ties and actually held that the consummate artist is able to love nothing but the creations of his fancy. It is such men as **Thomas Sandys** who have exploded that pernicious fallacy. . . .

“Whether his name will march down the ages is not for us, his contemporaries, to determine. He had the most modest opinion of his own work, and was humbled rather than elated when he heard it praised. No one ever loved praise less; to be pointed at as a man of distinction was abhorrent to his shrinking nature; he seldom, indeed, knew that he was being pointed at, for his eyes were ever on the ground. He set no great store by the remarkable popularity of his works. ‘Nothing,’ he has been heard to say to one of those gushing ladies who were his aversion, ‘nothing will so certainly perish as the talk of the town.’ It may be so, but if so, the greater the pity that he has gone

THE PERFECT LOVER

from among us before he had time to put the coping-stone upon his work. There is a beautiful passage in one of his own books in which he sees the spirits of gallant youth who died too young for immortality haunting the portals of the Elysian Fields, and the great shades come to the portal and talk with them. We venture to say that he is at least one of these."

What was the individuality behind the work? They discussed it in leading articles and in the correspondence columns, and the man proved to be greater than his books. His distaste for admiration is again and again insisted on and illustrated by many characteristic anecdotes. He owed much to his parents, though he had the misfortune to lose them when he was but a child. "Little is known of his father, but we understand that he was a retired military officer in easy circumstances. The mother was a canny Scotchwoman of lowly birth, conspicuous for her devoutness even in a land where it is everyone's birthright, and on their marriage, which was a singularly happy one, they settled in London, going little into society, the world forgetting, by the world forgot, and devoting themselves to each other and to their two children. Of these Thomas was the elder, and as the twig was early bent so did the tree incline. From his earliest years he was noted for the modesty which those who remember his boyhood in Scotland

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

(whither the children went to an uncle on the death of their parents) still speak of with glistening eyes. In another column will be found some interesting recollections of Mr. Sandys by his old schoolmaster, Mr. David Cathro, M.A., who testifies with natural pride to the industry and amiability of his famous pupil. 'To know him,' says Mr. Cathro, 'was to love him.'"

According to another authority, T. Sandys got his early modesty from his father, who was of a very sweet disposition, and some instances of this modesty are given. They are all things that Elspeth did, but Tommy is now represented as the person who had done them. "On the other hand, his strong will, singleness of purpose, and enviable capacity for knowing what he wanted to be at were a heritage from his practical and sagacious mother." "I think he was a little proud of his strength of will," writes the R.A. who painted his portrait (now in America), "for I remember his anxiety that it should be suggested in the picture." But another acquaintance (a lady) replies: "He was not proud of his strong will, but he liked to hear it spoken of, and he once told me the reason. This strength of will was not, as is generally supposed, inherited by him; he was born without it, and acquired it by a tremendous effort. I believe I am the only person to whom he confided this, for he shrank from talk about himself, looking upon

THE PERFECT LOVER

it as a form of that sentimentality which his soul abhorred."

He seems often to have warned ladies against this essentially womanish tendency to the sentimental. "It is an odious onion, dear lady," he would say, holding both her hands in his. If men in his presence talked sentimentally to ladies he was so irritated that he soon found a pretext for leaving the room. "Yet let it not be thought," says One Who Knew Him Well, "that because he was so sternly practical himself he was intolerant of the outpourings of the sentimental. The man, in short, reflected the views on this subject which are so admirably phrased in his books, works that seem to me to found one of their chief claims to distinction on this, that at last we have a writer who can treat intimately of human love without leaving one smear of the onion upon his pages."

On the whole, it may be noticed, comparatively few ladies contribute to the obituary reflections, "for the simple reason," says a simple man, "that he went but little into female society. He who could write so eloquently about women never seemed to know what to say to them. Ordinary tittle-tattle from them disappointed him. I should say that to him there was so much of the divine in women that he was depressed when they hid their wings." This view is supported by Clubman, who notes that Tommy would never join in the somewhat

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

free talk about the other sex in which many men indulge. "I remember," he says, "a man's dinner at which two of those present, both persons of eminence, started a theory that every man who is blessed or cursed with the artistic instinct has at some period of his life wanted to marry a barmaid. Mr. Sandys gave them such a look that they at once apologized. Trivial, perhaps, but significant. On another occasion I was in a club smoking-room when the talk was of a similar kind. Mr. Sandys was not present. A member said, with a laugh, 'I wonder for how long men can be together without talking gamesomely of women?' Before any answer could be given Mr. Sandys strolled in, and immediately the atmosphere cleared, as if someone had opened the windows. When he had gone the member addressed turned to him who had propounded the problem and said, 'There is your answer — as long as Sandys is in the room.'"

"A fitting epitaph, this, for Thomas Sandys," says the paper that quotes it, "if we could not find a better. Mr. Sandys was from first to last a man of character, but why when others falter was he always so sure-footed? It is in the answer to this question that we find the key to the books, and to the man who was greater than the books. He was the Perfect Lover. As he died seeking flowers for her who had the high honour to be his wife, so he had always lived. He gave his affection to her, as

THE PERFECT LOVER

our correspondent Miss (or Mrs.) Ailie McLean shows, in his earliest boyhood, and from this, his one romance, he never swerved. To the moment of his death all his beautiful thoughts were flowers plucked for her; his books were bunches of them gathered to place at her feet. No harm now in reading between the lines of his books and culling what is the common knowledge of his friends in the north, that he had to serve a long apprenticeship before he won her. For long his attachment was unreciprocated, though she was ever his loyal friend, and the volume called 'Unrequited Love' belongs to the period when he thought his life must be lived alone. The circumstances of their marriage are at once too beautiful and too painful to be dwelt on here. Enough to say that, should the particulars ever be given to the world, with the simple story of his life, a finer memorial will have been raised to him than anything in stone, such as we see a committee is already being formed to erect. We venture to propose as a title for his biography, 'The Story of the Perfect Lover.'"

Yes, that memorial committee was formed; but so soon do people forget the hero of yesterday's paper that only the secretary attended the first meeting, and he never called another. But here, five and twenty years later, is the biography, with the title changed. You may wonder that I had the heart to write it. I do it, I have some-

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

times pretended to myself, that we may all laugh at the stripling of a rogue, but that was never my reason. Have I been too cunning, or have you seen through me all the time? Have you discovered that I was really pitying the boy who was so fond of boyhood that he could not with years become a man, telling nothing about him that was not true, but doing it with unnecessary scorn in the hope that I might goad you into crying: "Come, come, you are too hard on him!"

Perhaps the manner in which he went to his death deprives him of these words. Had the castle gone on fire that day while he was at tea, and he perished in the flames in a splendid attempt to save the life of his enemy (a very probable thing), then you might have felt a little liking for him. Yet he would have been precisely the same person. I don't blame you, but you are a Tommy.

Grizel knew how he died. She found Lady Pippinworth's letter to him, and understood who the woman was; but it was only in hopes of obtaining the lost manuscript that she went to see her. Then Lady Pippinworth told her all. Are you sorry that Grizel knew? I am not sorry — I am glad. As a child, as a girl, and as a wife, the truth had been all she wanted, and she wanted it just the same when she was a widow. We have a right to know the truth; no right to ask anything else from God, but the right to ask that.

THE PERFECT LOVER

And to her latest breath she went on loving Tommy just the same. She thought everything out calmly for herself; she saw that there is no great man on this earth except the man who conquers self, and that in some the accursed thing which is in all of us may be so strong that to battle with it and be beaten is not altogether to fail. It is foolish to demand complete success of those we want to love. We should rejoice when they rise for a moment above themselves, and sympathize with them when they fall. In their heyday young lovers think each other perfect; but a nobler love comes when they see the failings also, and this higher love is so much more worth attaining to that they need not cry out though it has to be beaten into them with rods. So they learn humanity's limitations, and that the accursed thing to me is not the accursed thing to you; but all have it, and from this comes pity for those who have sinned, and the desire to help each other springs, for knowledge is sympathy, and sympathy is love, and to learn it the Son of God became a man.

And Grizel also thought anxiously about herself, and how from the time when she was the smallest girl she had longed to be a good woman and feared that perhaps she never should. And as she looked back at the road she had travelled, there came along it the little girl to judge her. She

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

came trembling, but determined to know the truth, and she looked at Grizel until she saw into her soul, and then she smiled, well pleased.

Grizel lived on at Double Dykes, helping David in the old way. She was too strong and fine a nature to succumb. Even her brightness came back to her. They sometimes wondered at the serenity of her face. Some still thought her a little stand-offish, for, though the pride had gone from her walk, a distinction of manner grew upon her and made her seem a finer lady than before. There was no other noticeable change, except that with the years she lost her beautiful contours and became a little angular — the old maid's figure, I believe it is sometimes called.

No one would have dared to smile at Grizel become an old maid before some of the young men of Thrums. They were people who would have suffered much for her, and all because she had the courage to talk to them of some things before their marriage-day came round. And for their young wives who had tidings to whisper to her about the unborn she had the pretty idea that they should live with beautiful thoughts, so that these might become part of the child.

When Gavinia told this to Corp, he gulped and said, "I wonder God could hae haen the heart."

"Life's a queerer thing," Gavinia replied, sadly

THE PERFECT LOVER

enough, "than we used to think it when we was bairns in the Den."

He spoke of it to Grizel. She let Corp speak of anything to her because he was so loyal to Tommy.

"You've given away a' your bonny things, Grizel," he said, "one by one, and this notion is the bonniest o' them a'. I'm thinking that when it cam' into your head you meant it for yoursel'."

Grizel smiled at him.

"I mind," Corp went on, "how when you was little you couldna see a bairn without rocking your arms in a waeful kind o' a way, and we could never thole the meaning o't. It just comes over me this minute as it meant that when you was a woman you would like terrible to hae bairns o' your ain, and you doubted you never should."

She raised her hand to stop him. "You see, I was not meant to have them, Corp," she said. "I think that when women are too fond of other people's babies they never have any of their own."

But Corp shook his head. "I dinna understand it," he told her, "but I'm sure you was meant to hae them. Something's gane wrang."

She was still smiling at him, but her eyes were wet now, and she drew him on to talk of the days when Tommy was a boy. It was sweet to Grizel to listen while Elspeth and David told her of the thousand things Tommy had done for her when

TOMMY AND GRIZEL

she was ill, but she loved best to talk with Corp of the time when they were all children in the Den. The days of childhood are the best.

She lived so long after Tommy that she was almost a middle-aged woman when she died.

And so the Painted Lady's daughter has found a way of making Tommy's life the story of a perfect lover, after all. The little girl she had been comes stealing back into the book and rocks her arms joyfully, and we see Grizel's crooked smile for the last time.



