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TRANSMIGRATION.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

AUTHOR OF

"MARQUIS AND MERCHANT,"

&c. &c.

> "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
> The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar."
>
> WORDSWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

ELIZABETH,

MARCHIONESS OF WESTMINSTER,

WHOM ALL WHO DESIRE

"THE PRESERVATION OF OUR RELIGION AND OUR LOYALTY

TO OUR QUEEN"

MUST HONOUR FOR HER COURAGE IN THEIR DEFENCE.

INTRODUCTION.

WRITERS of what have been called Utopian Romances need not accuse their rivals of plagiary, since they are all treading in the track of giants like Aristophanes and Swift. But it may be well to state that I had not read *The Coming Race* until these volumes were passing through the press, and that I have never seen *Erewhon.*

The idea of an experience of metempsychosis has dwelt in my mind since, walking with one of England's great poets on the terrace of Rydal Mount, in full sight of that "aërial rock" which he loved to greet at morn and leave last at eventide, he answered an inquiry of mine with the immortal words on my title-page.

KNOWL HILL, 1873.

TRANSMIGRATION.

CHAPTER I.

A WIFE ON THE WAYSIDE.

> "Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might:
> 'Whoever loved that loved not at first sight?'"

MY father, Colonel Ellesmere, one of the most brilliant cavalry officers of his day, sold out after the Peace of Paris in 1763, and afterwards passed his time between London and the family seat of his uncle, Sir Ralph, near Rothwell, in Northamptonshire. Sir Ralph, a bachelor, was always fond of him, and made him his heir. As I was not born till 1780—the memorable year of Lord George Gordon's riots—I have only traditions of my father's fame. He had been a gallant leader in India and Canada, and became quite a favourite with the young King and the ladies of the Court. The King knighted him; the ladies coquetted with him; he was the most admired dancer at Almacks', which famous assembly was opened in the very year that the King was first suspected of insanity, and that our American colonies resisted the Stamp Act. My father might have made choice between many beauties (so I have been told) in those days when his feats of war were fresh; but he liked better his gay life about town, which was then a brilliant city of manageable size. He wore the finest *Nivernois* hat in St. James's; there used to be a picture of him in the gallery at Ellesmere, *ætat.* 35, his long curls adorned with this toy of the time, a large silver *chou-fleur* set in front. A hideous affair,—but a man of his build could wear it without being very ridiculous.

My father, in the course of a few years, came to live much at Ellesmere, for Sir Ralph's health began to fail, and he wanted the company of his favourite nephew. Sir Arthur came to live permanently in Northamptonshire, the year the great Lord Chatham died; after that time he settled down into a country gentleman, taking (by Sir Ralph's desire) the management of the estate, and setting up a pack of foxhounds.

"When wilt thou marry, Arthur?" Sir Ralph used to say.

I have often heard my father tell the story.

"I can't die happy till I see you with a boy to take the estate."

"I'm an old fogy, sir," my father would say. "I'm forty-five. Where's the lady who will take an old soldier like me, when there are so many gay gallants of the town to be had?"

"Not many like thee!" said the old man. "Why, I'm twice thy age, and could find it in my heart to marry to spite thee."

This friendly after-dinner quarrel between uncle and nephew went on day after day; but nothing came of it till one afternoon, as Sir Arthur was riding home alone from the hunting-field, he met with an adventure. He saw a coach overturned in the miriest lane of the neighbourhood. Those Northamptonshire lanes are knee-deep in slushy mud to this day; what they were in 1778 passes the imagination of man. I don't think the Mount Sorel quarries had been opened; at any rate, their hard stone has not reached the Rothwell vicinage to this day.

My father (how often he told me the story, while my mother's blue eyes filled with tears, though she laughed all the while!) rode up to the overturned travelling chariot, which had four horses, and helped the frightened postilions to extricate the travellers. They were two: a lady not more than sixteen or seventeen, evidently of perfect blood, as indeed of perfect beauty, but with a sad perplexed terrified expression in her eyes; a gentleman, over six feet high, with black hair and eyes, and a coffee-brown complexion, his brow cut by a sabre-slash diagonally. My father recognised him at once as a notorious bully and blackleg of London; Captain Mayo he called himself, but was better known as Bully Mayo. He evidently did not recognise my father.

"Thank you, sir," he said, when my father had got him out—for the fall had regularly doubled him up. "We have had an accident, you see, and I am afraid it will take us some time to get things in order again. I am anxious to make—this lady comfortable."

"There isn't a house of entertainment near," said my father, who saw at once there was something wrong; "but if you like to come on to my house, or rather my uncle's, we can make you pretty comfortable."

"Oh, let us go! Is it far?" said the young lady. "I am *so* tired! Oh! my dear sir, I shall be so thankful for a little rest."

"Can't we get on, postilions?" cried

Bully Mayo, in a surly, vexed voice.

"There's a wheel right off, and a shaft broke, your honour," said one of the men. "I wonder whether there's a blacksmith or a carpenter near."

"Just a mile on, my man, at Rowell," said my father.

"I am afraid we must accept your kind offer of hospitality, sir," said Bully Mayo, with grim reluctance. "To whom am I indebted?"

"I am Sir Arthur Ellesmere," said my father, who all this while was not wasting time, but had seated the lady on his hunter, and prepared to lead her homewards. "We shall be at the gates in five minutes," he continued, "and then," with a gay smile to this distressed damsel, "you will be comfortable."

Sir Ralph, who so loved his nephew that

he was wont to watch for him on hunting afternoons from the library window that looked down the long oak avenue, was rather surprised to see the approaching cavalcade—my father leading his hunter with a lady seated on its splendid loin, and a tall black man stalking stolidly along on the other side. When this procession reached the great hall door, it was at once thrown open, and servants were ready. My father lifted the lady from her horse, and almost carried her up the steps. He declared that he lifted her over the threshold, that being the way to bring luck to a house the first time any lady enters it. The old housekeeper, Mrs. Scott, was in the hall—an ancient personage, whom I used to revere intensely. She had been Sir Ralph's confidential servant for half a century. To her care my father consigned the young lady;

and then showed Bully Mayo into the library, where Sir Ralph was sitting. They were most courteous to each other all this time, but Mayo was evidently puzzled.

Sir Ralph received him with the same courtesy. My father explained in few words what had occurred.

"These are very bad roads," said my great-uncle. "We ought to mend our ways. The least we can do, after leaving our roads in such a state as to upset your equipage, is to offer hospitality until you can proceed."

"Much obliged, I'm sure," said Mayo. "We wanted to get forward on important business."

"Not to get married, I hope," said Sir Ralph, jestingly.

"Not a *second* time," said Mayo, thoughtlessly.

While this brief conversation took place, my father slipped out of the library, caused ample refreshment to be sent in to Mayo, and went in search of Mrs. Scott. The upper staircase was full of excited servant-maids. The first he met told him that the young lady had been ill-used. When he reached the apartment Mrs. Scott had provided for her, he encountered the old housekeeper.

"Oh, dear Sir Arthur," she said, excited beyond what you would imagine possible of an old lady near seventy, "this poor young creature is in such trouble. This wretched man, she never met but once before, has decoyed her away from her aunt's house by Market Harborough, with a letter saying that her father was over at the Duke's, dying, and must see her directly; but she says he has been talking to her in such a dreadful way that she is sure something is wrong, and she was so glad when the coach upset and you came by. She wants to know what she ought to do."

"Who is she, Scott?"

"She's the Lady Amoret Lyle, sir, daughter of Lord Lyle, that used to come to see Sir Ralph years ago."

"We'll take care of her, Scott. She's a pretty little thing. I'll send a man to Boughton, to know if Lord Lyle is there. Cheer her up."

My father had come to a prompt conclusion. He knew Bully Mayo well by repute, and had seen him once or twice. When he descended to the library he found him alone, Sir Ralph having retired. Mayo, happily engaged with a decanter of port-wine, looked at him with a glazed eye, regarding the event with inapprehensive brain.

"You did not offer me your name," said my father; "but are you not Captain Mayo, of the Guards?"

"I am," he said, beginning to see that he must try to be equal to the situation.

"And the lady with you; may I ask who she is?"

"You may *ask*," he said. "She is a lady, that's all."

Mayo stood up, rather unsteadily.

"You were going to Boughton, were you not?"

"Damn it, sir," said Mayo wrathfully, with hand on sword, "how dare you question *me?* Do you call this hospitality? I was thankful for your entertainment—but now you are troublesome. Lend us a carriage for a mile or two, and we'll get away to-night."

"Lady Amoret Lyle is far too ill to leave to-night, Captain Mayo, and will not leave in *your* company at any time."

When Bully Mayo saw that the lady's

name was known he grew desperate and drew his sword.

"O, is that your game?" said my father, one of the finest masters of the rapier in Europe . . . and disarmed him in an instant. Then he touched a bell, and two or three stalwart servant-men came in.

"Take that man," he said, "and duck him in the horsepond. Then turn him outside the gates."

The order was carried out to the letter.

Next morning my father saw Lady Amoret Lyle, and thought her the most perfect creature in the world. She received him in an undress of cashmere and tears. She looked provokingly pretty. Her almost baby face, her blue eyes, her pouting petulant lips, her hair that was neither fair nor dark, her girlish bust and shapely arms, have been well depicted on ivory by a master of miniature. My father fell in love at once. He could not wait to hear anything she had to say. He strode across the room to the beautiful child, took her in his arms, and kissed her, with old Mrs. Scott looking gravely on.

He had not the remotest idea that she was the first heiress in England—in præmillionary days.

When she came to herself after this sudden embrace, she looked up merrily, and said,

"What will papa say?"

She was at once joyous, having been relieved from a scoundrel who wanted to get her fortune, and finding a chivalrous gentleman who loved her at first sight. For she knew it was love at first sight, both for him and for her. She has told me so many a time. Indeed, the story of this adventure, the only fragment of hearsay in my narrative, was usually told me with one of my parents as narrator, and the other as corrector. It used to be great fun at Ellesmere of a Winter evening in the library after dinner. Being an only child, I had fortunate privileges.

What became of Bully Mayo nobody ever heard, nor indeed did anyone ever care to know. After that horsepond, he may possibly have repented. He kept well out of the way both of Lord Lyle and of my father.

At the time of this event Lord Lyle was in London. My father sent a courier to him, and he came down. He was something at Court—Lord Chamberlain, I think. I have seen his portrait—tall, stately, silver-haired. When he came, he seemed at once to have given consent to my father's marriage; so here I am, the son of Sir Arthur Ellesmere and Lady Amoret Lyle.

Events move in continuous cycles. How often the same thing recurs it would be impossible to say. What always struck me, as soon as I began to think, was the absurdity of age. I never could treat my mother with proper veneration—I always regarded her as the girl of sixteen who was the heroine of my father's favourite after-dinner story. And, in my judgment, she never grew older. She was a precociously wise little woman in her own opinion; but, oh! how she liked to throw off the trammels of custom, and have a bit of real fun! My father and mother were a perfect couple, though between them there were nearer thirty years than twenty. He had a pleasant paternal way of treating her, which she liked very much. Besides, he was a young man for his age. When I was a boy, he always seemed young to me—he was full of energy, riding, walking, driving. He looked after all the affairs of the estate. He was restless, indefatigable. So he never seemed old to me in my youth, though there was nearly half a century between us.

Sir Ralph died just before my birth. They called me Edward: I don't know why, having no reason to believe it a family name. However, Edward Ellesmere I am—or was—and one name or label is pretty much as good as another. My earlier years are to me a perfect chaos of delight in the memory. I could give no account of them. I remember cantering with my father over the grassland on an Exmoor pony; I remember listening to my mother as she played sweet music on the organ in the great Hall. Thousands of days are deliciously blended, all alike, all unlike, in my frail memory, the central figures in every scene being my stately father and my graceful happy mother. Those two were all the world to me; those two, and the old house, which seemed as if it were made for them. It was Eden!—it was Elysium! Pity such pleasures cannot last—that boys must become men and girls women!

As for me, poor devil, I was booked, in time, for Eton!

CHAPTER II.

ETON.

"I pray you ask him some questions in his accidence."

"POOR devil!" That really was what I thought when I started drearily from Northamptonshire in the family travelling-carriage, my father accompanying me a stage or two, just to keep up my spirits. And my heart sank when he left me, and the old coach floundered southward. And it was with a decided sinking of heart that I entered the tutor's house at which I was to live.

But that was soon over. In a few days I

was a happy atom of that marvellous microcosm, a great public school. I was just the fellow for the situation. My father had taught me self-reliance, my mother (how often I thought of her and her last tears!) had taught me courtesy, and I was born with a tendency to enjoy the study of character. Unluckily I was not always accurate in my estimate of character; and a school-fellow of mine at Eton was the cause of nearly all my subsequent ill-fortune.

His name was Algernon Norton. He had curly red hair, and greenish eyes, and knees that were always making too close an acquaintance with each other, and a most plausible persuasive style of flattery. I fancy his father was Norton & Co. Plenty of money he always had, and I suspect was in the habit of lending it to his extravagant school-fellows, at an exorbitant interest. If

Dr. Keate had found him out he would have received the soundest flogging in the annals of Eton.

This fellow became my favourite from my first arrival at the school; he was in the same house, and had ample opportunities. He flattered me, mind and body; and boys are quite as fond of flattery as girls. I wrote his Latin verses for him—he did any menial service I chose. He was my *umbra*. I can only understand his conduct on the supposition that he was the descendant of a long line of knaves, and that his hereditary instinct made him attach himself to the heir to a baronetcy and two fine fortunes. Two or three of my independent friends warned me against him, but I argued that he was a harmless useful fellow, though confoundedly ugly.

"He'll serve you some rascally trick, by

Jove!" said Harry Vane, one day. "He's just my ideal of Judas Iscariot or Oliver Cromwell. I detest the fellow! Cut him, Ned."

I wish I had taken Harry's advice; but I indolently allowed Norton to maintain his parasitical relation to me, finding that he was useful in one way or another.

One of my pleasantest recollections of Eton is the kind interest King George took in the boys. There were few fine days when he was at Windsor that he did not stroll down to the playing-fields. When he first saw me, and found out who I was, he said,

"What, what, what!—Ellesmere's boy? 'Gad, he shall have a commission."

Wherewith he put his royal hand on my long light curly hair, and went on—

"Wilt fight, my boy, fight for your King?—eh, eh, eh?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"Not your father's son if you didn't. Tell him you're a cornet in the Guards."

"You're in luck, Ned," said Harry Vane, when the King had left the field. "You'll get your commission."

"Nonsense!"

"You will, though, and full pay. There are a lot of fellows with commissions. One's a Major already, bless you!—Charlie Nevile. He's eighteen, and he got his commission at eighteen months. When Keate flogs him, he always says—'*Now, Major Nevile.*"

It turned out true. I was gazetted Lieutenant and Cornet of the first Life Guards, about the year 1796. I think it was the same or the following year that I made the largest score in the famous cricket-match against the Oldfield Club; the next being made by Sumner, who was afterwards an Archbishop. Sumner was a very fast bowler. We went in for fast bowling in those days (before the "round hand" had been invented), and I very seldom took a wicket without breaking it. Greaves were unknown; but the Etonian skin is marvellously strong. Still, "leg before wicket" was a rare offence.

Now I must relate one of the first messes into which that villain Norton got me—I cannot conceive why. One day he came to me mysteriously.

"Ellesmere," he said, "can you keep a secret?"

"Well, I'd rather not—I've a bad memory. I might forget it *was* a secret, and tell somebody."

"Come, be serious, old fellow. What should you say if a girl was in love with you?"

"Why, that she had better give it up, and try somebody else. Get out, or I'll throw an inkstand at you! I'm turning Romeo and Juliet into iambics."

"Better turn your iambics into Romeo," he retorted. "Do you remember that little girl in pink we saw the other day in Datchet Lane?—pretty little plump thing?"

"Well, what about her?"

"She's awfully in love with you. Her father's a chemist in Peascod Street. She wants to meet you."

"She must be a remarkably nice young woman," I said, "Get out of this, Norton, or I'll kick you out! Be off!"

He saw I was in earnest, and went; but he returned to the charge. He was so persistent that at last I half believed him; and we one Summer afternoon met the girl, whose name was Emily Watts . . . . quite accidentally, of course. Young, and devoid of experience as I was, at once I saw that it was what in these days is called a "plant"; there was something in the look of the girl which showed me that she was of a bad type. When Norton had got us into conversation he disappeared.

I spoke civilly to the young woman, who was evidently disappointed by my slowness, and thought me a fool. To say truth, my great desire was to get away from her as quickly and courteously as possible. I had just succeeded in doing this, to my companion's obvious disgust, when I noticed one of the assistant-masters passing on the opposite side of the road. His keen eye gave me a recognizing glance. I walked homeward, very much ashamed of myself, and frightfully angry with Norton.

I lounged down to the margin of the Thames and watched the boats. It was a delicious Summer afternoon; the sky was cloudless; the larks were Midsummer-mad; a thrush on a great willow across the river sang "Do it again! Do it again! Do it again!" I remember it all, though I could not enjoy it—for I was angry with myself, with Norton, with the girl, with that keen-eyed master. There was no great reason for being angry with myself, seeing that I had avoided temptation. Still I was.

Presently Norton came up, and touched me on the shoulder.

"What luck?" he said.

I sprang to my feet. He was in his shirt-sleeves, having been at cricket. I threw off my jacket.

"Now, my good fellow," I say, "stand your ground. I am going to thrash you."

He was two years older than I, and at least a stone heavier; but before a ring could be formed I had knocked him out of time.

"Bravo, Ned!" said Harry Vane. "With a little practice you'll hit beautifully straight from the shoulder. You shall come to my room and put on the gloves with me now and then."

We walked away together. Norton was lying incapable upon the turf. I did not speak to him again that term.

Of course I was not surprised at being "sent for."

"You young officers of His Majesty's Guards," said Doctor Keate, with bland irony, "must not suppose that you are to make love to all the girls of Windsor. Colleger, bring me a birch-rod that is suitable to the dignity of a cornet of horse."

Such an easy indolent tolerant fool am I, that during the course of the next term I allowed Norton again to become familiar with me. Harry Vane was left, else I think it could not have happened.

Norton was the most penitent of crocodiles. He made himself useful at every point; and I began to discover that it was impossible to do without him.

In the Autumn of 1797, I was summoned suddenly from Eton. My father was on his death-bed. His horse had made a mistake at a sunk fence, and my poor father was brought home on a litter, with his spine severed beyond the power of surgeons to patch it up. I was so fortunate as to be with him half an hour before he expired. My dear mother was kneeling by his bedside, holding one of his hands in both her own. He languidly stretched to me the other hand.

"Ned," he said, "thou art a true gentleman, I believe. Love thy mother, and trust in God. I am going to meet Him in a few minutes. I am not afraid. I fought for my King."

How quietly he passed! Something—a sob or a sigh—seemed to shake that grand frame, and then all was over. My dear mother fainted; the women came and took her to her room. It was long before I could tear myself away from my father's body; there came upon the dead face a calm still satisfied expression, which seemed to me a revelation. The soul is happy elsewhere (I thought), or the body could not look so happy here.

I pass by all the funereal celebration. My mother was ill for weeks; when she recovered, she implored me not to return to Eton, but to remain at Ellesmere, to take care of her. My mother had always been very like an elder sister to me, and I felt toward her in her present state a tender pity, born of a love that was almost as much fraternal as filial. She was so young, I thought, for this terrible blow to fall upon her—to lose the love and strength of a man like my father—a man whom you could not look upon without thinking that he belonged to the noblest class of men—a man to whom fear and dishonour were words without meaning. I knew full well that my darling mother would not long survive this terrible loss. She did not. Within six months she also lay in the family vault in Rothwell churchyard.

I was alone! Yes, in one sense; but in another sense I had too much company.

My father's will was vague; the Court of Chancery kindly appointed two trustees to look after my affairs till I came of age. How they came to be chosen, I cannot imagine. One was Ezra Sykes, a retired lawyer, who had at some time been employed by my father; the other was General Lord Clanfurly, G.C.B., the youngest General in His Majesty's Army, and an old crony of my father's. Sad as I was, I could not help being amused when my two guardians, or trustees, or whatever they were, met for the first time at Ellesmere. Clanfurly rode over in uniform, with his staff attending him, and a troop of horse; for he was Commandant of the district, and those were days when we dreamt of French invasion. It was quite cheery to hear the bugler's call as the red coats came rattling into Ellesmere courtyard. Mr. Ezra Sykes had come in a carrier's cart from the nearest point at which a stage-coach stopped; so, when shown into the library to meet Lord Clanfurly, his dingy yet glossy black habiliments were covered with scraps of straw.

There had been some conversation about me between my two ill-assorted guardians before I was summoned to their presence. When that summons arrived, I could not help laughing at the *coup-d'œil.* I have an intuitive sense of humour, and cannot avoid laughter under the gravest situation, if anything tickles my fancy. On the present occasion, what did I see? There was an *aide* of the general's sitting at a table, pen in hand, suppressing his amusement as well as he could. There was the legal and pious Ezra Sykes, in greasy black broadcloth much obscured by straws, standing on one side of the fireplace—a blear-eyed roundshouldered knock-kneed splay-footed animal. On the other side stood Lord Clanfurly, tall, shapely, and vigorous, one hand by habit on his sword-hilt, his steel-blue eyes looking right into the middle of his next battle.

"Sir Edward Ellesmere," he said, when I was called into the room, "Mr. Ezra Sykes and I have been appointed by the Lord High Chancellor your guardians. We cannot quite agree as to what it is best for you to do. I think you should go back to Eton and finish your studies. Mr. Sykes seems to object to this."

"I object to Eton," said the lanky Sykes, with a mighty sigh, "because time is wasted upon heathen studies, such as Latin and Greek, which would be more properly expended on Hebrew and commercial arithmetic. The dulness of modern young gentlemen is dreadful. Few of them know that there are three six-and-eightpences in a pound."

"Important knowledge," said the general laughing, while the *aide* at the table gave me an encouraging wink. "Come, young gentleman, as your guardians differ, what do *you* say? Will you go back to Eton?"

"No, my lord," I said.

"Then will you follow my advice?" said Ezra Sykes, becoming eloquent. "Will you let me be your guide, philosopher, and friend."

"I'll see you damned first!" I said, indignantly. "My lord," I went on, addressing myself to the General, "I am a Captain in His Majesty's Life Guards. My first duty is to the King. I intend to join my regiment."

Sykes's horror would have made a picture.

Clanfurly put his hand in fatherly fashion on my young shoulder and said,

"All right, my boy."

CHAPTER III.

LIFE IN LONDON.

"White-handed mistress, one sweet word with thee!"

YES, while I had been fagging away at my Homer and Horace, my cricket and boating, promotion had reached me, and I was now, at eighteen, a captain in the Guards. The Earl of Clanfurly encouraged me in my military ambitions, and I went to London in the gayest spirit, with a fine allowance and a splendid outfit. Ezra Sykes had to give way to my resolute will, backed as I was by the Earl, and he uttered a snuffled protest through his nose. But Ezra had his revenge; the management of my estate was left in his hands: a pretty picking the scoundrel made of it!

Before joining my regiment, I spent a couple of weeks with Lord Clanfurly, at a pleasant house he had near Totteridge, with plenty of park-land. He was a widower, with one daughter, married, and the mother of many children; and his house was kept for him by an elegant and demure person of about thirty, who treated him with great deference, but evidently had her own way in everything. To me she was remarkably courteous, and made me as comfortable as I could desire. I spent a very pleasant fortnight there; and the General gave me a series of worldly lectures after dinner each day, that were worth their weight in gold. He inculcated a philosophy of refined and elegant selfishness. I was by nature selfish enough . . . a lover of luxury and laziness, and a spoilt child to boot; Lord Clanfurly's lectures confirmed me in my tendency to become "Epicuri de grege porcus."

When I joined my regiment, I took rooms in Pall Mall, over a saddler's . . . capitally furnished and arranged, with a pleasant view of the trees and lawns of Carlton Gardens. When first I got into my uniform and mounted my charger, what a splendid fellow I thought myself! Everybody in the regiment received me with a hearty welcome. The son of a distinguished soldier, with youth, good looks, and plenty of money, it was not likely that I should be unpopular. This was a time of delirious delight. We were never weary of enjoyment. Our life passed between London and Windsor. We glittered through the western streets, a splendid pageant. We passed our nights sometimes in good society, and sometimes in bad, but always where life moved fast. We betted high, drank deeply, threw money away on diamonds and other luxuries for our frail friends. We crushed ten years of life into one—with the customary result. If I exceeded my allowance, old Ezra Sykes showed a courtesy you would not have guessed from his grim appearance, and sent me as much as I wanted. Of course he was quite right. Why should the income of an estate be accumulating at compound interest, when its owner wants the money?

The history of my life at this time cannot well be written. It was the mere foam and froth of existence. I was popular everywhere, from the Court downwards. I spent money as if I had the purse of Fortunatus.

I rode the best horses, and drove the finest equipages, and gave the costliest dinners in London. I had in the highest degree the passionate generosity of an intense selfishness. My boyish career was the wildest of that wild time when there was always lightning in the air . . . the terrible time of Napoleon. Anyone who cannot remember that period cannot realize what men felt then, or how fast we youngsters lived. The great name of Napoleon hung in the political atmosphere like some mighty comet that comes close to earth, burning so fiercely that moon and stars flicker and grow pale. And because this great thought haunted us, we lived in a defiant gaiety, sure that when the supreme hour should arrive victory would be with England. The temper of the time is well indicated by Gillray's caricature . . . King George in colossal size, curiously examining a Lilliputian Bonaparte, who struts *en petit caporal* on the palm of his hand.

My chief friend in those days was Captain Lovelace, of my own regiment, about two years older than myself. He differed from me widely, being quiet and unostentatious, though he spent money freely enough, and thoroughly enjoyed any reasonable pleasure. He used to give me excellent advice, and, when I laughed at it, he would suggest some brilliant dissipation. His motto was that of Ovid, which Thackeray loved so well:—

> ". . . . video meliora proboque,
> Deteriora sequor."

The truth about Charles Lovelace was that he ought to have been on active service—his fine brain wanted work; at the head of an army he would have been a match for any marshal of Napoleon's—perhaps for Napoleon himself. He did not enjoy the lazy luxury of life as I did; he pined for occupation, and took severe dissipation as the only alternative. I saw through the dear boy at the first, and the fact that I appreciated his character made us close friends.

He never talked of his family—indeed, he was a man of singular reticence. I remember it was in the Summer of 1804 (I was a Major by that time, and expecting soon to be Lieutenant-colonel) that he came to my rooms one morning, and said,

"Ned, have you time for a ride this morning, after parade?"

I was at breakfast, drinking claret, which had become the fashion with us instead of chocolate. This was wine for which I had given a guinea a bottle. I confess I have since tasted as good at a shilling. I was turning over a heap of unopened notes which my villain of a valet had just brought in upon a gold salver—some were in pink paper, and some in blue, but there was not one worth the trouble of opening. I neither wanted to know the amount of my tailor's bill, nor what Aphrodite Severn had to say to me. It was abominably hot—the trees in Carlton Gardens opposite could not catch a breath of air; I had already forgotten my cold bath, and began to want another.

"I am at your service, Charlie," I said, languidly. "Where do you want to go?"

There was a kind of sly hesitation about him that puzzled me. He replied,

"Twickenham. The Thames breezes will cool you."

"Charming idea!" I said. "But have you any special reason for going to Twickenham? And have you breakfasted?"

"Yes, to the first question; no, to the second. I shall attack that lobster. Have you any champagne? I've been up all night, and want a reviver."

The Villain (he was known as such among my friends, and I have clean forgot his name) brought some champagne. Lovelace ate and drank with that fine ferocity noticeable in a man who has been up all night. I looked on languidly, dipping dry toast in claret, and trying very hard to finish a *rognon aux fines herbes.*

"My mother," said Lovelace, presently, "has lately come up from the country, and taken a house at Twickenham. I want you to know her. I think she would do you good, old fellow. So I arranged to bring you down to luncheon, if you could manage to come to-day. You will meet nobody else except my sister Lucy, who is a mere girl. She is several years younger than you and I. So many of my family died young."

When a brother talks disparagingly of his sister as a *mere girl*, don't you always believe him. A stolid young gentleman will often look contemptuously on a sister who is made of much finer clay than himself. Charlie was not stolid, but he did not understand his sister Lucy.

That I accepted *va sans dire*. We had a lovely ride that Summer afternoon. We had a charming *al fresco* luncheon on the lawn of Mrs. Lovelace's pretty cottage . . . a lawn that sloped to the Thames, and was dotted with beautiful trees. Mrs. Lovelace herself was quite worthy of being Charlie's mother . . . a kind stately old lady, who had evidently borne a prominent part in society of the highest class.

But Lucy? She had the tremulous movement of the sensitive plant—the fragrant life of the tall white lily. Her hair was a rich brown, with specks of gold in it. Her eyes were like the dog-violet. She was tall; her hand was long and flexible, tipped with narrow rosy nails. What struck you about Lucy was that her soul seemed to burn through its tenement; her flesh was translucent; if she held her hand against a candle the light shone through. Lucy answered Milton's definition of poetry, being "simple, sensuous, passionate." Her electric spirit was stirred by even the unexpressed thoughts of those who were with her, and her own thoughts made themselves known, without aid of speech, by the light in her eye, by the movement of lip or hand. When her hand was in yours it told you the thoughts of her heart. Lucy was as near to being a pure spirit as anybody could be in this world.

It was love at first sight with us both. I knew it, the very moment I met her glance in that wainscoted Twickenham parlour. She was mine. She knew it also; a psithurism seemed to pass through her, as when a full-foliaged tree is caught by the wooing south wind. But we were very quiet and polite that afternoon, and neither Mrs. Lovelace nor Captain Charles for one instant suspected what was very well known to Lucy and me . . . though without a word.

What a time it was! England against the world! Nelson, flower of Admirals, was at sea, longing to catch Bonaparte "on a wind." Charlie was perpetually pining to be on service; I hypocritically echoed his longings, but had really no desire to have the sea between me and Twickenham, to which riverain village my horse's head turned with diurnal regularity. Mrs. Lovelace soon saw what was the matter with me, but she had no objection. Why, indeed, should she? I was a soldier, and Charlie's best friend, and the owner of a great estate. In those days a man's having lived pretty fast did not make him an abomination in the eyes of either young ladies or old ones. Milksops were not popular.

My London cronies did not see quite as much of me as of old, for almost every afternoon was spent in Lucy's company, and often I dined with Mrs. Lovelace instead of returning to join the mess. Happy little dinners! . . . though they were simple enough—a bit of fish, and a joint of mutton, perhaps, and an apricot tart, and a glass of old Madeira. The Prince Regent had not spoilt our dinner-tables by making that vile fluid, sherry, fashionable. After dinner, on clear Summer nights, the old lady would obligingly fall asleep, and Lucy and I would ramble down to the margin of the Thames, and watch the reflexion of moon and stars in the restless river.

One night may stand for all. Charlie's having dined with us that evening makes it more strong in my memory; but he left soon after dinner, having some engagement. The old lady was soon serenely asleep in her customary chair near an open window, through which came fragrance of multitudinous roses. Lucy loved roses; and the queen of flowers seemed to return her love, for she always had them in profusion. They grew in her garden more profusely than I had ever seen them anywhere, and in varieties more numerous. Some vast masses of odour, ruddy and inexhaustible, some pale and delicate white, with just a blush in their centre; some of crocus hue; some a dark deep purple. Lucy's roses were the marvel and envy of all her fair friends. Nobody else could grow them in such profusion and perfection. There was magic in it; the nightingales came to sing among them; their music this very night was thrilling through the air. The moon was at its full this night. One planet burnt near it; which of the two chief planets I know not, being perfectly ignorant of astronomy and astrology, and all such matters. Only Mars I know, the soldier's star, red as blood; and this night he shone like a ruby in the cloudless blue. I had noticed him a night or two before; so I had gone to a jeweller's, and bought the finest ruby I could find, and made the man set it in a thin flat hoop of gold, that should suit Lucy's delicate ring-finger. And this night, as we strolled up and down in silence by the never-silent Thames, I suddenly said: "Lucy, which is your favourite star?"

She looked up into the sky with a dreamy, questioning gaze.

"I am rather superstitious about the stars," she said. "My mother laughs at me for it. The Bible says they were made 'for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years.' I think they have some strange influence. I always have a tremulous excited feeling when I look at the planet Mars."

"That means you are to be a soldier's wife," I said, "and here is the ring of betrothal."

"O what a lovely ruby! Edward, how extravagant you are! It is just the very colour of the planet."

I put it on her finger, and pressed my lips to her lovely hand. She was half laughter, half tears. She leaned her fair head on my breast.

"I hope this happiness will last," she said. "But *can* such happiness last? I am terrified lest it should come to a sad and sudden end. Edward, be true to me."

"My darling child," I said, "I will be true to you as long as the planet Mars endures. Come, throw aside these fancies; sing me one of your pretty little ballads."

She sat on a garden seat. My arm was round her waist. She sang.

"O songs of the olden time!
  That were so wondrous sweet,
When the world was a fairer clime,
  And the turf was cool to the feet,
  And the days fled all too fleet,
And lips had their low love-rhyme,
  When lovers were fain to meet:
O songs of the olden time!

"O songs of the olden time!
  Who dares to sing them now?
For love may be turned to crime
  By the basely broken vow.
  And alas! we know not how
The marriage-bells may chime.
  'Tis a weary world, I trow,
O songs of the olden time!"

"What a melancholy darling you are to-night!" I said. "Come into the candle-light, and give me a cup of coffee before I go, and be cheerful. You must sing me a merrier song to-morrow."

Lucy did as she was bid. An hour later I rode townwards joyously, for she had broken into her gayest mood of caprice and merriment. We parted with a laughing kiss. I rode gaily to town, sent my horses home, strolled into Vandesme's, intending supper only; played, broke the bank, won twenty thousand; went home, and slept right soundly.

CHAPTER IV.

LUCY AND I.

"O, my good lord, the world is but a word;
Were it all yours to give it in a breath,
How quickly were it gone!"

NEXT morning, as I was at breakfast, Charlie Lovelace came in; very woe-begone he looked, and as if his immediate intention were suicide. I knew every phase of his countenance by this time, having a real brotherly love for him. So, when I saw him in this condition, I made him drink some sparkling wine, and awaited his confidence.

It was simple enough when it came. He also had been playing the night before. He had lost twelve thousand. He did not see what he could do, unless he sold out, and also sacrificed some freehold property in Leicestershire.

I laughed at him.

"My dear Charlie," I said, "you are absurd. What is twelve thousand pounds? You know perfectly well that if I gave you a cheque for that sum, Coutts's people would honour it, whether or not I have so much to my credit. But it does so happen that I can put you out of your trouble at once; for I broke the bank at Vandesme's last night, and there are rolls of notes to the amount of twenty thousand lying about somewhere. The Villain can find them."

"You don't expect me to take this money from you, Ned?" said Charlie.

"Why not? What I win or lose at play I always consider *waste money.* I had a run last night, and landed twenty thousand; you happen to want twelve thousand of it—there it is; the other eight I shall throw away somehow."

Saying this, I told the Villain, who had just brought in an omelet, to fetch a small black bag from my dressing-room.

He obeyed orders. The bag was crammed with bank-notes. I put it on the table, and said to Charlie:

"Now, old fellow, take what you want."

He gave me a whimsical smile, and pulled out a roll of notes.

"You are a good fellow, Ned," he remarked; "but you are a devilish odd fellow. Fancy having twenty thousand pounds in your bag, and with the Villain close at hand."

"I should have asked leave of absence first, sir," said the Villain, with a grin. He was a very honest Villain, I believe; at any rate, the bank-notes were safe enough on this occasion, and I gave the fellow a hundred pounds.

The value of money had never occurred to me at that time. I had not mastered the fact that every sovereign means so much human labour—so much human life. A rich man gives fifty pounds for a thing without thinking that he is giving away a year of somebody's existence. Yet it is so; every piece of hard money is the mere representative of human toil. O for a miracle to make the gold we squander speak, and tell us what hard work it represents!

Charlie, having been persuaded to take what he needed, went away quietly. I was only too glad that a run of luck had thus enabled me to help him. I thought no more about it. He did, I regret to say; he felt himself under some sort of obligation—I can't think why. If he hadn't had that twelve thousand pounds, I should certainly have thrown it away, as I have no doubt I did the other eight, though on this point I have no distinct recollection.

What chiefly I remember in that time was my pleasant intercourse with my darling Lucy. Her mother and Charlie both considered her too young to marry, and she and I obediently acquiesced in their decision, though most assuredly it would have been fortunate for us both if she had been pronounced of matrimonial age. However, she was not, and we had to play at love-making, and we both enjoyed it very much indeed.

Given, a delicious rose-garden, sloping to the Thames, and the lady of that garden a creature of perfect beauty, and most loving and loveable temper, is it not easily conceivable that Major Sir Edward Ellesmere was happy? As a fact, I was rather glad that Lucy was not old enough yet. Cynical sneerers had made me rather afraid of marriage. It was a belief of those times that the most charming girl in the world might, when she became a wife, become also a nuisance. I hardly know how to account for the prevalence of this theory, but just then it was the fashion with men to run down women—to regard them as mere toys and playthings—to maintain that they were heartless and untrustworthy. These cynical fashions of thought come round in cycles, according, doubtless, to some hitherto undiscovered law.

"Most women have no characters at all," wrote Alexander Pope; yet Pope had read

Shakespeare, in whose chief plays there is not one woman without distinctive character.

Of course I was in the fashion, and professed to regard women as below one's notice, otherwise than as mere playthings. I was obliged silently to recant every day of my life, for every day of my life I saw Lucy, and she taught me more in a night than I ever learnt anywhere else in a year. She was the very darling of nature. As I have heretofore said, the roses seemed to grow for her delight; and the nightingales came to sing amid the roses, and Lucy and I were happy. She had not a touch of coquetry about her. She was mine; she knew it, and was satisfied. Every night of my life I came down to see her, and we wandered into the garden in Summer, or sat in the little library in Winter. Mrs.

Lovelace left us to our own devices. Ah! it was a happy time!

I was in no hurry for wedlock. I like to have this tremulous sweet virgin-flower my own, uncrushed, unsoiled. She had given herself to me, my Lucy, but I would not take her yet; I would let her grow and ripen, pass from girl to woman, from bud to flower. It was only too delightful, this happy, innocent converse with a beautiful, simple creature like Lucy Lovelace.

One night I brought her some rhymes, to the same air which she had fitted to most melancholy words. Right gaily she sang them.

"O songs of the time unknown!
  That is coming, so sweet, so fair,
The time of the loosened zone,
  Of love in the Summer air,
  Of days that are void of care,
Of nights passed never alone,
  Of a heart whose dreams I share.
O songs of the time unknown!

"O songs of the time unknown!
They haunt the restless stream,
And the woods where we roam alone,
And the valleys where we dream;
And love is their one sweet theme,
And I think, my darling, my own,
Our joy shall be supreme.
O songs of the time unknown!"

Trivial rhymes, you will say, dear reader; but what is trivial when a man's in love? Heartily do I wish my worst offence against my beautiful Lucy was making bad verses about her! I could forgive myself for that, seeing that every man is not born a poet. But I cannot forgive myself for the way I treated her; though I believe when we meet again she will say she heartily forgives me.

Looking back upon that happy time, I have come to the definite conclusion that to be in love is a man's highest fortune. It is far better than to be an emperor or a millionaire. The despot is in daily dread of assassination; the owner of millions is in hourly dread of being robbed or swindled. The true lover has no dread; his wealth, his empire, cannot be taken from him; it is inalienable, inviolate.

So I say that the happiest time of a man's life is not when he obtains distinction as statesman, soldier, poet, what not; nor is it when he finds a comfortable balance lodged at his banker's, whereby he can snap his fingers at his creditors; but it is when two bright eyes look lovingly into his, and two sweet lips are ready to be kissed, and a warm white hand rests trustfully in his. I am of opinion that we do not yet half understand the philosophy and psychology of sexual completion. Our modern sophists are so anxious to prove the non-existence of God and the monkey ancestry of man, that questions of real importance are forgotten. A Universe self-created is far less imaginable than a creating Deity; a monkey made as a caricature of man is far more probable than the development of man from a monkey. The thing cannot be done. Even a Darwin could not be grown from the chimpanzee . . . and there could be no easier form of the experiment.

But, O ye philosophers and students of life, there is room for great discovery in connexion with the higher nature of man. It is not our relation toward the beasts that perish which requires investigation; it is our relation toward God, who created us in his own image. Just at this moment we have fallen on a time when sham science is rampant; when anything new is accepted by all the shallow thoughtless people whose minds have no real culture. The man who argues that we are mere developments of the lower creatures finds hosts of admirers; his books pass through many editions; his miserable misrepresentations of nature are accepted as absolute truth by persons who have never observed nature. "The Divinity is an ape, and behold! I am his prophet," is one man's cry. Logic works no cure; fallacy is the fashion, and with the multitude fashion is stronger than either revelation or reason.

While I was tasting the joyous hours with Lucy Lovelace, drinking the wine of my young life, learning lessons of love from her fragrant lips, I suddenly, for the first time, came in contact with a very decided annoyance. It reached me in the form of a letter from that abominable old canting rascal, Ezra Sykes, to whom I had carelessly left the management of my estates, and who had hitherto always sent me money with promptitude. Having occasion for a few thousands in a hurry, I despatched the Villain down to Ellesmere, with an order to Sykes to get it. To my amazement, he returned next day without it, but with a note from this rascal Ezra, saying that my income had been greatly exceeded, that there was no balance in hand, that he would endeavour to raise the money at interest in a few weeks! A few weeks!—to me who had never had to wait an instant for money! Well for Ezra Sykes he was miles away, or I would have horsewhipped the truth out of the old hypocrite. Of course I had kept no accounts—why should I, with my princely income? I decided at once that Sykes was a thief, and sent the Villain off again with a letter, threatening him with my severest vengeance if he did not at once send the money.

"If the fellow does not at once send the money," were my last words to my unscrupulous servitor, "bring him. Strap him on to a horse, if necessary; I'll hold you harmless."

The Villain rode off with an obedient grin on his countenance, that augered ill for Ezra Sykes.

He was off, and I was thinking of a ride to Twickenham, when a servant came in to ask if I could receive Mr. Norton. I said yes—I did not connect the name with my old schoolfellow, of whom I had seen nothing since I left Eton. But when the man entered, I knew him at once. He was oppressively overdressed, and wore, over a white satin waistcoat, an immense gold cable, attached to a watch the size of a half-guinea. His coat was black velvet, with a collar of sable; his breeches were fawn-coloured kerseymere; the diamonds on his fingers were about the size of those in his shoe-buckles. His hair was redder, his eyes greener, his hands dirtier, his knees weaker, than they used to be at Eton.

Now what could this fellow want? I was in no mood to be civil to him. I was wroth with Sykes; I was eager to quiet myself in the peaceful company of Lucy. I felt quite out of humour with Norton and Co., and showed it unmistakably.

But Norton's plausibility and humility were too much for me. He was a Belial-Iago. He congratulated me on my fashionable distinction, my brilliant career, my fame for wit, my success among the ladies. The strongest of us are accessible to flattery; I, in those days, was very weak; I have become hard as heart of oak since. This Norton, whom in my inmost soul I utterly contemned, managed to cajole me with his fulsome flattery. I tolerated his red hair, green eyes, and grimy hands—because he told me pleasant lies.

By-and-by he introduced a subject that at that moment was for the first time interesting to me—money. He delicately remarked that, although I had a noble estate, I might sometimes be pressed for a trifle; and that he was connected with a large financial firm that always had money at the service of their clients.

Fool that I was, it never occurred to me that this fellow was in league with Ezra Sykes. I took his opportune arrival as a fortunate dispensation of Providence. I borrowed ten thousand pounds of him, giving merely an I O U. He seemed to consider I did him quite a favour by accepting it, and withdrew from my rooms a perfect incarnation of humbleness.

I sent two hundred pounds of this money to a girl named Laura Scarth, whom I had met a few evenings before in the streets. She was the daughter of one of my father's tenants. I remembered her quite a child—a pretty little blue-eyed thing. She had grown up too pretty, and come to sorrow, and broken the heart of old Michael Scarth, her father. She recognised me and spoke to me. She seemed passionately eager to lead an honest life, and thought she could set up a small shop if she had a little money. I sent her this two hundred pounds, and I believe she used it prudently, and rescued herself from degradation. But my detractors made this act of charity a ground of assault on my character.

Foreseeing nothing of the unpleasant future, I took horse, and was soon with my beautiful Lucy, among the roses and nightingales.

CHAPTER V.

LADY DIANA CREÇI.

"Que voulez-vous, Diane bonne,
Que vous donne?
Vous n'eustes, comme j'entends,
Jamais tant d'heur au printemps
Qu'en automne?"

PLANTAGENET AQUILA, Marquis of Creçi, was the descendant of a race whose men were always *sans peur et sans reproche*, while the women were generally *sans peur* only. The Creçis, a very old Catholic family, Hereditary Grand-Masters of the Revels of the Crown, were prouder than prelates and poorer than church mice.

The young Marquis, who was about my own age, was living a careless brilliant life in London at this time, with no perceptible income except what he won at play; and certainly his luck was amazing. It was he indeed who had cleared out Charlie Lovelace, that time when I was able to help him; and it was through Charlie that some time after I made his lordship's acquaintance.

I certainly never met any one so brilliant—not with wit, for he had not a scintilla, but by reason of his inexhaustible animal spirits, his gay daring, his passionate delight in adventure. He had a clear blue eye, a keen classic face, a splendid agile figure. The wildest dissipation did not affect his health. He was the most perfect specimen of the human animal I ever knew.

My acquaintance with him would have been comparatively unimportant, had it not led to my knowing Lady Diana Creçi, his father's youngest sister. This lady was certainly the most notable person of her sex in London at the time. She was not young; the polite *Peerage* told not her age, but I fancy she was nearer forty than thirty. She had however the family health and spirits, and was a very skilful artist in self-adornment. She was not handsome; but her figure was good, and she possessed a wondrous wealth of hair, the very colour of Californian gold. She was not clever; indeed she knew nothing, and spelt abominably; but she was the most fascinating woman I ever met. I have said she knew nothing; but she certainly *did* know every trick of coquetry, every artifice of dress, every device invented by women to make themselves irresistible.

Lady Diana had a small house in Kensington; it was called Bijou. It stood in the centre of about an acre of lawn and garden, surrounded by a wall eight feet high. It had a cloister all round it, and four rooms on the ground-floor all opening into each other, and two conservatories, one on each side, which were entered from the reception rooms by crossing the cloister. Here was always a wonderful show of the choicest flowers; and rare birds flitted about in large cages. The kitchens, offices, servants' apartments, stables, were at the rear, approached through a corridor.

Charlie Lovelace, making acquaintance through the Marquis with Lady Diana, was soon fascinated. She had the power of magnetising men. After a while she commanded Charlie to bring me to Bijou, wanting, as I presumed at the time, to make an experiment on a new victim. I did not till afterwards learn that she had a cruel pleasure in fascinating men whom she knew to be engaged, and proving to her own satisfaction that she had more attractive power than the pretty girls of a younger generation.

When Charlie pressed me to accept an invitation to Bijou, I reminded him that my evenings all belonged to his sister.

"Pooh, pooh!" says Charlie. "She'll give you up for one night, and glad; I dare say you're boring her. Depend upon it, old fellow, it's a mistake for you to see so much of each other; you'll find out all one another's faults before marriage—and you may just as well leave it till after."

As I knew that Lucy had no faults, and was quite ready to forgive mine, this argument did not touch me; but Charlie was so resolute that at last I gave way. That evening, amid the roses and the nighingales, I told Lucy that her brother and I had an important engagement on the coming Wednesday, and that I should not be able to come down.

"Well, Edward," she said, "I am so used to your coming every night that it will seem quite strange. But no; I tell you what you shall do; you shall come and dine with us. Mamma will give you a roast fowl and a bottle of poor papa's favourite Madeira, and you can go straight from here to meet Charlie. We dine at five, you know; and I suppose your engagement is some hours later."

"Nine, my darling," I said. As her sweet face, luminous with love, looked up into mine, I felt a strange sharp presentiment that I was about to do a very foolish thing in deserting her for one night only. I dreaded it. I felt disposed to throw Lady Diana over, and to pursue my customary course; but then Charlie had my promise. He laughed at me a good deal when I told him that I was going to dine at Twickenham on the evening in question.

"You're a regular Romeo," he said. "I hope the mater's wine won't poison you."

Wednesday came; we had our little dinner together, and enjoyed it. Mrs. Lovelace was slightly didactic; she always deemed it her duty to drop pearls of wisdom into the ears of any young men whom she got at the dinner-table, whence of course they could not escape, and it may be guessed that her very choicest pearls were reserved for her future son-in-law. However, I always enjoyed the dear old lady's clever lectures; but I could hardly keep from laughing when, at intervals, I saw Lucy making a pretty little wicked grimace at me.

I had something beside roast fowl to eat, and the wine was by no means what that rascal Charlie wanted me to anticipate.

"Now, sir," said Lucy, bringing me with her own pretty hands a cup of fragrant Mocha, "have you dined well? *I* arranged that dinner, and I expect you to praise me. How do you like red mullet with sauce of capers and periwinkles? I am sure you never tasted it before."

"Certainly, I never did."

"Ah! I thought not. Well, did you like the young pigeons on anchovy toast, with Muscat grapes?"

"They were delicious, my own Lucy; but why are you asking me these questions?"

"Because I want to know whether I can

arrange a good enough dinner for you. Do you suppose I have not learnt that man's chief idea is dinner and politics, just as woman's chief idea is tea and gossip? It is all very well to talk about love—you and I are very much in love, I know; but then, you see, we shall have to dine together so many times! Suppose we should live together fifty years—and I have heard of such things—why, that would be nearly twenty thousand dinners!"

The child was in one of her mad moods. I knew how it would be. She was all action and re-action; life was to her like the flow and ebb of the tide beneath the mischievous magnetic mysterious moon. I felt only too certain that when I left her she would grow melancholy. Very loath I was to leave her, but the thing had to be done, and, at about eight, I was on horseback, bound for Bijou and Lady Diana.

There was no gateway to Bijou—no carriage-entrance; you passed through a quiet green door in the high wall, and were at once in a most perfect garden. That night, even after Lucy's roses, the fragrance of Lady Diana's parterres seemed wonderful. I have since seen her gardens in the sunshine, and they seemed to me more original and various than any other of which I have had experience.

Bijou was brilliantly lighted. At the threshold I met Charlie, who had been awaiting me, and who forthwith presented me to the hostess. At first sight I thought her grotesque, but after a little conversation I forgot her undeniable ugliness, and began to think her a very fine woman. She had a mellow voice; she had suggestive eyes; she had unlimited capacity for lying. She was a female Mephistopheles.

Her reception this night took the form of a kind of artistic conversazione. Some painters and sculptors whom she patronized had brought their most recent work. We were all divided between a picture by Jack Easel, of Ares and Aphrodite caught in the golden net of Hephaistos, and a statue by Claudius Chisel, of the divine bull with Europa on his back, preparing to swim the Bosphorus.

"Which do you like best?" said Lady Diana to me.

"I like both equally," was my answer. "They are real works of genius."

And, indeed, so they were. Later in the evening I managed to get a few quiet minutes with the artists, bought both picture and statue for a few hundred pounds, and determined to offer them to Lady Diana. I had some difficulty in making this arrangement, for her lively ladyship kept me by her side as much as she could. She quite snubbed poor Charlie, who, to my great amusement, was immensely jealous. Of course, with the customary contrariety of human nature, I did all I could to increase this jealousy. It never occurred to me that I was treading on ground doubly dangerous.

There was a brilliant supper in one of the rooms. Lady Diana put her hand on my arm when it was announced, and made it clear to the assembly that I was the favoured cavalier that evening. Charlie went off to the other end of the table, where he got between two middle-aged blue-stockings, who treated him with ferocious affectionateness. Evidently, till my arrival, he had been Lady Diana's favourite—now he felt dethroned. I had made up my mind I cared not twopence for Lady Diana, but I could not help being gallant and deferential to her, just to spite Charlie, who pretended indifference, but at intervals looked as if he would like to meet me with pistol or rapier. Supper ended, there was a general gathering of the guests to take leave. I was about to do the same, but Lady Diana said, in a whisper,

"Stay a little longer."

So I stayed. I was not sorry, for I wanted to see whether she would accept my presents, which I had told one of her servants to place where she would see them. Charlie, I observed, did not come to take leave of Lady Diana—whence I judged that he was decidedly in love, and wondered at his choice. She was fascinating, doubtless, but I, who had known Lucy, could not think of Lady Diana otherwise than as a mere soulless heartless creature, witty and wicked.

I should have saved myself unutterable agony if I had acted on my intuitive knowledge of her character, and left her to Charlie, or anybody else that might fancy her.

The brilliant company gradually left.

The last straggler, an undecided gentleman, who could not find his gloves, was eventually disposed of. A footman lighted us up stairs to a lovely boudoir, in which every article was beautiful in material and workmanship. As I entered, I saw that Easel's picture and Chisel's statue had been brought hither.

Lady Diana sank into a low lounging chair, and then caught sight of Aphrodite and Europa.

"I wonder why these are left behind?" she said, languidly.

I explained to her that I had bought them, and hoped she would accept them. She looked at me for a minute.

"Yes," she said, "I will accept them. I like your gentlemanly generosity to a lady you never saw before. I am afraid you are too generous. I have heard a great deal of you, Sir Edward, or I should not have told Captain Lovelace to bring you here. By the way, what do you think of Captain Lovelace?"

"He is my most intimate friend, and I have the highest opinion of him."

"Distrust him, Sir Edward," she said; "he is a disappointed man, and disappointed men are never safe. Besides, I am sure you have done him some great service, he always speaks of you so bitterly."

"What, Charlie!" I exclaimed, in amazement. "Why, we are the best friends in the world."

She laughed ; not a pleasant laugh.

"Don't trust your best friend too far," she said ; "I am told that you are to marry his sister. Tell me what she is like."

It appeared to me profanation to describe my beautiful pure Lucy to this cynical woman of the world ; so I excused myself by saying that I was a bad hand at description.

"You will never marry her," she said, laughing lightly.

"Who will prevent me?" I asked.

"Your best friend, Captain Lovelace. He hates you, Sir Edward. I knew that from his references to you, and for that reason I made him bring you here. I am rather sorry for him ; with a career before him he might have been a good fellow. He'll break off your engagement with Miss Lucy, depend on it."

"I am not afraid," I said.

"Of course not. I despise a man who is afraid of anything in the world. But this fellow will beat you, Sir Edward, if you do not play a very clever game."

"I am sure of Lucy," I said.

"Is she as sure of you?"

Just then a waiting woman brought in a silver tray with a few anchovy sandwiches and Presburg biscuits, and chocolate and liqueurs.

"This is my real supper," quoth Lady Diana. "What we had down stairs was a mere sham."

So she took a sandwich and a glass of maraschino.

"Do you drive four-in-hand, Edward?" she asked. She had dropt the "Sir" and become quite familiar.

"O yes," I replied; "I can drive."

"I am very glad. Are you engaged tomorrow? If not, come here at two. I've just bought such a lovely roan team, a beautiful match, but the off leader is much too frisky. I want to try them to-morrow afternoon. Will you help me?"

"With infinite pleasure," I said. "Two o'clock. I'll be here, and your most humble servant; but I suspect you can manage four horses better than I."

"We shall see to-morrow," she said with an amused smile. "Now you must go, or I shall lose my character. Be off with you!"

My horses were waiting at the garden gate. I rode home and went to bed; but I'll be hanged if I could sleep. Lady Diana Creçi was too stupendous a study of character.

CHAPTER VI.

FOUR-IN-HAND.

"Sunt quos curriculo pulverem Olympicum
Collegisse juvat, metaque fervidis
Evitata rotis palmaque nobilis
Terrarum doninos evehit ad Deos."

I HAVE met many people who could see nothing delightful in driving four-in-hand. To such folk I say—*Try it, if you dare.* No man can do it who has not an intelligent left hand, which is a very rare endowment. Gather up the ribbons: the horses know in an instant whether they have a master. And the intelligent left must have as partner a dexterous right hand, so guided by a quick eye that a horse can at once be admonished by a stinging touch on exactly the right point. Till you can cut down a wasp on the wing with the very end of the long lash, do not try to drive four-in-hand.

That I was punctual, may be supposed. When I reached the gate of Bijou, I recognized Charlie's horsesbeing led up and down, and naturally supposed that he was to join the party; but just as I was about to ring the bell, Charlie came rapidly out, stared at me as if he hardly knew me, threw himself on his horse, and galloped away.

Having long been of opinion, from experience of myself and of others, that we all have our mad moments, I took no notice whatever of Charlie's vagaries. The madder a man is, the sooner he comes to his senses. It is your slow lunatic that is a nuisance; the man who gradually grows mad, and who has to be cured even more gradually. That is not the sort of fellow Shakespeare meant when he classed together "the lunatic, the lover, and the poet."

I entered the house, and was received by Lady Diana, who was just finishing her preparations. She had on a rose-coloured silk dress, adorned with most miraculous lace; but, as I came in, her attendants were cruelly hiding it beneath a many-caped similitude of a coachman's coat, built of drab velvet. Then she placed on her head a broad-brimmed beaver hat, and, turning round to me, said, with a laugh and a curtsey,

"Now don't I look the real thing?"

"Lovely," I said. "You might drive the Chariot of the Sun."

"Too airy a trip," she replied. "I should smash the whole Zodiac. But come, I hope you won't be ashamed to sit on the box with me?"

"I shall be delighted. I have never seen a lady drive four-in-hand yet, and it will be quite a treat."

"Ah! well, you differ from your great friend Captain Lovelace. He has just been scolding me for the extraordinary things I do, and went off in a huff because I laughed at him. He is quite jealous of you: he need not be; he ought to know by this time that I only amuse myself by finishing the education of boys like you and him. You have no idea how many boys I have educated. But come, they ought to be ready for us!"

At the garden-gate stood a beautifully-appointed coach, with dark body and red wheels—helpers at the heads of the four roans; three grooms ready to mount behind—one of them dressed like a mail-guard. Lady Diana always carried out her caprices so thoroughly that people wondered almost as much where she got her money as where she got her ideas.

She mounted to the box-seat as easily as if she had been a Jehu born—and if anybody caught a glimpse of her ankles, they were very pretty ones. The reins and whip were handed her; she gave the off-leader a touch under the ear to remind him that his mistress had him in hand; and away we went, eleven good miles an hour, while the groom-guard blew a startling peal on a silver horn an ell long. All the vicinage turned out to see the sight.

Soon we were beyond the suburbs, briefer and less populous by far than in these days. It was a most delicious Summer afternoon;

the Thames was clear and bright as we crossed the hideous bridge at Putney. Full of excitement was the air as we rattled over the heath beyond. The roans went well; the silver horn rang through the air; Lady Diana laughed and chatted and sang, till I began to forget her age, and to think she must be a mere girl, after all.

I had never much geography about me; I knew nothing of London south of the Thames, and so I could only wonder where Lady Diana was taking me. It was a lovely drive, but a long one; three times, I think, we stopped to rest and bait the horses. We were among beautiful green hills at last, with tall ferns by the wayside, and a clear shallow stream, in which I could see the trout, crossing the road at intervals. We began to descend a hill so steep that the skid was necessary. In the valley we pulled up in front of a quaint old inn, with a wide archway, under which we drove, and galleries all round the inner court. It was as if Chaucer's Tabard had been removed into the country.

There were plenty of people to help the grooms with the horses, and in the side entrance, under the archway, stood the stout landlord, with a portly wife and a ruddy-faced daughter, making obeisance each in their own way. The yard was full of bustle—waggons loading and unloading, and, just as we had arrived, an up-mail stopped to change horses, and there was a rush of travellers for refreshment. Lady Diana, in her coachman's cape and wide-brimmed hat, was an astonishing apparition; but she was soon out of sight, turning to me as she went upstairs with the landlord's daughter, and saying, gaily, "Don't you want your dinner?"

On reflexion, I did. I had taken nothing all the way down, and was hungry, but more especially athirst. I said to the burly landlord, who, though immense, was well-grown, and did not waddle in his gait, or run to abdomen,

"What's the name of your inn?"

"The 'Creçi Arms,' your honour. Look at the sign."

It hung right across the road, as you may see them to this day, I believe, at Croydon and Temple Cloud, and the sun was upon it, and threw up the emblazonment of the arms of Creçi, with the haughty motto, "*Dux regit examen.*"

"Is your ale as good as your sign?" I asked. "I have drunken nothing since I left town."

The landlord left the room with greater

alacrity than I should have expected from a man of his weight, and returned in about five minutes with a quart tankard of silver, bearing also the Creçi arms, and full to the foam-kissed brim of that amber fluid which all Englishmen love.

"That's some of the Marquis's birth-day ale," said the landlord with a grin. "It's fine stuff."

As Creçi had been of age some years, I at once guessed this was fine ale, and my anticipation was amply fulfilled. It passed the palate with exquisite softness; it filled the frame with a healthy warmth; it nimbly reached the brain and stimulated the forgetive faculty. I was grateful to mine host, for I wanted to be ready for a gay encounter with Lady Diana, and this grand beverage, the happy gift of Demeter and Dionysus, had just supplied my mental and physical need. I thought of the famous apostrophe of a poet of the period:

"Hear, O hear!
Dionysus and Demeter!
Give, O give
Wine and bread that a poet may live!
All Olympus I disdain,
If I get the gifts of this glorious twain."

Now the unique beauty of ale is that it is wine and bread in one. Demeter, Dionysus, and Co.'s entire.

Just at this moment there came across me the feeling that I was further from London than I ought to be, and that my chance of seeing Lucy Lovelace that evening was slight. When I accepted Lady Diana's invitation, it was with the notion of a short drive out of town; but I was at least twenty-five miles away. When this thought came suddenly upon me, Lady Diana passed from my mind, and my sole idea was to get to Twickenham, to see Lucy. I made inquiries. The last stage coach had passed just as we arrived. There was a mail up at twelve. I could have post horses, but a glance at them showed they would not reach London till midnight.

I was very angry with myself for having thoughtlessly got into this difficulty. I saw no one else to blame. I did not know then what I know now—that Lady Diana Creçi planned the trip to keep me away from Lucy, and that she had a bet of a hundred guineas on the event. With whom, think you? With my friend Captain Charles Lovelace. However, Lady Diana cared nothing for the hundred guineas, but it absolutely delighted her wicked heart to wile a man away from a girl who loved him. That idiot, Charlie, had told her of my devotion to Lucy ; she, *diablesse*, resolved to interfere.

These things I found out afterwards. That night I accused Lady Diana of nothing worse than a wild caprice. Had I known!

When I came back from my foiled investigation, I ascended the quaint black oak staircase of the old inn, which was brilliantly lighted. A large room on the first floor was shown me, where preparations for dinner were made; in the window stood Lady Diana, looking out upon the sunlit afternoon, dressed in white muslin, with roses in her hair. She certainly had the art of looking marvellously young. As she stood with her back to me in the bay window, her long hair wreathed with roses, her white arms bared girlishly, one might have thought she was a mere girl. This was her policy. She went in for immortal youth. She died many years ago, wherefore I may candidly criticize her character.

My step caused her to turn, and I saw that she was dressed for conquest.

"Ah! Sir Edward," she said, "what do you think of the Creçi Arms? I am going to teach you that a good dinner is obtainable at a country inn."

"If it bears your name," I said, "I would fight the man who dared question its cookery or its wines. Diana Creçi means perfection."

"Ah! you are making fun of me, I see. Never mind; I shall have my revenge."

"Revenge!" I said, pretending alarm—"don't be too cruel."

"No, I shall simply give you so good a dinner that you will be compelled to admit all women are not always fools."

She did so; it was a real good dinner for a country inn. Even the wine was sound. I was not very loquacious during dinner; I was all the time speculating on my companion's character. There seemed something entirely original about it. All that time I had not caught any infection from the superstitious epidemic which crops up at intervals. If I had, I might have imagined Lady Diana influenced of unseen spirits—some working good, and some evil. The idea did not occur to me. I regarded her as a very fine, but rather uncanny specimen of the human race. The under-current in her temper was as carefully concealed as cats conceal their claws.

The port of the Creçi Arms was undeniable, and I enjoyed it greatly. There was quite an artistic dessert, and the waiters were as easy and dexterous as one's own men-servants. Travel in the open air makes a man hungry and drowsy ; I was in a state that seemed half-way between apathy and felicity. We chatted pleasantly enough through dinner; quite abruptly Lady Diana said,

"When are you to be married, Sir Edward?"

The question took me entirely by surprise, but I knew Lady Diana well enough to be aware that she could stand a joke on such a topic; so I simply said,

"I have a blank licence in my pocket—may I put in the name of Lady Diana Creçi?"

"No, you may not, you audacious boy! But of course you talk nonsense when you are so young. How dare you attempt to flirt with me, when you are in love with Charlie Lovelace's little sister? Don't go about on false pretences; consider yourself married, then you will cease to be dangerous."

"Am I dangerous?" I asked. "I never thought so."

"Did you ever read the *Beaux' Stratagem?*" she inquired.

"Yes—played Archer in it once."

"Ah! then you remember the catechism of love, and the little catechized girl? Now let me catechize you. Answer, on pain of not getting another bottle of port."

"Terrible punishment!" I said. "I will do my best."

So the catechism began:—

Lady Diana.—Are you in love?

Myself.—Yes.

Lady Diana.—Do you love the lady, or the creature you imagine her to be?

Myself.—Both.

Lady Diana.—Be good enough to explain that answer.

Myself.—Easily. I love in the lady the beautiful character which I perceive in her, and I purge that character in my imagination of all the trivial stains given by the world; and so I love her both as she is to-day, and as she will be in the infinite to-morrow. She is a lovely bud just now; I love the bud, and also love the future flower.

Lady Diana.—Does the bud return this sentimental affection of yours?

Myself.—I disown the epithet *sentimental*, and I think it wrong to "kiss and tell."

Lady Diana.—You are not the least use in the world to catechize. I have set up a Christmas catechism class at my little place in the country. I shall make you join that class, and learn the eternal verities in words of one syllable.

Myself.—I like words of one syllable. I also like the eternal verities. The combination must be something perfect. I will join your class with pleasure.

Lady Diana.—Ah! but I am afraid you are one of the wicked, and my Christmas class is made up of innocent creatures of both sexes. You would come among them like Satan in Eden.

Myself.—I feel flattered, Lady Diana. I always rather admired Satan, as a resolute rebel, who must have known from the first he had no chance. At the same time, I thought it was hardly worth his while to trouble himself about such very weak creatures as the parents of the human race seem to have been.

Lady Diana.—Then you don't think much of the human race?

Myself.—I don't think much of Adam and Eve; they were hardly equal to you and me. The race has improved. I have no doubt that in a few generations we shall arrive at something much finer. Science, you know, must have its effect. There is a scheme for manufacturing children by steam. Don't you think it would be a great improvement?

Lady Diana.—What dreadful nonsense you talk, Sir Edward! But it is growing late; I think I shall go to bed.

I rang the bell, and she was lighted to her room. It was past midnight. I, however, had decided that I would not pass my night at this place. I was restless. I was disgusted at not having seen Lucy. Going downstairs, I found no one about but an "odd man," who apparently took an occasional nap in the coal-cellar; him I aroused, and made him find the key of the stables. On examination, it appeared that the only animal with an ounce of go in him was Lady

Diana's troublesome off-leader; so I made the man saddle that unfortunate animal, and gave him a guinea, with instructions not to know anything of what had happened. He leered at me with a wide-mouthed grin of such inimitable immeasurable stupidity that I knew my instructions would be obeyed.

It was a moonless night, but the sky was full of stars. Orion had written his autograph of three initials firmly across the sky. The six Pleiades were radiant, regardless of their lost sister. Sirius was doing his best to look as bright as Venus, and failing utterly. The Milky Way was like unto the cream of Devon. I rode along in a pleasant mood, the soft night air cooling me after my dinner and wine, while a myriad odours came from the wild-flowers in hedgerow and on open common.

Never had I a pleasanter ride. All the

while I thought of Lucy Lovelace. Her brown hair and violet eyes haunted me; the wild-flower fragrance made me remember the roses that she loved, and that seemed to love her in return. I compared her with this witch of a woman who had lured me away. What a chasm lay between them! Lady Diana was false to the core, anybody might see. She was always playing a part. There was no iota of truth in her. She was all intrigue and manœuvre. As I rode along beneath the starlit sky, the figure of my darling Lucy was before me. The old roan plodded along, his skittishness quite lost; the stars shone clear; the Creçi Arms and Lady Diana were left behind, while in front of me shone, in divine purity, the perfect form of Lucy Lovelace, her exquisite spiritual beauty seen through her fair undulations of form.

I did not hurry. It was about three in the morning when I reached Pall Mall, and rang up the Villain. He might possibly have been surprised to see me, if anything could have surprised him. He wasn't. He took the unhappy horse in charge, and walked off with it to some mews or other, while I, feeling reflective, opened a bottle of Champagne, which, with a biscuit, carried me to bed.

When the morning came I was in an uncertain state. I lay and thought over the position. Church bells rang (it was Sunday, as it sometimes is . . . the arithmetical equation of Sunday is 142,857), and I wished, with Voltaire, that the ringers had round their necks what they held in their hands. Sunday in London is dreadful, and always has been dreadful. The middle class puts on its best clothes. The worst of it is that the best clothes of the middle class cannot be persuaded to fit.

After some reflexion, I decided not to get up just yet. I rang for the Villain, and got a bottle of hock, and some prawns. This light breakfast (always a favourite of mine) I took quietly in bed. The Villain had brought me the *John Bull* newspaper, and I laughed greatly over Theodore Hook's wild rhymes. I quite agree with Coleridge that Theodore was as great a genius as Dante. That unerring untiring faculty of improvisation is the sign of wondrous intellectual force. Thackeray and Dickens, rolled into one, had not the power of my friend Theodore Hook.

Late in the afternoon I turned out, went to White's, met a few friends, showed myself, in fact. When evening came I rode down to Twickenham. Rather to my surprise, Charlie Lovelace was there; not often did he show himself in the company of his mother and sister. But he was here to-night, and he, too, looked grieved, and my beautiful darling Lucy looked perplexed.

I took extremely slight notice of my old friend and his mother. I talked to my own sweet love. I explained her that I had been kept away by an accident. Her lovely blue eyes told me at once that she believed and forgave.

> Strong sighs the sexless woman heaves,
> And in a whirl of fight she lives:
> Happier the woman who believes,
> Happier the woman who forgives.
>
> That man is weak full well we know:
> We also know that man is strong;
> The weakest man will strike a blow
> When woman suffers wicked wrong.
>
> 'Neath workman's cap or soldier's helm
> Always let loyal blood appear;
> And be the maxim of the Realm,
> In England ladies need not fear.

My darling Lucy was very good. We went out into the rose-garden. O how the roses smelt! O how the nightingales sang! O how my sweet little love delighted me with her rare and ineffable freshness and beauty! Lucy! She was like a wild-flower—a lovely May lily, such as in my boyhood I used to find in Birchanger Wood. Lucy was just as pure and white and fragrant as those wild lilies of May. Lucy was a very foolish little girl (dear Lucy!), as the event will prove—she gave me no end of trouble; she made me live many years of lonely misery; but for all that Lucy was the sweetest brightest happiest girl in the world! Ah me, how well I remember her! The years pass, the girls fade, the senses weaken, the spirit which God gives to man grows stronger as it approaches its next movement through the infinite universe. I have good reason to know this, as my story will show.

Little Lucy did not say much as to what was the matter with her mother and Charlie; and I, being perfectly happy in her company, asked no questions. It would have been better if I had. But I merely thought that Charlie was jealous of me with Lady Diana, and wondered much at his taste, and then forgot everything but Lucy. Ah me, it was the last of my happy evenings at Twickenham, and I shall remember it throughout eternity. Some memories are imperishable. The musical lapse of Thames, the sweet song of the Daulian minstrel, the bright soft eyes of my lovely Lucy, remain on my memory. Ay, that night I was happy! Well saidst thou, glorious John—

> "Not Heaven itself upon the past has power,
> But what has been has been, and I have had my hour."

That hour in that garden with Lucy was worth a millennium of common life. Laugh if you will, you who cannot understand love in its purity, love that is beyond passion and appetite, as the star is beyond the fire, love that can flourish without words, without kisses, without anything but the magnetic interpenetration of two spirits that have become one. You don't understand it, madam? Well, then, take Sir Anthony Absolute's advice, and, when you marry, begin with a little aversion.

CHAPTER VII.

MONDAY NIGHT AND TUESDAY MORNING.

ASTROLOGOS.—Monday, you know, is the Moon's day, and therefore is
The week's most certain time for utter lunacy.
RAPHAEL.—And Tuesday?
ASTROLOGOS.—Tuesday is the day of Mars, *beau sire ;*
If you will fight, let Tuesday be the day for it.
The Comedy of Dreams.

CHARLIE had left when we came in from the garden, and Mrs. Lovelace was gone to bed with a headache. How I hate women who are capable of such meanness as going to bed with a headache! Lucy came down with me to the garden gate, where my man was waiting with the horses, and as I touched her red little rosebud of a mouth I saw that there was a diamond tear in her eye. But she took leave of me cheerfully, and ran gaily back to the house, singing some whimsical song. I wonder what I should have done that night had I known how long it would be before I should see her again. *Clara luce refulsit.*

I rode slowly home. Next day I was on duty. We were suddenly ordered to Windsor; the King was going down. I sent a messenger with a note to Lucy, saying that I should not be able to see her that evening. I felt rather savage; I am loyal, but what is your king to your sweetheart? At the same time, I know His Majesty would have given me leave of absence if he had known I was in love. Perhaps if it had been Charles II. instead of George III. I might have plucked up courage and told him.

I dined at mess that night. Colonel Darell presided. We all liked the old Colonel, for he was as fearless as a lion and as gentle as a lady. The evening would have been pleasant enough, but that Charlie Lovelace, who was seated nearly opposite me, glared at everybody, would not speak, and was evidently in an abominable temper. I could not make it out. I could only suppose that he was annoyed because I had gone out with Lady Diana. To me it seemed such a trifle that my chief feeling was pity towards Charlie for caring about such a woman. I acknowledged Lady Diana's marvellous fascinative force . . . but then I loved Lucy. To love her was to love truth, purity, intelligence . . . to love indeed the God who made her. For you could not really know her without seeing that she came straight from God's hand. Such creatures as my beautiful Lucy are not developed from gorillas or ascidians.

Colonel Darell, who was seventy that year, left the mess early; a Lieutenant-Colonel Wynn took the chair. I always liked Wynn, though he was a Welshman, and as intensely Cambrian as Fluellen himself. When the Colonel had gone we went in for Lafitte and desultory talk. I listened, saying very little indeed, for I was thinking over the divine Sunday evening at Twickenham, and inwardly grumbling that I was at Windsor that night. The talk was dull; I had sunk into a contemplative state, and my spirit was away by the margin of Thames, when I was aroused from my reverie by strident sound of Charlie's voice. He was talking, with intentional loudness, to his next neighbour. He was saying—

"Well, I am glad Lady Diana has returned safely. She has had a narrow escape, I should think. Where did they pass the night, I wonder?"

"Somewhere in Surrey," said Lieutenant Rolfe. "All London is talking about it. They say everybody will cut Lady Di."

"Rolfe," I said, sharply, across the table, "what are you talking about? Lady Diana Creçi drove *me* into Surrey on Saturday night, and I came up to town the same evening. I know very little of her ladyship, to whom, by the way, I was introduced by my friend Lovelace; but it appears to me that her name ought not to be lightly mentioned at our mess-table."

"Quite right, Sir Edward," said Wynn, oracularly.

But Charlie, who was evidently in a fury of jealousy, rose from his seat, and threw the contents of his glass at me, saying,

"I'll name Diana where and when I

like. Choose your weapons, if you are not a coward!"

I am not a coward. I was, physically, in my early boyhood, but I got it well thrashed out of me at school. Cowardice is a vague term. In a sensitive frame it is merely the dislike to physical pain. Moral courage—by which I mean the will—is far more useful than the mere physical courage of the dull strong human animal. The man who can say *I will* has found the fulcrum desired by Archimedes.

A few drops of Charlie's claret fell on the ruffles at my wrist. I was sorry, for his sake as well as his darling sister's; but things of this kind admit one only solution. Fownes Luttrel was sitting next me; without even glancing at Charlie, I said to Fownes,

"Will you arrange this affair? Let it be as early as possible to-morrow morning. I never go to bed when I have to fight—it chills one."

I think, from what I have since heard, that poor Charlie was rather puzzled by my cool way of receiving his insult. He was not sober, dear old boy; had it been anywhere but our mess I'd have reasoned with him in friendly fashion, and got him to see that he had made a fool of himself. But this was obviously impossible at a regimental mess. Insult is rightly inexcusable among men whose profession is war. I knew I must fight Charlie. It made me horribly unhappy; whether I killed Charlie, or Charlie killed me, what would Lucy say? Ah! the grey morning on the heath . . . the hostile forms vaguely looming through the mist . . . the chill sad feeling of meeting an old friend as a new enemy. We were to fight with pistols; how I wished it could have been the rapier! But I was known to be the best fencer in the Guards, and so I could not use the weapon which would have enabled me to disarm Charlie without taking a drop of his blood. On the other hand, I am an abominably bad shot, so it seemed as if I were marked down for destruction.

I resolved to fire in the air. Charlie might kill me if he liked. But, just as the handkerchief dropped, I felt a sharp touch on my right arm, and my bullet, which was to have been harmless, shot Charles Lovelace right through the heart. He, firing first, caused his own death. He never spoke a word. Mine was a slight flesh-wound in the forearm, which a little lint set right.

I was stunned. It was the end of my

life, I saw. I could not marry Lucy now. She would never speak again to the man who had killed her brother. When I had seen that Charlie was dead—my old friend, dead by deed of mine—I walked blindly away across the heath. Luttrel wanted me to drive home quietly, but I exclaimed hoarsely,

"Let me alone!—let me alone!"

I walked away from the scene of murder, and tried to tire myself out by sheer exertion. That night I had not slept. I felt haggard and hideous. I had killed Charlie; of course it could never be rightly explained that I did not mean to kill him. But I could never dream of marrying my darling Lucy now; and how would Lucy feel to me, her brother's murderer? O, how mad I felt that day! The power of consecutive thought seemed lost in me, and my brain was a hell of hot fancies. I have no idea how I passed the hours which followed the duel. Some mere instinct brought me to my own rooms late in the afternoon; I went straight to my bedroom, locked myself in, and threw myself on the bed without undressing. Nature avenged herself; I slept—a strange heavy dreamless sleep. I did not awake for hours.

When I did awake, it was with an indescribable feeling of numbness and dejection. I was stupefied. For some time I could not recall what had happened. When I did, I almost relapsed into my previous madness; but presently, through mental fatigue, as I suppose, I fell into a state of strange apathy. All that had happened was like a farce. I laughed a strange sardonic laugh at myself for caring that I had killed Charlie and lost Lucy. A kind of fiendish spirit took possession of me. I regarded myself as the victim of an inevitable fatality.

What ought I to have done? How often, for years and years, did I turn that question over and over? I ought to have refused Lady Diana's invitation; I ought to have forgiven Charlie's insult; I ought to have fired in the air more carefully; I ought, all these other mistakes having been made, to have gone to see Lucy. Ah! there I was a coward. I dared not. I knew I could not venture to look into her tear-dimmed eyes.

I don't know how long I was alone, in a state of incredible languor. When I began to think of time, it was very early in the morning. I went to my window, and was rewarded by seeing Pall Mall looking dreary beyond measure beneath a heavy "weeping" fog; the air was yellow. The chill of the miserable morning, so exactly suited to my wretched situation, smote me to the marrow. I could think of nothing but my own amazing ill-luck; I dared no more think of Lucy than Adam dared think of Eden after the cherubim had been set on guard to warn him from its gates. I felt rebellious. I did not see what I had done to deserve such a series of misfortunes. Again I threw myself on the bed, and tried to forget my care in sleep. It could not be done. I rang the bell at last, and when the Villain came, told him to light a fire, and bring some coffee.

To do the Villain justice, he was wonderfully attentive on this occasion. I think he had a kind of liking for me. Of course he had heard of the duel, and knew well enough what was the matter with me; but he offered no remark. He lighted the fire, prepared breakfast, brought up the *Courier* and a pile of letters. When he had finished, I dismissed him. Sitting in an easy-chair by the fireside, I drank a cup of strong coffee, with some brandy in it, and strove, but strove vainly, to eat. Under the covers were several tempting trifles, but I could touch none of them.

I took up the morning paper; the very first thing I saw was an account of the duel. I turned to my letters. None looked inviting. The first was from Norton & Co., with a formidable account of my liabilities, suggesting either prompt payment or additional security. My next was from Ezra Sykes, informing me that the year was a very bad one, and that my rents were difficult to collect, and that I was considerably in advance of my income. I laughed cynically. I felt quite an agreeable sensation when I thought of being ruined. It served me right. I had killed my friend, and broken my mistress's heart—to have flung away my property completed the circle of my achievements. These letters gave me an appetite. I ate some kidneys *aux fines herbes*, though they were getting cold.

What to do? My energy returned. I had a bath and dressed. I went first to my agents, and instructed them to sell my commission promptly. Then I went to Richmond, hired a boat, and rowed to Twickenham, past the lawn of Mrs. Lovelace's house—I yearned to know something of Lucy. I could only see that every blind in the house was drawn. I went ashore, got writing materials at an inn, and wrote a few lines to my darling. They were incoherent, I know. I tried not to throw any blame on Charlie, though I knew he was more to blame than

I. If Lucy could have seen me as I wrote, I think she might almost have been persuaded to forgive me. I sent the note by a messenger, ordering him to wait for an answer. It came soon enough, written on paper with a wide black edge.

"Mrs. Lovelace, on behalf of herself and her daughter, declines all farther intercourse with Sir Edward Ellesmere."

They gave me some very fair port wine at that Twickenham tavern. I finished the bottle, with aid of an anchovy toast, and then returned to London in a state of rebellious disgust. The world was against me, clearly. I had got into a downward current, as much by other people's fault as my own. Only a few days ago the happiest man in England, with every hope of a pleasant country home, with a lovely and loving wife. I was now about the most miserable of human beings. Why should this be, through the fault of others? This was the ceaseless question in my mind. It seemed so infernally unfair.

I could not remain in London. I told the Villain to pack up a few things in a valise, and started that night by the mail for Northamptonshire. I drove most of the way, to the delight of the coachman, who pocketed his guineas and rested his arms. We reached the "George" at Northampton earlier than usual.

CHAPTER VIII.

EZRA.

"Oculus domini saginat equum."

NEXT morning I took horse and rode to Ellesmere. Years had passed since I had visited my old home. The terrible blow which I had received made me reflect sadly on the foolish way in which I had neglected my estates and wasted my life. The whole of my career unwound itself slowly before my eyes, and I felt that it was a series of lamentable blunders. I left behind me a murdered friend and an estranged mistress; I came to find an estate neglected and impoverished. It was a dreary situation for a young man who had started with all the materials necessary for a distinguished career.

Soon I saw the old gables and turrets of Ellesmere in the distance. But before I reached it I had to pass a very handsome mansion, newly built, among pleasant gardens, standing on a spot where I remembered open common. Who could live there, I wondered?—who had been cool enough to enclose a part of my manor? There was no one near of whom to inquire, so I pushed on to Ellesmere.

The place was terribly altered since my father's days. The beautiful gardens were devoted to the growth of the commonest vegetables; sheep grazed in the park where there used to be herds of deer; the shutters of all the windows were closed, and I could not detect a wreath of smoke from any chimney. Everything seemed so melancholy that I felt almost inclined to ride back to Northampton at once. The gates were open, the lodge was unoccupied. I rode to the front door, and rang a tremendous peal on the bell. It brought a rough-looking country lout from somewhere behind. He said with surly civility,

"What's your will, master? Nobody lives here now."

"Whose house is it?" I said sternly.

"You'd better ask Mr. Sykes. I suppose he knows."

"Where is Sykes?"

"O, he lives down below in that new house. He's a nice 'un, he is."

"Open the front door," I said. "This house is mine. I am Sir Edward Ellesmere."

Open the door — then go and fetch Sykes."

The fellow evidently did not understand what it all meant; but my tone of command made him obedient, and I soon heard the unaccustomed bolts creaking in the locks. I entered. There was a room on the right my father had used to receive visitors on business; I had the shutters opened, and waited there for Sykes, striding up and down impatiently amid the dust of years.

Ezra came. His hair was white—his lank frame had grown portly; he was dressed most respectably. He entered the room with a doubtful look, as if not knowing whether to be servile or impudent.

"You are quite a stranger, Sir Edward," he said. "I am sorry you did not give me notice, that I might have had some rooms prepared for you. Perhaps you will condescend to stay at my little place."

"Your little place," I said, "appears to be built on part of the common. I have no recollection of giving leave that this should be done."

"You left me general permission to manage your affairs, Sir Edward, and of course it was necessary I should be on the spot."

"Being on the spot," I replied, "you might have kept this house and grounds in order."

"What I did was for economy's sake, Sir Edward. You know you required very large sums of money. There seemed no need to keep up a staff of servants."

"Pshaw! you might have kept servants enough to prevent the place from being ruined. I call this disgraceful! Am I to be without a dinner or a bed in my own house? You had better get some people in, and prepare rooms for me at once. After that, I will talk about business."

"You received my letter, Sir Edward?"

"Oh! yes—I received your letter. I will talk about that as soon as you can produce your accounts in a fit state for examination. Meanwhile, see if you can get some part of the house made habitable."

My abrupt and irritated manner frightened Ezra, who shuffled off to obey orders. I was in a lovely temper—everything was going wrong. Well, I would fight to the end, and see if I could not discomfit some of my enemies. It was bad enough to kill my friend in a duel, and to lose my ladylove, but when, in addition, I found my house shut up and no apparent chance of dinner, things became intolerable.

However, the worthy scoundrel Sykes exerted himself. He sent up his own servants, and emptied his own larder; he had not had the audacity to invade the wine-cellar, so I succeeded in getting a good bottle of claret, to wash down a sirloin of the juiciest, grown, of course, by an ox of my own.

Before the post went out I wrote a letter to my London agents, telling them to send down at once, without regard to expense, an accountant from the city, with ample experience in landed property. I also wrote to Norton for a statement of account.

For the next day or two I was alone. I told Sykes that business must, for the present, be deferred. I could see he was evidently in suspense, and at a nonplus. He had never expected to see me so resolute. For my part, there was a melancholy in my father's old house which seemed to calm my maddened brain; I could see him and my mother again, as they sat in the library or wandered upon the terrace. One night, when I had been in bed some hours, I awoke suddenly believing that I heard the organ in the hall—and the music was a plaintive melody my mother loved. I sprang from bed and descended the stairs, the music dwelling in my ear all the while; I half-fancied I should see my mother in her long-remembered seat, her white hands playing with the keys, my father bending over her. Ah no, the hall was still; the organ shut, the silence saddening. No footfall or rustle of silk proclaimed the flight of the spectral organist. It was all a dream—a dream that had rested on brain and dwelt in the ear after the passing of sleep. And yet—was it a dream wholly? Might it not be a visionary revealing of my mother's satisfaction in what I was now doing?

My agents sent down an accountant, and Norton sent down his account. The accountant was a Scotchman of sixty, named Fraser, who had evidently lived upon figures all his life. He came just in time for dinner; over our wine I told him what I had done (or rather, left undone), and what I proposed to do.

"You are quite right," he said, with a kind of deliberate drawl that seemed to indicate profound reflexion. "You will probably find matters not half so bad as these people are interested in proving; but it generally ends, when accounts have run so long, in some sort of compromise. Of course you have kept no account of the sums advanced by Norton or supplied by Sykes?"

He put this with an amusing air of pity, as if the idea of a man in my position keeping accounts was really too absurd. Why, you might as well expect your dog to read. Homer. In reply to my negative he said:

"There will be my main difficulty. But I shall conquer it, if I can make them think you *did* keep accounts."

Fraser rewarded himself for this astute idea by another glass of port. Then he went on:

"I have had many experiences with men of this kind, Sir Edward. It is like a game of whist; the great point is, to discover your opponent's cards. Now, in the present instance, you and I are partners against Norton and Sykes."

"I'm no better than a dummy," I said, "if as good."

"My dear sir," said Fraser, "you once held all the trumps, but played them very badly; you still hold the ace, being the actual possessor of a great estate, however much deteriorated and entangled. I shall extricate you from labyrinthine imbroglios, and we shall win the odd trick at least."

Fraser was fond of long words, which he paired rather oddly, and of metaphors which he sometimes mixed. But he was an accountant of the first order, born with an intuitive faculty for unravelling accidental or intentional muddles; while his long experience had made him familiar with the greedy moneylender and the dishonest steward, and he knew, by an inevitable instinct, where to put his finger on the weak points in their transactions.

I gave him *carte blanche*, and left him to encounter the two scoundrels—one my schoolfellow and the other my guardian—on his plan. Only one point I was determined about—to investigate to the utmost the circumstances of Sykes's building on my manor without leave, and to bring him to an account. As for me, I sent to London for the Villain, and for my horses and groom; and spent my days in solitary rides about the country, dining with Fraser at about eight. I relapsed into a kind of apathy, pending the settlement of my affairs. I did not even open my letters. I felt stunned and weary; my time was divided between the saddle and sleep. Strange to say, I could sleep dreamlessly; my brain, I think, was so shocked that its imaginative power had suffered paralysis. When I rode out, the brisk motion and fresh air seemed to give me a kind of languid pleasure; when I went to bed, it was with a feeling that I should be glad to sleep always. I should have welcomed that impossibility of the scientist, annihilation. I read no journals at that time, though the war was at its fiercest.

Ezra Sykes and Algernon Norton were disgusted when they found they had Fraser to meet; he was known as a redoubtable antagonist. I forget how many months he was at Ellesmere; but at length he came to me with a statement of what he could effect. He had immensely reduced Norton's claim, and had made Sykes a debtor to the estate; but still my extravagances had been such that he saw no way of clearing the property except by my letting the place, and allowing the rents to accumulate for gradual payment of arrears.

"I should not live here in any case," I said. "It would drive me mad."

"Well," replied Fraser, "an unobjectionable tenant is easily found. Indeed, I think I can find one immediately."

"What about Sykes's house?" I asked.

"He has taken counsel's opinion, and finds he is in the wrong. He offers ten thousand pounds for the land on which he has built."

"Ten thousand pounds, that he stole from me, in return for land that he also stole! No; turn him out at once. I will not have the reptile within sight."

Fraser remonstrated, but I was resolved. Within a week Sykes left his new mansion, I think he was glad to get away from within my reach, but a grocer's widow, whom he had married for her money, and her two daughters (by the grocer), execrated me as an abominable tyrant, and called poor Ezra a mean-spirited wretch for giving in without an action at law. Mrs. Sykes and the two Miss Figgeses had been quite the chief people of the neighbourhood for some years; they went away in a great rage.

The next thing I did excited Fraser's remonstrance still more. I pulled down Sykes's house, removed his conservatories, destroyed his gardens (leaving only trees and shrubs), and restored the place to its previous condition of common land. I would have no trace of the pestilent rascal in the vicinage. The materials did well to build a row of cottages for labourers, which happened to be much wanted. Thus, thank God, I was relieved from Ezra Sykes, who has never crossed my path since.

CHAPTER IX.

LORD LESBURY.

" 'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all."

FRASER, as he supposed, was able to obtain a tenant immediately for the house, and park, and the home-farm. Curiously, it was a client of his own, a good deal in my position—the young Earl of Lesbury. Lord Lesbury's father had been so extravagant that on his death it became necessary to let Lesbury Hall for a term of years, and the young Earl found himself with a very small income indeed. But within a twelve-month a rich bachelor uncle, high in the Indian service, died, leaving him a very large fortune; and, as he was anxious to have a place in the country, while waiting to re-enter his own demesne, he was glad to make an offer for Ellesmere. He, as well as I, had been Fraser's client, and the arrangement between us was quickly made.

He came down to look at the place, and we seemed to become friends at once. There was a candour about him, a luminous temperament, that reminded me of Lucy. It was almost painful to be in his company on this account, but it was a pleasurable pain. I soon found out the meaning of this. On the first night of his visit we were sitting together after dinner, Fraser having left us, no doubt designedly, when Lesbury said,

"Sir Edward, there is one thing I must tell you—pardon me if it gives you pain—

I am a first cousin of Charles Lovelace."

"And of Lucy," I thought. "No wonder I felt a strange trouble."

But I said nothing.

"I know what happened between you and Charlie," he said, "and I can assure you that I, in common with every man to whom I have spoken on the subject, think that the fault was entirely his."

"Not entirely," I said. "Chiefly, I admit; but if I had possessed more strength of mind, I might have prevented the duel, and saved myself from life-long sorrow."

"I never could understand Charlie's laying a trap for you as he did. It was so different from his usual character."

"He was maddened by jealousy. He had led too fast a life, and it did not suit him."

"Not faster than yours," said Lord Lesbury, "if I may say so."

"Not so fast. But I am an easy Epicurean, to whom self-indulgence is only too natural. Charlie was a Stoic, created for hard work and brave deeds, who took to dissipation because he was weary of enforced inaction. He was born to command, and might have been a Wellesley if he had had the chance."

"And you, Sir Edward?"

"O, I might have been a Cotton, perhaps."

There was silence for a time; then Lesbury said,

"I have something more to tell you, if you will kindly have patience to listen. Years ago Lucy and I were boy and girl sweet-hearts. When she grew into her beautiful youth I loved her, but I saw she regarded me simply as a brother. Of course I said no word. When you were visiting at Twickenham I was away in Warwickshire, trying to arrange my father's affairs; but I saw her once, during a hasty visit to London, and she spoke of you in a way that showed me you loved each other. It gave me a pang, but I was sincerely glad she would be happy. I have not seen her since till about a month ago."

"Is she changed?" I asked.

"She is more serious, perhaps, though she always had her fits of melancholy. It is a serene sadness; she reminds me of a Madonna of Raphael's that I saw in Italy. Her eyes have a remote look; she is more beautiful than ever. She spoke of you."

"She did?"

"Yes. 'I must never see Edward again in this world,' she said. 'If it were right, I could not bear it. Ah! and, besides, I should be afraid of myself and of him. We could not meet coldly. You may tell him what I say, Harry, if you should ever see him.' I think I remember her very words."

I could not speak to thank him. My face was hidden by my hands. He rose and paced the room, respecting my grief.

After a long pause, I said,

"Lesbury, I thank you. Do not speak to me again of Lucy."

"I will not," he said; "but I wish to say something more *now*. May I?"

"Go on," I replied.

"How should you feel if Lucy were to marry?"

"I hope she will. It will only add to my own grief to think of her as living a lonely life. If she should marry a good man, and have children, all this will be only a bitter-sweet memory of the past, to be recalled in melancholy hours. O, I wish her to marry!"

"You speak generously and nobly. I love her still. I have never in my life said a word to her of love. But, as we are first cousins, and know each other so well, I have thought in time she might learn to love me a little. It would be a love like twilight at first."

"A morning twilight, that becomes full noon in time," I replied. "You have my heartiest wishes. I know that with you Lucy will be happy—happier, perhaps, than she might have been with me."

No more was said. I dreamt that night of Lucy at Ellesmere, not my wife but another's, and wealth of roses blooming to greet their queen, and nightingales singing passionately through the sweet Summer nights. But in that dream I was not miserable—for there had risen in my heart a mighty desire for Lucy's happiness.

Very soon after this I left Ellesmere to Lesbury, and went forth on a pilgrimage. I discharged all my servants, the Villain among the rest; he was profoundly sorry to go, and I don't wonder at it. He must have made a very fine income out of my follies; the rumour reached me that he himself set up as a country gentleman, and eventually got into the society of people whom he had previously seen when standing behind my chair. Why not? Has not a footman become a Secretary of State?

Fraser advised me not to draw more than two thousand a year from the property, and I had inwardly determined to live on much less than that, in order to free my paternal estate. My mother's large inheritance, I should have mentioned earlier, passed to the Lyle family on her death. But Ellesmere was a noble property, if only I could clear off the encumbrances; and this I resolved to do, having a special object therein.

Lesbury wished to correspond with me. I told him that he might write to me when he found his happiness secured, but that I wished, for a time at least, to isolate myself from all my friends and acquaintances. I wanted to try a new kind of life Too long had I been travelling in one groove—the straight and swift descent to Avernus; I pined to take a wholly different track. Lesbury tried hard to persuade me to keep up a correspondence with him, but could not shake my resolution. It was at last agreed that he should write to me, under care of Fraser, when he had asked Lucy and received her answer.

He seemed more grieved than I when I rode away one April morning entirely alone.

I had kept from my stud a famous brown hunter, Mazeppa, steady and strong, and a splendid fencer; on him, with a valise strapped to the saddle, containing the merest necessaries, I rode away from Ellesmere. I took with me a good stock of money, not wishing to communicate with Fraser for some time. Lesbury went with me to the gate, where I grasped his hand with a hearty wish for his success, and cantered away across the wide common, no longer made hideous by Ezra Sykes's mansion.

What was I leaving behind? My father's house; my true love; my wasted life. No pleasant thought for a man past his freshness of youth—past the days of illusion. A time comes when you comprehend the world, and find that much of what you deemed its beauty was the mere creation of your own ebrious brain. Somebody says that youth is a perpetual fever; my youth was. I have since learnt that you can only be happy when you see the world as it is, not as you fancied it in your early delirium of delight. But to see the world as it is! who can do it? Some regard it through the golden glass of perpetual sunshine; some through the blue glass of perpetual frost. What we want is the white light of truth.

I rode for weeks through the lovely weather of April; and, though I did not forget my great grief, I felt some consolation in the thought that I had now acted rightly. Great strength and solace nature gave me, in the song of heaven-seeking sky-lark, and cyclic flight of ever-returning swallow—with wealth of wild flower, and music of brook, and delicious breath of wind. And from humanity I also found relief;

country folk, peasant lasses, had their gay greeting for the traveller, gave information in a kindly way; landlords of wayside inns apologised for their humble accommodation, yet made me far more comfortable than when I stopped at an hotel at The Bath or at Weymouth. I seldom met a churl, though those were rougher times than these; and I often thought, what a pity it is the different classes of the English do not know each other more intimately. I am of the same opinion to this day, after an experience without parallel. The poor have something to learn from the rich; the rich have quite as much (perhaps more) to learn from the poor.

On the last day of April, being a Sunday, late in the evening, I rode into a small midland village, and pulled up at what seemed to be the principal inn. It was a large rambling two-storied place, with a rustic porch in front, where smokers were sitting. The landlord came forward in his shirt-sleeves, and a boy ran to hold Mazeppa, and I dismounted. On asking whether I could have supper and a bed, mine host began to apologise at once, but I cut him short by saying that I was used to rough living, and could eat anything and sleep anywhere. Upon this he showed me into the bar, where a not unwelcome fire was burning, and went to consult the "missus." The favourable result of this conclave being quickly announced, I went off to look after Mazeppa.

The landlady wanted to do me honour by putting me in a private room, but I was too old a campaigner.

"No," I said, decidedly, "this is far too comfortable a corner for me to leave. And I dare say you will have company presently, and then I shall hear some clever talk."

"Ah, that you will, sir," said the landlord. "I don't think e'er a man in England knows so much about old Bonypart as our Will Smiter, the blacksmith; and I believe, if he were to be Minister, we should soon have that fellow in a cage to show as a wild beast."

"Nonsense about Will Smiter," said the landlady; "Mr. Drawl, the parish clerk, knows far more than he does. As how shouldn't he, seeing that he has to help the Rector on with his surplice every Sunday morning?—if so be he comes, that is."

The difference of opinion between landlord and landlady as to the village oracles did not prevent my having a capital supper. I got a joint of roast lamb, and some first-class home-brewed ale. I thought I might as well finish the entertainment with some wine, "for the good of the house," and was surprised by getting an excellent bottle of port—though port was much better at the beginning of the century than it has ever been since.

The village wiseacres arrived while I was engaged with my wine. It was easy to recognize Mr. Drawl by his seedy, semi-clerical look, and Mr. Smiter by the stalwart hammer-hardened muscles that seemed to resent compression within unaccustomed sleeves. Other rural luminaries were present, but I cannot recollect them all.

The village debate this evening did not deal with Bonaparte and the Ministry. Two other topics of closer interest made this bucolic senate neglect foreign affairs. The next day was May Day; there was a maypole, a wake, and the like; and a tremendous schism had occurred between the villagers as to who should be Queen of the May. I should hardly have recollected the names of the two candidates but for their country origin; one was Ruth Greenland, the other Mary Appleyard. No choice had been made; the wise seniors anticipated, apparently with pleasure, the appearance of two rival Queens, and a free fight between the lads of the village of the opposing Greenland and Appleyard factions. It was Montagu and Capulet in miniature.

On the other topic they spoke with bated breath. "Mad Will Scudamore was back." With some difficulty, their dialect being peculiar, I found that this worthy was a native of the village; that he had been the plague of the place till he 'listed for a soldier; that he came back, having deserted, and turned highwayman, so that none of the roads were safe; that he had been away, nobody knew where, for three or four years; that now he was back again, and had robbed several people quite lately. He rode an iron-grey horse, but nobody could guess where he lived, unless it was at Eynsham Caves—which appeared to be some old lead mines.

I went to bed more amused with the evening's talk than I have often been with the conversation at the mess-table. I slept soundly, and was awakened by sounds of rustical music. Looking from my window, I beheld the tall maypole on the village green, and two opponent bands of youngsters were each bringing forward a rival queen. One, whom I afterwards learnt to be the Greenland, was a tall slender girl, who looked as if she were dying of consumption. The Appleyard was short and round and plump, and looked as if nothing could hurt her, unless she overate herself. Whig and Tory never had better causes of quarrel. Between *tall and slender* and *short and plump* there is a definite issue.

I strolled down before breakfast to see the fun. The rival bands of lads used strong language to each other, but seemed loth to fight. There ought to be a teacher of boxing in every village. These louts had pluck enough to throw stones at each other, but dared nothing further. I was going away to look for breakfast, when I heard Mr. Drawl, the parish clerk, speak with tones of authority. He threatened the ringleaders of the riot with the stocks and the whipping-post, and advised them, as they could not agree which was the prettiest girl, to have two queens, and pass their holiday in a peaceable neighbourly way.

The sagacious words of this ecclesiastical Nestor allayed the storm; the two queens became allies, and I, wishing to cement the peace, handed Mr. Drawl a guinea for each of them, which seemed to give the girls and their lovers amazing delight. I had thrown away such myriads of guineas, just to pass the time, that I walked back to the inn astonished at the pleasure two guineas could give.

A wholesome country breakfast was prepared for me in a parlour looking on a quaint, old-fashioned garden. After that meal, I walked out on the common, where the fun grew fast and furious. If they had begun to dance already, where would their legs be by bed-time? As I thus reflected, I was joined by the parish clerk and the blacksmith, both of whom looked so anxious that I thought perhaps the French had landed.

"Are you going to travel to-day, sir?" said Drawl.

"Towards evening, I think."

"I ask," continued the parish clerk, "because that highwayman, Mad Will Scudamore, was on the green to-day, and saw you give me money for the girls."

"On the green!" I said. "Why the devil didn't you seize him?"

"We're all afraid of him," said Smiter. "He's bewitched—you can't hurt him."

I knew full well it was useless to reason with this sort of superstition. It has an intelligible basis. The most reckless men, whether soldiers or robbers, are always the most fortunate; if two men meet, of whom one values his life and the other does not, the latter has the advantage; so I merely said,

"Well, I am not afraid of the fellow. I

thought of riding over to a little town called Redborough; I see it is only a dozen miles by the map, so I need not start till late."

Parish clerk and blacksmith both shook their heads sadly, and evidently deemed me lost. Even the landlord and landlady piteously remonstrated, when, after a ramble of many hours, and a final glance at the May-day sports (the two queens were somewhat dishevelled and rumpled), I came in for some dinner before starting. I merely laughed at their scruples.

The sun had set, and there was a bright crescent moon as I rode away toward Redborough. I had pistols in my holsters, but my main reliance was on a heavily-loaded riding-whip, and on my knowledge of Mazeppa's cleverness. I had travelled about four miles, when my quick eye caught something that moved in a lane that joined the high road just in front of me; I patted my horse's shoulder, and rode rather faster. Out of the dim light came down upon me a man on an iron-grey horse, pistol in hand, shouting some blasphemous threat.

Quick as light I rode Mazeppa at him; with one cut of the whip I broke his pistol wrist; with a second, right on the temple, I struck him from his horse. The animal, too good for his master, stood like a rock.

A few hundred yards beyond I thought I saw the lights of a house. Without waiting to ascertain the scoundrel's condition, I rode forwards, and found a picturesque roadside inn, with a group of splendid trees in front of it.

CHAPTER X.

FIVE TREE HILL.

Arborum directi in quincuncem ordines.

CICERO.

I REINED up Mazeppa at the inn door; under the porch stood the landlord, a wiry fellow, shirt-sleeved, erect. He gave me a soldierly salute with the left hand, and I perceived his right arm was gone.

"Cavalry officer," he said. "Knew the trot. What can I do for your honour?"

"I have just knocked over a fellow who tried to rob me," I said. "It was close by here. Can you send some people to see what has happened to him?"

"Why, it must be Will Scudamore, sir," said the landlord. Then he blew a shrill whistle, and several men came running up from the stables. "Go down the road with lanterns; this gentleman has knocked down a robber. Won't you come in, sir? I'll take the greatest care of your horse, and my wife will take the greatest care of you."

I dismounted. There seemed no reason why I should trouble myself about this discomfited highwayman. I had no particular desire to push on to Redborough, and might just as well see what this old soldier could supply in the way of provender and sleeping arrangement. The place looked promising. I was shown into a parlour comfortably furnished; and the landlady, a brown dark-haired lass of five-and-twenty, did all she could to make me comfortable.

Having discovered that a supper and a

bed were procurable, I visited the stables to see that Mazeppa was well-housed and well-fed. When I returned, they had just brought in the highwayman and his horse. The fellow was stunned, but, I am happy to say, not dead. Having, by inadvertence, killed a friend, I had no wish also to kill an enemy. The landlord had him shut up in a room that night, with a man on guard; and in the morning sent to Redborough to the magistrate. The famous iron-grey horse was impounded.

I, being the hero of the hour, got a capital supper, and the best wine the house afforded. Things were good, for it was a coaching house, and about a dozen coaches changed horses there during the day. This brought in a nice little bit of business, as the landlord alleged. When I had dined, I asked him to make a bowl of punch, and to join me in drinking it, and we grew quite confidential. His buxom wife did not disdain a glass. I soon found out that both the landlord and his wife were originals.

"My name, your honour," he said, "is Timothy Short——"

"Well, you needn't be so proud of such a name as that," interrupted the landlady. "I never thought I should live to be Mrs. Short."

"It was very wrong of you, my dear, to condescend. My wife's a superior woman, sir, and I'm afraid I don't exactly do her the justice which her sublime character requires. I've always thought myself rather an unlucky man, sir; if you're born short, and christened Timothy, what are you to expect but to lose your right arm in battle and marry a scolding wife?"

"Isn't he a wretch?" said buxom Mrs.

Short, good-humouredly. "As if I ever scolded him!"

I saw clearly enough that Timothy and his wife enjoyed these little squabbles, and played them off as a kind of comedy for the amusement of spectators. They were a capital pair. Each had a special humour, and each had opportunity to gratify it. While Tim was absorbing all the casual news brought by the stage-coaches that breakfasted and dined and supped at his house, Mrs. Tim made herself agreeable to anybody who stayed at the house, whether for an hour or a night.

Timothy Short was by no means short in his narratives; he made me acquainted that evening with the greater part of his history. I learnt where he had left his right arm, and how his wife Barbara came to fall in love with him. He liked to talk about himself, but too often got cut short by his wife, who had doubtless heard all his stories so often that she could have told them better than he. I ascertained from him that the inn was the "Romayne Arms," and that the little village around was called Five Tree Hill. The property belonged to General Romayne, who was on foreign service. Timothy, who had been born on the estate, and had served for years in the General's own regiment, was put into the inn when his wounds compelled him to leave the army.

"He's a good gentleman, the General," said Tim, "though uncommon fierce. When he came to see me in the hospital he said, 'Short, my man, you shan't starve. There's a new landlord wanted at the little inn at Five Tree Hill, so I've written to my steward that you're to be the man. Get well, go home, and marry a woman that can manage a house, then you'll make your fortune.'"

"You seem quite in the way to it, Timothy," I said. "You've got the right sort of wife, anybody can see. But why is this place called Five Tree Hill?"

"There's a story about that, sir. The arms of the Romaynes are five trees. I don't know in what century it was, your honour . . ."

"Any century will do, Timothy," said I, thinking of my uncle Toby.

"Well, there were five brothers of the Romaynes, and the eldest stayed at home and married, and the other four went out to see the world, and make their fortunes. Before they went they planted five trees in a clump, each putting in one. Years passed away, and nothing was heard of any of them, for I believe it was before writing letters was invented; but one morning, when the Squire came downstairs, he saw that one of the trees was withered, and said, 'My brother is dead.' And the other trees died in the same way, the eldest brother's being last of all. So his son took five trees for his arms, and wherever the Romaynes settle, they always plant five trees in a cluster. There are five opposite my door."

There were, as I discovered next morning, when lovely May sunshine brought me down early. As I walked out of the front door I heard the ringing horn of a mail-coach, and ostlers came out with four fresh horses. Up came the mail; the steaming horses were unharnessed, and rubbed their heads together as they walked into the well-known yard, expectant of corn; outside passengers tumbled off hastily to snatch a glass of "something short," Timothy being a renowned maker of "lamb's wool." Mrs.

Short herself appeared at the coach door, to see if any ladies inside required refreshment.

"Harry," said Timothy to the guard, "you needn't carry that old blunderbuss of yours any more; we've got Will Scudamore safe."

"You don't mean it!" said coachman and guard at once.

"I do, though. There's the gentleman that did it. I want you to tell the Redborough constable, that he may come after him."

"Well, it's a blessing that scamp's taken. I'll send the constable."

At this moment off started the fresh team, and the place was quiet. I examined the situation. The high-road ran along the ridge of a long hill; on the right hand, as you looked towards Redborough, there was a wide common, gradually sloping downwards; on the left a lane that was half grass descended much more steeply to a valley in which water was visible. The Romayne Arms occupied a corner of this lane, the front being in the lane itself, while the stable-yard faced the road. At the opposite corner, on a space of turf, was a quincunx of stately trees; the centre one a very tall Lombardy poplar, the other an oak, a beech, a walnut, and a Spanish chestnut, all evidently of great age. The sign that swung in front of the Romayne Arms was a real work of art; this very group of trees was painted on it, and by no mere dauber, clearly.

The whole aspect of this place pleased me; the bold sweep of common one side, across which there was a glimpse of Redborough town; the steep suggestive lane on the other, with immense trees and crystal water. Half way down the lane on the right hand there seemed to be a cottage buried in trees; and in front of its gate there was another quincunx, of exactly the same character. A third, as I discovered later, had been planted at the foot of the hill.

I determined to stay at the Romayne Arms a day or two, and explore the neighbourhood. So I went in, and found Mr. Short busy preparing my breakfast. The kitchen was visible from the wide passage; there was the buxom landlady toasting herself before a brisk fire, while she delicately toasted my rashers of bacon. The meal was excellent—the freshest cream and eggs and water-cresses; and when I praised the tea, Timothy said,

"Well, your honour, it goes against my conscience, having served the King, but I must confess to you that tea hasn't paid duty.

My wife's brother is in that way of business, and I can't quarrel with him for bringing me a chest of good stuff when he comes this way. I hate quarrels between relations."

"And your wife likes good tea, Timothy. Small blame to her. You needn't let your conscience trouble you; if the duty had been paid the King wouldn't have got it—it would only have been wasted by his ministers."

This casuistry gave Tim great satisfaction.

"Who painted your sign, Timothy?" I asked.

"Ah, sir, I wish I knew. He was a gentleman about fifty perhaps, that came here by the down mail one dreadful snowy night. He'd been going further, but the cold was too much for him travelling outside, and he had his luggage got out, and stayed here. He was very feeble at first, and said he had been suffering from a sharp illness; but he got better in a week, and looked quite young again. One day he asked for his bill; I gave it him, and he paid it, and turned over the gold he had left ('twasn't much) in the palm of his hand with a queer look. 'Landlord,' says he, 'that's all the money I've got, and I ought to be somewhere else making more; and I don't want to go. That old sign of yours is in a seedy state; how long will you keep me here if I paint you a first-rate one?'

" 'A month, sir,' says I, without thinking; and didn't my missus blow me up when I told her! But when she saw him put out his easel and sit all day patiently drawing the trees, and bringing out branch after branch, she said, 'He may stay a year if he likes.' The trees were all bare, for the late snows made it a dull spring; but he painted them as they were—and then, when they came quickly into leaf with the hot sun, he painted them with their leaves on. So one side of the sign is Winter like, and the other's Summer."

"I did not notice that, Timothy," I said. "I must look at it."

They were two masterly pictures, that improved as you examined them. The character of each tree had been caught perfectly, both with and without its leaves; you could see from the bare bough that it *must* have such foliage as the companion picture showed.

"Well, your honour," continued the garrulous landlord, "he didn't say a word about going away; but when the sign was finished and hung up, he set to work and did a picture of the house. And then he painted the missus, and then he painted me—they're wonderfully like."

"Where are they, Timothy?" I asked.

"Upstairs, sir."

He led me to a large old-fashioned panelled room on the first floor, evidently kept for great occasions—full of nick-nacks, and with two bow-windows, through which the light streamed cheerfully. On the walls were the picture of the inn, and life-size portraits of Timothy and his wife, done with real power. There was not only masterly execution—there was also that divination of character which belongs to the great portrait-painters only. The great painter is the best of all historians. What a revelation is there in a portrait of Titian or Vandyke! I have just seen Mr. Millais castigated by an art-critic for adhering to portraiture; but if he has the supreme art he is right. Unluckily the people who can afford to pay the fee of a great portrait-painter are seldom the people whose portraits posterity will care to see.

"These are admirable, Timothy," I said. "How long did your friend stay with you?"

"About eight months, your honour. One Autumn morning, when the London coach from Redborough pulled up, he walked out as cool as possible, without any luggage, and got up outside. 'I'm going to London for a day or two, Timothy,' he said. 'Take care of my things; and, by-the-way, just deliver this letter.' He threw down the letter as the coach was off, and I picked it up without looking at it, and told my wife. 'Let's look at the letter,' says she; and fancy, sir, it was addressed *Mr. Timothy Short!* So I opened it, and there was a Bank of England note for a hundred pounds, and nothing else in the world. That was two years ago, and I've heard nothing more of the gentleman; his luggage is here still, and I've kept the bank-note, for his paintings are worth more than that, I'll swear, and he never cost me half the money."

Tim insisted on showing me the note; it was charmingly crisp and new, and bore the magic signature of Abraham Newland.

"Put it in a frame, Tim," I said, "and hang it up in your bar—it will astonish your visitors. Only mind Mrs. Short takes it up to bed along with you and the silver."

There was a long morning before me. I left the landlord, just full of business through a stage-coach arrival, and strolled down the lane. It was very steep, and by no means straight. Half way down, as I have said, there was another quincunx formed of trees of the same kind; it stood opposite a green gate, through which I could just catch a glimpse of a pleasant lawn and a quaint cottage. A thick yew hedge, six feet high, ran down the hill, securing the privacy of the garden. Idly speculating as to who might live there, I passed on to the bottom of the lane.

This was an idyl. A grass ride, equally tempting in both directions; parallel with it a clear stream, in which the trout were visible; on the other side, accessible by stepping-stones, an ancient chapel, which I later found was dedicated to Apollonia, that saint whose teeth cured the toothache, and who was kindly so prolific of teeth that many tons of them were found when the monasteries were dissolved. Saintly kindness could go no farther; St. Apollonia could not have wanted so many teeth for her personal use, though rumpsteaks were probably tougher in her time than in ours.

The chapel was small and old; the surrounding soil had grown up round it; the windows were mere arrow-slits; moss and lichen of centuries encrusted it, and there was maiden-hair fern growing on its topmost stones. The door was a round archway. There was not a house in sight, nor a human being; it was a solitude that to me seemed delight. Since I had killed my friend, and lost my love, I pined for nothing but to be alone, unknown. I could bear the company of absolute strangers, people not of my own class; but I preferred absolute solitude. I did not brood over my great trouble; I accepted my fate, and hoped that Lesbury and my beautiful Lucy might be happy together. But it seemed strange that I, who had lived the gay life of a Londoner, should find no solace now except in the quietude of woods and fields and streams. Song of bird and colour of flower seemed sent to cheer me. When alone in the Spring sunshine, I fell into a visionary state, and seemed to assimilate the natural calm around me.

I was not, however, on this occasion destined to remain long in my trance—being aroused by the arrival of Timothy Short, who cried out to me across the stream—

"Begs pardon, your honour, but the Redborough magistrates wants you to go over about Scudamore."

I crossed the brook, and found that the magistrates wanted my deposition before they sent the highwayman for trial, and had adjourned their session till four in the afternoon, that I might be present So I walked up the steep lane in the landlord's company, and, as I passed the gate of the cottage half way up, asked him who lived there.

"Nobody, your honour. It's to let—to a gentleman."

"What do you mean?"

"It belongs to the General," said Tim. "His great uncle, Doctor Romayne, lived there till about four years ago, when he died—over a hundred, they say. He didn't look above seventy at the last, and he wouldn't have died if he hadn't fallen downstairs. He was a wonderful nice old gentleman, and knew everything."

"And the place is to let?" I said, interrogatively.

"Well, your honour, it's this way—I've got the letting of it. There's the old gardener and his wife living there, and keeping it in order. The General, after the old Doctor's funeral—he's buried close where your honour was sitting—the General says to me: "Short, if any gentleman that looks the right sort would like to live in the cottage, you may let it him, sticks and all, for twenty pounds a year. But don't let any damned tradesman have it; burn it down first."

After a bit of bread and cheese, and a pint of Timothy's home-brewed ale, I mounted Mazeppa, and rode towards Redborough. As I rode, I could not help thinking of the quaint cottage which, "sticks and all," was to be let for twenty pounds a year. Why shouldn't I take it, and be forgotten? I determined, at any rate, to see it the very next day.

It was slightly down hill all the way to Redborough. The town—a flourishing one—apparently got its name from the red sandstone of which it is almost entirely built. The effect is pleasant. There are three fine old churches and a ruined castle in this material. The streets are mostly narrow, but very clean, from the abundance of water, which flows down from the moor, and turns the gutters into brooklets. The County Hall, which I had to visit, stands in a market-place; where also are some other public buildings. In the centre of this market-place is the statue of a queen, crowned, under a rich stone canopy; but the antiquaries cannot decide what queen it represents.

My business with the magistrates was brief enough. The court was crowded—all the neighbourhood had come to see the famous highwayman, and the man who had terminated his career, and I was received with applause. The robber had engaged a pettifogger to defend him, and this fellow cross-examined me amusingly. I had given my name as Edward Ellesmere, leaving the baronetcy unmentioned, and had said that I had no fixed address, but was travelling for my amusement. The scene that followed was laughable.

Pettifogger.—You say you have no address?

Myself.—None.

Pettifogger.—Do you consider that respectable?

Myself.—Yes.

Pettifogger.—Oh—h—h! Respectable! Are you sure you are not a highwayman yourself?

Myself.—Quite.

Pettifogger.—Can you produce testimonials to your respectability?

Myself.—I do not consider it necessary to produce such testimonials before knocking down a robber—or an insolent lawyer.

Pettifogger gobbled like a turkey-cock; the old fogies on the bench interposed, and complimented me on my courage, and committed the prisoner; and I went across the market-place to what seemed the principal hotel, to make arrangements about corresponding with Fraser. Whether I took the cottage or not, I meant to stay at Five Tree Hill for some time.

The Royal Hotel was crowded with people who had come to hear the case. I got complimented on all hands for my pluck. Loudest in his praise was Sir Boanerges Brooks, chairman of the bench of magistrates, whose every alternate word was an oath; and who damned himself to the twentieth power (as a mathematician might say), with the wish that he had had the chance of doing the same thing. As I looked at Sir Boanerges's blear eyes and puffy abdomen, I doubted whether he would have done it.

Escaping as well as I could from the

bucolic crowd, I got at the landlord, and arranged with him to receive any letters addressed, "*Mr. Ellesmere, Royal Hotel, Redborough.*" Then I mounted Mazeppa, and rode home to dinner—received with quite an ovation by Timothy and Barbara.

CHAPTER XI.

BEAU SEJOUR.

"Hic in reducta valle Caniculae
Vitabis aestus."

TIMOTHY SHORT took me next day to see old Doctor Romayne's cottage, which he had called Beau Sejour. It was a rambling place, two stories high; the garden and lawn were delightful, shut in by thick hedges of yew and Portugal laurel, haunted by innumerable starlings, blackbirds, thrushes, grosbeaks; a perennial spring rose in front of the house, and, after filling a wide water-cress bed, ran in a tiny rivulet down to the brook below; the sunny May air was alive with pigeons, there being a large dove-cot, with pyramidal roof, at the back of the cottage. It was the quaintest isolated corner. The entrance was at the side, into a little hall; beyond were a couple of sitting-rooms opening on each other, and a door from each of those rooms opened into a bedroom behind.

"What is upstairs?" I asked Timothy.

"Come and see, your honour," he said.

I ascended, and found one large room, rather low, extending over the whole of the house—the servants' rooms, as well as those I have described. It was lined on all sides with bookcases and bookshelves, and the floor was covered with boxes full of books. The room was very light, having windows on all sides, and in one of those windows stood an old black oak writing-table, with an uncomfortable straight-backed chair to match. A sheet of paper and an old quill lay in front of the chair. I glanced at the paper, wondering what Doctor Romayne may last have written in that antique chair. There was one word—"Yes"—in very faded ink. Perhaps it was only the first syllable of yesterday.

I said *yes* in my own mind at once, for I thought I would sit in that straight-backed chair, and look at the lovely landscape below—all garden and lawn to the stream and Saint Apollonia's chapel—and investigate this quaint old forgotten library. Doctor Romayne's *yes* seemed prophetic and effective, as, indeed, it was.

That evening I was much amused by a little fight between Timothy and his wife on the merits of their respective almanacs. Almanacs were dear then, thanks to the shilling stamp; one and tenpence seems a heavy price; but who could do without his almanac? Mrs. Short takes the work of "Francis Moore, physician," and reads to her husband with delight the following prediction for May:—

"This month is ushered in with an opposition of *Jupiter* and *Mars*, and soon after there is an opposition of the *Sun* and *Saturn;* these show the motions of armies, and the usual misfortunes and miseries attending the same; the loss of honour, or death of a great prince, also of a military commander of the first degree."

"There!" says buxom Mrs. Barbara, "what do you say to *that*, Timothy Short?"

Now Timothy's favourite almanac was *Old Poor Robin*, and he at once began to read in return:—

> "Now jolly lads, who, left at home,
> Are safe from war and strife,
> Let each in haste fulfil his doom,
> And take himself a wife.
> For soldiers if one half are gone,
> What must the maidens do?
> Why, I myself, good faith, for one,
> Am willing to take two."

"Yes, that's your *poor* Sir Robin!" says Mrs. Short. "I wonder you aren't ashamed of such nonsensical trash in these dreadful times!"

"Pooh! my dear," says the old soldier, "Sir Robin's right enough. He says just after:

> 'We all of us will mend our lives,
> And fight our foes, and love our wives,
> Keep dear Old England hale and hearty,
> And thrash this rascal Buonaparte.'"

"Ah! now that's better," quoth Mrs. Short. "But still, you know, Moore *does* tell what's going to happen."

"Ay, but it doesn't happen," retorted Timothy.

"Now, how can you say so? Didn't he prophesy, only two years ago, the death of the poor Emperor of Turkey? I remember the very words. 'If he can save his life, let him: I give him fair warning.' And isn't the Emperor murdered, just as Doctor Moore said he would be?"

"Well, I can't deny the Grand Turk, that's a fact," says Timothy. "It was a good guess."

"Guess!" cried the indignant Mrs. Short. "Why, last December our cow died, and you know Moore said there would be lots of casual accidents."

"Your honour's a scholar," said the provoking Timothy, turning to me. "Is *casual accidents* Latin for a cow's dying of old age?"

The quarrels between Timothy and his wife were mere comedy quarrels, and soon came to an end; and on this occasion the old soldier got the best of it by declaring that Poor Robin, some five years ago, had made Mrs. Short propose to marry him, saying—

"Girls, this is Leap Year. Come, be bolder;
Next time you will be four years older.
Don't throw away another Summer,
Marry the very earliest comer."

When Timothy found that I had a fancy for living at Beau Sejour he was perfectly delighted. There were no stables at the cottage, but Timothy could make Mazeppa comfortable, and I saw full well he would be pleased to do it. Then came the question of somebody to cook my dinner, and so forth. The gardener and his wife were in charge, and I designed to keep them on, but the gardener's wife was very deaf, and had imperfect ideas of cookery.

"Wouldn't your sister Emma like to come, my dear?" says Timothy to his spouse.

"Well," said Mrs. Short, "she would do very well, I think. Only you know I must tell the gentleman all about her."

"True," quoth Timothy, with profound gravity. "Never hide anything."

"You see, sir," said Mrs Short, with a tear in her eye, "my sister has had a misfortune. She was very great friends with a young man, who pretended to be very religious, and went to the same chapel . . . and she, poor dear! believed in him, and he took advantage of her, the mean wretch! and then ran away. She had a poor little child, that died; she's living at home with mother at Redborough, and moping; but I think she'd make a good servant if you don't object, sir."

"*Your* sister's a good girl, I'll swear, Mrs. Short," I said. "She will do capitally.

Don't tell her that I know anything of her misfortune. It would only make her uncomfortable, without cause."

"She is sure to ask, sir," said Mrs. Short.

"Say *no*," I answered, "There is not the slightest need for anyone's knowing anything about it. If she comes here without any explanation, she may get on very comfortably."

Thus I was provided with a servant, and a capital servant she became; but before I took possession of Beau Sejour we had an adventure at the Romayne Arms. My highwayman had been kept in Redborough gaol all this time; one morning the guard of the up mail told Timothy that all the town was excited because he had escaped.

"You'll hear something about him up here," said the guard. "He's desperate revengeful and cunning."

His conversation Timothy repeated to me. Although not alarmed, I was prepared for anything. From all I had heard of this man Scudamore he was not a mere ordinary thief; a disordered brain had driven him to the highway, just us it drives others to the Stock Exchange, others into Parliament.

The Romayne Arms was generally half awake all night, thanks to the night coaches. Sunday night was the exception; and one Sunday night I was awakened by feeling a rough hand upon my shoulder. It was pitch dark. My greatest annoyance is to be disturbed in my sleep, and my greatest virtue is promptitude. I struck savagely at the place where the head of such a hand ought to be, and was rewarded by finding my fist do damage. My assailant fell to the ground. I got out of bed and vigorously rang the bell, disturbing the whole household. The first arrival was a servant-maid, who, determined to be decent, had in her hurry put over her arms the garment designed for her lower extremities. My man was stunned; and the affair cost me, much to my annoyance, another interview with the Redborough magistrates. However, on this second occasion rather more care was taken of Will Scudamore.

I took possession of Beau Sejour. I found the old gardener and his deaf wife very useful servants; he, though slow, was sure, and had that old experience which

> " . . . . . doth attain
> To something like prophetic strain."

Though never rapid, having outlived rapidity, he was never idle. Tom Radstock couldn't be idle if he tried; he must be doing something.

His wife kept the kitchen fire burning,

and was indefatigable in cleaning—hating a speck of dirt as much as Nelson hated a Frenchman. She and Emma got on well together. So I got settled down, and I enjoyed two things—the lovely quiet country, and old Doctor Romayne's library. I studied the country first. I wandered and pondered. It was to me a new form of existence, and I learnt many things in that isolation. Down where the clear stream murmured and rippled by the dusty old lichen-stained walls of St. Apollonia's chapel I drank in the beauty of nature, and thought over the infatuate folly of my own life. "What shadows we are," said the most eloquent of men, "and what shadows we pursue!" I resolved to pursue shadows no longer. I determined to follow (a long way off) those philosophers who cared only for intellectual beauty. Rang in my ears those lovely lines:

"How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute."

And to philosophy I was recalled, when one day through Fraser I received a letter from Lesbury. Thus it ran:

"DEAR ELLESMERE,

"Forgive me for being happier than you. When the only girl that I could ever love told me, with tears in her eyes, that she would try to love me, I felt, amid my supreme happiness, almost the misery of a murderer. If I lost Lucy now it would kill me; yet I sometimes think I could suffer that loss if it were possible for her to be yours.

"But I will not waste words, when words cannot touch the depths of meaning. Lucy vows she will not marry without a line from you to say she may.

"Your loving friend, "LESBURY."

It took me some hours to decide how to answer that letter. I thought I had obtained the power of sacrifice; but then came the vision of Lucy Lovelace in another man's arms—ay, even Lesbury's—and, my God! I felt as if I must kill that man. I wandered up and down my garden: I went down to St. Apollonia's chapel, and listened to the river. I walked myself dead tired, and positively frightened poor little Emma by my face's pallor, when I came back, after a long struggle with myself, anxious to catch the post. Then, with tremulous hand, I wrote a blotted line, not to Lesbury.

"Dear Lucy,

"Marry Lesbury. Try to be happy. I will try to be content.

"Your lover once, your friend for ever,

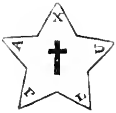
"E. E."

When I wrote that scrawl, I little thought I should ever see it again. Yet I did again see it, carefully kept in an ivory casket, and yellow with age.

I sent off my letter, and shut myself in Dr. Romayne's library. I wanted something rough to break my mind upon, as a great poet hath said. I took a quarto MS. volume, and sat in the black oak chair, and gazed at the book some time without realizing what it was about. When I did, I found there was a weird wild geometry in it. There was the family quincunx, pentagrammatic:

𝔒 𝔚
𝔓
𝔏 ℭ

There was a stellated pentagon thus arranged:



This puzzled me greatly for some time, till I saw that *Pax* and *Lux* were herein indicated, a cross being the common terminal of both. And this, indeed, I found more clearly shown by some verse, in a most crabbed MS. that followed the pentagram :

> "Lux est amor, Pax est Lux,
> Christe, animarum Dux!
> Mihi da amoris flammam,
> Mihi daque pacis mammam.
> Amo ubi amet Dux :
> Sequor ubi signet Crux."

There was a good deal more Latin rhyme in the volume, some whereof struck me as not exactly what Catullus would have tolerated, and as being particularly loose in its subjunctive moods. There was mathematics ; there was astrology ; there was cheirognomy ; there was alchemy. Here is a recipe for making gold, which I have never tried :—

"Take a female toad, seven years old ;

put it in a new linen cloth; carry it seven miles (walking and fasting) between midnight and one o'clock, on the eve of Saint Bridget; as the clock strikes one drop it on a mass of red-hot iron, saying the Paternoster backwards; then sneeze seven times, and wait till the iron becomes *aurum purum*."

It struck me that the man who could walk seven miles in an hour, and sneeze seven times at will, had better go in for some mode of making gold less dubious than alchemy.

When I came to investigate old Dr. Romayne's MS, I found, amid much whimsical and capricious stuff, some very suggestive essays. He was, I discerned, a Pythagorean . . . or perhaps I should say a developed disciple of the Samian sage. He did not believe that Homer had been a camel in Bactria, at the time of the siege of Troy.

He laughed to scorn, in a fine vein of irony, the theories of one Dr. Erasmus Darwin, who, as I am informed, declared the origin of man from geometrical figures, in a treatise entitled, *The Loves of the Triangles.* If the father of the human race was an isosceles triangle, he might almost as well have been an ape. As a great poet remarks:

> "Blockheads there are who gladly would disgrace
> By hideous origin the human race,
> Make equal with poor products of the sod
> The only creature who is like to God.
> Who, if he wisely uses life's brief hour,
> With the Creator shares creative power."

And this, indeed, is so. For in the many isolated years I passed among Dr. Romayne's books in Beau Sejour, I came to know people like Hamlet and Falstaff, like Rosalind and Desdemona (poor little girl, why did she marry a bragging black man?), like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, that are more thoroughly flesh and blood than a good many people who walk about and coolly pretend to be alive.

But I digress. Let me come to Doctor Romayne's Pythagorean theories. "The man," he wrote, "who has not lived before, is an impertinent fellow to pretend he is alive now. His death can be as logically and irrefragably proved as that of Partridge, the almanac maker. If he is not at once buried, it is simply because ground grows dear. The soul is immortal; he who deems otherwise, can have no soul, but is an automaton produced to resemble a man, and designed entirely for a warning to real human creatures. Such eidola, or phantoms, move among us, 'tis certain, and write theologic and philosophic essays, and set up to be emperors and statesmen. This dangerous age is fertile of such creatures, as there is a blight of baneful insects when an evil east-wind blows.

"To determine between men with souls and their simulacra," continued the venerable doctor, "is the most important and most difficult problem of philosophy. After long and severe study of men and books, I have formed certain opinions, which I hope to make clear to myself as I pursue this inquiry, in an essay toward truth which probably will be read by no eyes save mine.

"An inspired poet has written:

'Their idols are silver and gold—
  The work of men's hands;
Mouths have they, yet speak not;
  Eyes have they, yet see not;
Ears have they, yet hear not;
  Noses also, yet smell not;
Hands have they, yet handle not;
  Feet have they, yet walk not;
Neither uttereth their throat speech.
They that make them are like unto them.'

"Herein," continues the doctor, "lies the essence of my philosophy. Those who make idols are like idols. As from εἴδωλον, by gradual trituration of language, came *idol*, so *idol* is shortened to *doll;* and as monosyllables are convenient, I propose in my future nomenclature to divide the human race into *men* and *dolls.* The man believes in God; the doll believes in dolls.

"I have met in my time with persons apparently virile, who declined to admit the immortality of the soul. Examine such a person, you will find he is a doll, and a doll cannot have an immortal soul, or indeed any sort of soul. Examine such a doll farther, and you will find he has eyes that cannot see the glory of God, ears than cannot hear His words, hands and feet that cannot do His work and walk in His ways, lips that utter what seems speech, yet is not. To imagine him the bodily presentment of an immortal soul would be absurd. He expects annihilation—he is already annihilated.

"My essay towards establishing this first principle of ontology must needs desult (as the Romans said of the rider of more steeds than one in the Amphitheatre), since I am only gathering by degrees its proofs and examples from history, and experience, and observation. Indeed, this is only an essay; should I live to form it into a treatise (which seems unlikely, being now ninety-five), I hope to base my theory on the true inductive method of the great Verulam.

"I may say here that doubtless my distinction between the *man* and the *doll* applies to both sexes; but women are so unwilling and unable to answer philosophical questions as to their mental and physical structure in a direct manner, that I have small hope of extending the proofs of my theory on that side. This shy incapacity proceeds from a delicate instinct, like that of the mimosa, which shrinks from the touch—like that of the timorous bird which flies away into the woods at a step. Without troubling that instinct, I may yet prove my thesis—

Πρὸ τῶν ἐπαισχῶν χρὴ λόγων δάκνειν στομα.

"But if I have met, or should meet, an apparent woman, who possesses either no grace or modesty, no love of kin, no fortitude in suffering, no belief in God, I shall maintain that she is no woman, but a pale simulacrum, an eidolon, a doll."

"Queer old philosopher!" thought I, as I shut the big book, resolving to re-open it soon.

CHAPTER XII.

TUTOR AND PUPIL.

Comes not weird counsel from a vanishing voice?
Have I not heard unsyllabled sayings, often,
By rivers where perchance the gay nymphs whispered,
In ghostly ruins where dead wizards murmured?
Ah yes, I know the stern words heard at midnight,
And also what the dreary twilight told me:
And both are one, for love and death are one.
Who loves, meets God—who dies, meets God.

THE MYSTIC, 1773.

DR. ROMAYNE'S library had an immense influence over me. I listened with loving awe to the voice of this venerable thinker, coming from beyond the river of fate. As I read essay after essay that had come from his unresting brain, I grew gradually to think I knew him. I used, after a long perusal of his work, to picture to myself a tall and venerable sage, stooping, white-bearded, with keen penetrative eye, with attenuate long fingers, eagle-claws, till I might have painted his portrait easily. Then I would go down to the little burial-ground by Saint Apollonia's chapel, and sit on the grass mound that covered his dust, and watch the sunshine on the pleasant trout stream, and read again and again the simple inscription on his tombstone:

HENRY ROMAYNE, M.D.
BORN,
MDCCIV.
DIED,
MDCCCV.

I had fixed his imaginary portrait on my mind so much that I was always conjuring it up before me; and when I took long rides over the moorlands on Mazeppa, I used to fancy the doctor by my side on a comfortable cob. Indeed, we carried on imaginary colloquies to an immense extent, and I clung to his personeity as a fixed idea.

Odd how well I remember coming back from one of those rides, after a glorious gallop over gorse and heather, that made the moor a double stream of colour, and dismounting at the "Romayne Arms," and walking in to get a tankard of Timothy Short's home-brewed. Some demon prompted me to say,

"Timothy, you knew old Doctor Romayne, didn't you?"

"Lord, yes, your honour. He larruped me once when I was a boy for throwing stones at a cat."

"And served you right, you vagabond!" promptly said buxom Barbara.

"What sort of a man was he, Timothy?" I asked.

"What, to look at? Never saw his like, your honour. He was short and plump, with white fat hands, and quite a round rosy face, and brown hair (the little he had) to the very last, and such a laughing look with him, and O so quick! I wish I could see him now, sir, trotting up the lane, in his black breeches and gaiters. It was a treat to hear him talk. He took a deal of exercise, and used to walk, mostly; he kept an old pony here, your honour, but when I asked him if he wouldn't ride, he'd say, ''Tis a shame, Tim, to have out poor old Jack, when I've got good legs of my own.' And he'd drink a glass of beer as hearty as your honour, and walk away laughing and singing and rubbing his hands, and oft-whiles talking to himself in all manner of languages. O he *was* a man!"

"Ah! that he was!" said Barbara. "He used to kiss me and call me a little slut, and tell me if ever I was a widow he'd be my second."

Alas for ideals! Could this lively centenarian be my departed Pythagorean Doctor? Surely some mocking fiend had got into the library and transformed him utterly.

When I got home and had dined, I pondered much. A glass of old port helps one to ponder. What had happened to me had forced my intellect, making me prematurely old. I wished I had asked no questions about Doctor Romayne's personal appearance; having done so, I philosophized over the affair in the method taught me by my unseen tutor, till I began to believe that, after all, I might be right, and Timothy Short and Barbara wrong.

"There are those who have eyes, yet see not," I reflected. "How easily might such people, who can see no splendour in the sky, transform the Doctor into the odd little man they describe! I won't believe it. I have seen him."

At midnight, in the Doctor's sanctum, I pursued the theme in my own mind, trying to decide whether the soul forms the body, or whether soul and body have only incidental connexion. What we call chance led me to a desultory essay in another part of the great folio I was studying.

"Mr. Abraham Johnson," it said, "in his ironic letter to the Royal Society, published this year of grace, 1750, is intentionally wrong in his main thesis, but unconsciously right in an argument on which he bases it. There can be no doubt that the body is a mere tenement, into which the soul passes from another similar tenement. If the soul enters on its new domicile wearied by a previous period of toil and distress, its energy cannot control the development of that domicile, and hereditary tendencies often get the better of it. Thus may we account for the frequent appearance of a great man in a frail or ugly body; for

'The tenth transmitter of a foolish face'

being a statesman or soldier, or even poet. Who would expect genius from Epicurus, if his profile has correctly reached us?

"Now, if the soul comes fresh from a happy career, these hereditary influences have no force. The strong spirit moulds the frame. Poetry lightens the eye; eloquence curves the mouth; skill shapes the flexile fingers; courage and vigour mould and poise the frame. You have Apollo, not as he shepherded for Admetus, but as he sends afar the unerring arrow, or brings marvellous music from the lyre.

"Hence, those who would possess greater happiness and beauty hereafter, should aim at happiness and beauty here.

"*Corollary.* There is no limit to the height of happiness and beauty to which man may ascend."

"Egad!" thought I, "this may explain the mystery. The Doctor's philosophical soul, tired by a previous residence not quite satisfactory, doubtless fell into the mould of a family of lively humourists!"

I must not weary my readers with too many extracts from the essays of this modern Pythagorean; nor, indeed, must I be too minute in describing the life which I lived at Beau Sejour. It was a very quiet one all through—being about thirty years; during which time the mighty tide of affairs which agitated Europe seemed to flow through another world, so completely had I isolated myself. Lover once, I heard with slight interest of the birth of Lucy's son and Lesbury's heir. Soldier once, I felt no pulse of triumph when "the meanest man of men" fell before our loyal Captain at Waterloo. Landowner once, I was unmoved when Fraser reported that I was as rich as I had ever been. Henry Romayne's mysticism had enthralled me; to follow his sinuous track of thought was "riches fineless." I believed his theory more absolutely every day, and looked forward for years with eagerness to the proof which death would give of it. Wherever I was, Romayne's mystical spirit haunted me. I not only read all he wrote and all the books in his library, but wrote a whole library of essays myself—all on the one great theme. By the time there came an end to my studies, I was master of many languages and of abstruse science—all self-taught, as some would say; all really taught me by Henry Romayne, *archididasculus.*

Still, though the outer world interested me slightly, the microcosm of Five Tree Hill had its events. One morning, some years after I had lived at Beau Sejour, returning home from an early meditation by Saint Apollonia's Chapel, I was told that a gentleman was waiting to see me. Entering the room, I perceived an old man who, in all but the stoop, was the very picture my volatile imagination had drawn of Doctor Romayne. He met me with extended hand, saying,

"Good morning, Mr. Ellesmere. I am General Romayne."

I said I was glad to see him, and said so truthfully; for I had always felt grateful to the unknown landlord whose "twenty pounds, sticks and all," had made me a Pythagorean.

"We've beaten that damned rascal over the water," he said, his eyes flashing fiercely, "so I've time to look after my estate, which is going to the devil! I'd be glad to see you any time, but they tell me you're quite a recluse."

I told the General I was a solitary student, and that the old Doctor's books had made me so, and that I hoped never to leave home again.

"Damned odd fellow you are, Ellesmere! Guessed who you were before I saw you. 'Gad! you're uncommon like your father! We've ridden side by side in two or three hot things, my boy! He cut a fellow's right arm off at the shoulder just as he was poking a lance into me once. I've got the mark now," he said, putting his left hand to his side. "An inch farther, and where the devil should I have been? Fancy your burying yourself here, and reading old Harry Romayne's magical stuff! Why don't you come into the world again, and marry? You're ten years younger than your father when he married Amoret Lyle—the prettiest woman I ever saw. Your estate's getting free, I hear—you dipped it pretty well, you young dog! Come now, give up old Harry's magic; I'll soon find you a wife. I'm the best judge of virgins and horses in His Majesty's Army. Better marry a widow than be roasted for a wizard."

The General's humour was so magnetic that I think he might almost have wiled me away from the Doctor, and turned a Pythagorean philosopher once more into a man of the world, but for a sudden thought of Lucy. I had a vision of the Thames in the twilight, of a myriad roses and a thousand nightingales, of a maiden whose soul shone through her—whose voice stirred the Daulian minstrel to vain rivalry—whose touch made roses bloom. No; there could not be another Lucy; her love was worth a life. For the minutest division of a breath methought she was beside me again. In that infinitesimal atom of time's diamond-dust I swore allegiance to Lucy and my invisible tutor.

"Well," quoth the General, laughing at my refusal, "you must come over to Romayne Court for a week, whatever you do. It shan't be said your father's son was my neighbour and tenant, and wouldn't visit me."

I tried to decline, but I could not resist the obstinate kindness of my father's friend. The General had driven a curricle over from Romayne Court, which is just beyond Redborough; he insisted on my having my traps sent up to Timothy's at once.

"I won't lose sight of you, Ned," he said; "I shall call you Ned—you're a boy, though you are a philosopher—and your father called me Tom; so come at once; you needn't bring anything dandified—you'll meet no women."

We walked up to Timothy's, when, evidently for the first time, the General noticed the nobly painted sign. He stood transfixed, with his lean right hand pointed at it; then he cried:

"Tim Short, you villain, who painted that sign?"

"Gentleman without a name, General," says Tim, saluting.

"What did you pay for it?"

"Board and lodging, General."

"Take it down!—no, leave it there! By the Eternal, that's worth a thousand guineas!"

The General's voice had a fine thunderous quality—each of his short sentences grew louder than the last, so that you wondered what would be the final roar. It was a voice trained amid the din of artillery on the battle-field.

"The gentleman as did it left a hundred-pound note behind him," says Timothy. "It's framed in the bar."

Tim had taken my advice, and it had brought him many customers. The yokel thought it worth while to drink much beer or grog, sitting with eyes and mouth wide open, to stare at what he had never dreamt of—a bit of paper worth a hundred pounds!

When the General learnt what other work the unknown artist had done, he went upstairs to see it. He examined long, and in unusual silence, the portraits and the painting of the inn.

"Tim Short," he said, at last, "I want the picture of the inn, and I'll give you another hundred-pound note for it. Take it down, and tell my servant to be devilish careful of it, or I'll blow his brains out. No, by the Eternal, I don't think I *could* do that!"

Applying the Doctor's test to the General, I concluded that he was a *man*, not a *doll*.

The painting, carefully wrapped up, was handed to the footman, and the curricle came round.

"I wish you'd drive, Sir Edward," said the General. "These horses are young and fresh, and nearly pulled my arms off till we got to the hill. After dinner, we'll talk about that mysterious artist."

The young horses took us pretty fast to Romayne Court, a handsome old place above Redborough, built of the same sanguine stone, with beautiful garden terraces. No guests had the General except his steward, who was busily engaged with him in going through arrears of business. When that gentleman, who lived in Redborough, had left us, General Romayne said:

"Now, Ned, another bottle of port; I'm melancholy to-night. What think you of those pictures?"

"They are wonderful," I said, "so far as I am any judge. The painting of the trees on that sign seems as good as anything I ever saw."

"It *is* as good. Now, why the devil should a great artist come and stay at Five

Tree Hill and paint all that, and give Tim Short a hundred pounds?"

"Men of genius have caprices not to be explained," I suggested.

There was rather a long pause, during which the General gazed at the beeswing in his glass of port. There was a curious look in his eye, as if he were trying to hide something that affected him.

"By the Eternal!" he burst out, "the fellow is a genius, though I always thought him a fool. Ned, that painter is my only son, Lionel Romayne. We quarreled—he's just as angry as I am—because I wanted him to fight, and he *would* paint. Lord, I might have remembered that *my* father wanted me to preach, and I *would* fight. I might have been a Bishop by this time—a captain of the Church Militant."

"And what is your son doing now, General?" I asked.

"Why, they tell me that, under an assumed name (for he swore in his wrath he would never be called Romayne) he is the most famous painter of the day. I must not tell you the name; you will guess it."

"No," I replied; "I have been too long out of the world. But his coming to Five-Tree Hill seems to show that he had kindly feeling to you, and would gladly be reconciled."

"Ned, you're a damned humbug!" said the fiery General. "If he likes to come here and call himself Lionel Romayne, instead of the false name he goes by, I'll forgive him. The estate is entailed; when I die he'll have to claim it, or it must go to the next heir, if there is a next heir; and if not, to the Crown. We're an obstinate family, Ned, and Lionel's just as obstinate as I. He won't come to me, and I'll be hanged if I go to him. So you need not try to persuade me, my boy. Nobody ever changed *my* opinion, by the Eternal!"

I laughed.

"Laugh away, my boy," he said. "We Romaynes pride ourselves on being the most obstinate family in England. Obstinacy makes men successful. My great-grandfather made millions as a scrivener, obstinately refusing to part with money at a low price. His son was Secretary of State; his grandson was Archbishop of York; his great-grandson is a General; his great-great-grandson is the first painter in the world. All through the family, father hated son and son hated father obstinately; but it has been a point of honour that, however they quarreled, the property should go straight. Come, if you have had wine enough, let us look at the portraits of these worthies. They're in the large dining-room."

We went. The scrivener in black velvet, but for his stoop, might have been painted for the General. He had the keen eye and attenuate electric hand which I had imagined for Doctor Romayne. The Secretary of State was exactly what Timothy Short had described the Doctor to me—humorous, vigorous, brown-haired, a laugh lurking on his lips, a hand white and plump as a woman's, with a diamond on one finger . . . yet a born diplomatist; one could see. The Archbishop was of an alien type; dark, almost sinister, stern as to the mouth, with an air of inflexible will in the knotted fingers of the hand that grasped his crosier. I wondered if the errant painter was of the archiepiscopal type. I resolved to ask Timothy Short. There passed rapidly through my mind Doctor Romayne's theory about hereditary influence, but to the General I said, "They are splendid portraits, and all fine faces. The first of the series is very like you."

"Yes, confound it! Fancy being like a scrivener, even if he *is* your great-grandfather! And, by the Eternal, my father is very like that scamp of a son of mine!"

I spent a pleasant week with the General, chiefly riding over the estate with him and his steward. At the end of that time, he went to London, and I returned to Beau Sejour. What happened when General Romayne died, and his son, the painter, had to prove his identity, need not be recorded here, being written in contemporary memoirs.

CHAPTER XIII.

FORD COTTAGE.

Τοῖσιν ἐμπείροις βροτῶν
μόνοις οἷόν τε συνταλαιπωρεῖν κακά.

THERE was a ford across the stream, half a mile or so below Saint Apollonia's chapel: white stepping-stones, where many a country lass had wetted her feet, and a shallow crossing, where waggoners had given their horses a drink for centuries. Stood thereby an old cottage in a coeval garden and orchard, occupied till lately by the widow of the late miller at Eynsham Mill, who had succeeded somebody else's widow. Indeed, Tim Short called it Widows' Cottage, and invented stories about a score of widows that had occupied it in succession —stories that could hardly be very near the truth, as they varied on every occasion.

One day Tim informed me, with great delight, that Widows' Cottage was let to another widow—"a real lady this time, your honour. She's a Mrs. Lee, and she's got a little dot of a girl with her, about a year old; and she tells Barbara, who went down to see what she could do for her, that she has had much sorrow and trouble, and wants to be quiet for the rest of her life. I suppose she's not philosophical," says Tim, "and so found her husband a nuisance."

I thought very little of this bit of news, and certainly never guessed what that "little dot of a girl" would become to me. Two or three years passed in my favourite study and solitude before I even saw Mrs. Lee. When I did meet her, it was by accident, in the God's-acre of Saint Apollonia's Chapel, where the pretty bright-haired little girl was picking flowers and ferns. We talked —about the weather, of course. The young widow had the face of a sorrowful yet resigned Madonna. Somehow we gradually became friends. I never knew her story, which it was easy to see must have been a very painful one, since it had cast a settled melancholy over a character naturally designed to be joyous. This woman, at thirty so pensive, was as gay as a skylark, I'll swear, at twenty. What had crushed her, I never desired to know.

We gradually grew friendly, and being beyond the region of gossip, and beyond the folly of love-making, we could enjoy such friendliness. Helen Lee was like a too early twilight in Summer. Her lovely life had been saddened by some remediless grief, and there was nothing left her but the golden-haired "dot of a girl," who soon became my playfellow. The choicest of essayists has said that you may lose yourself in another man's mind as easily as in another man's grounds. So long had I lost myself in the mighty mind of my *archididasculus*, Henry Romayne, that I was glad to let myself out by a wicket gate, and talk nature to a pensive lady, and nonsense to a merry child.

We exchanged visits, regardless of scandal—which, indeed, left us quite alone. There was a diagonal meadow-path up-hill from Ford Cottage to a side-gate of my Beau Sejour garden, and on fine days it became an institution that Mrs. Lee and

"Dot" should come up to lunch, or that I should go down to tea. Very often it was both. Dot, by the way, had been christened Mavis—and a bird-like little fairy she was.

Helen Lee and I did not fall in love, though condition and juxtaposition might have justified it. She thirty, I forty, and her only incumbrance Dot with the golden locks. I think we got so far as platonic affection. But her great grief kept her fancy-free, while I thought more of Lucy the more I saw of another woman, and kept the love of my lost darling as my chief solace—the transcendental philosophy of Doctor Romayne being the next.

My uneventful life at this time requires no minute chronicle. As time went on, Mavis Lee passed from a baby to a girl, and then I took her for a pupil. I did not teach her abstract metaphysics—I taught her English poetry and literature; and when she had drunk deeply of the sweetest spring that ever flowed, I took her to the older fountains of Greece and Italy. Some severer studies were necessary, doubtless; even girls must know a smattering of history, geography, and the like; but we made tales of our history, and maps of our geography. Helen Lee often laughed at the odd way in which tutor and pupil went to work, as we three sat in the great book-room of Doctor Romayne, whose windows always caught the least stray sunshine; but Mavis picked up plenty of pure bright knowledge in this way, which made her after-life a myriad times happier than it might have been. Her mother taught her religion and music and painting—the child was a born artist. And on pleasant days, when Mavis was a dot of a girl no longer, we used to haunt the chapel of St. Apollonia with easel and books, and I had a feeling that the venerable Doctor, if his spirit ever approached the spot where lay his dust, would deem that I had turned his impalpable lessons to good account.

All this time there were great things stirring in the world outside; they had slight effect upon us three. My first personal grief was that poor Tim Short died; the wars had knocked him about unkindly; the unkinder railways killed him. Tim foresaw that, although no railway to Redborough was talked of yet, it must come in time; he beheld in vision the Romayne Arms shorn of its glories; he took to his bed and withered away. The staunch old humorous soldier lies in the shadow of Saint Apollonia's Chapel. I think he might have lasted years long, but for the threatened coming of steam.

Alas, and poor Mazeppa! I had given up riding him far, when Mrs. Lee first came to Ford Cottage; I was a heavy weight, and he was growing old. When we got intimate, I used to bring the old charger down to the river-path, and Dot would have a ride, while I led him; and in time the child and he became firm friends, as children and horses will. But, as he grew infirm, I turned him into a paddock which I hired of Tim Short; and there we often visited him with a gift of carrot or bread, dear old boy! I don't know his age when I bought him in 1800; but he was the staunchest steed I ever strode—the Launcelot of horses. When Mavis heard he was dead, she must come to see him at once; she was wild with grief; it took a week to console her.

"Never mind!" she said at last, with a kind of defiance, "I shall see Mazeppa again. I am sure he had a soul!"

"O Mavis!" says Mrs. Lee.

"He *had*, mamma."

Soul or not, Mazeppa lies buried on Beau Sejour lawn, and on a marble slab is the legend—

EQUO FIDELI.

CHAPTER XIV.

MAVIS LEE.

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in gay green wood,
When mavis and merle are singing.

AS a man passes onward through the world, there are many delights which he necessarily must leave behind him. Were it otherwise, what a monotoned world we should inhabit! There comes a day when you can no longer leap a five-barred gate; there also comes a day when you can enjoy Horace, whose amazing collocations of words and metre were your abhorrence at school. It may be asked which is better, to leap gates or like Horace? I reply that there is no comparison. Each is right at the right time. If at eighteen you can leap your own height, at eighty-one you may hope to be in good form, enjoying Horace in your arm-chair.

All those who regret the past are strangely unwise. If it has been a time of trouble, hope and work for a fairer future; if of pleasure, why, the pleasure that we have had is as thoroughly incorporated within us as the ox-beef we have eaten, as the vineyards we have drunken. There are those who profess to regret their youth, to be sorry they can never again do what once they did. I suppose they would like to be handsome boys to the end of time. They ought logically to go farther back, to shed tears over the cozy cradle, the comforting coral, the delicious pap, the malicious slap; to wish themselves always babies. Wish it or not, they *are* babies, as is any man who desires to be other than he is. One would have thought that by this time the majority of intelligent human beings would have discovered that their first duty is to seize the present, without weeping about the past or hungering for the future, and to use all their faculties to the utmost *in the present.* No, the lesson is unlearnt, though every event of life teaches it.

To give women their due, they are much readier to learn it than men. They understand repose. They can quietly accept a sunny afternoon on a lawn of the Thames, strawberries and cream and champagne, a perfect costume, a pleasant flirtation, without caring twopence for what may happen to-morrow, or what happened yesterday. A primary use of women is to teach men philosophy—not by lecture (Heaven forfend!) but by example. That they have many other uses not less valuable, I not only deny not, but maintain.

Now, Mavis Lee, as she grew on into girlhood, an instructive and unconscious little philosopher, gave me continuous lessons in *repose*. She was restless enough in some senses—she chattered, laughed, joked, raced about the lawn, did a thousand things as rapidly as lightning. She enjoyed the instant; she had no care for an hour ago or an hour hence. This absolute content, based on instinct only, is very rare. Based on reason, it is not frequent. We find few men who, deeming their future as certain as their past, crush out the entire juice of the passing moment, enjoying it as a child enjoys a peach, as a bird enjoys its own song. So far as I have learnt this happy art, it was from the practice of little Mavis Lee. Yet I fancied I had attained it by methods of strict logic; that it sufficed me to know that He who gave me fortunate entrance to the universe would secure for me an exit not less fortunate.

Being thirty-five years older than this little girl, it seemed odd that she could teach me anything. Odd also it seemed that we were such capital companions; we used to turn out of mornings, and wander by the stream, when I, having previously explored it each way, proposed often to trace it to the sea. The idea puzzled her, born and brought up very close to England's centre. I had to tell her exactly what the sea was like. If there is anything to puzzle a man, it is to describe the sea intelligibly to a land-born child. I found I could not do it, hard as I tried. Having conscientiously endeavoured to unite for her guidance the scientific and poetic elements of the ocean, I thought it hard when she exclaimed—

"I know where the sea is."

"You do, Mavis?"

"Yes, Eynsham Pond's the sea."

Now Eynsham Pond, the hollow formed by an old quarry, or time, though perhaps two hundred feet across, is not exactly the Atlantic; but I could not make Mavis understand the difference, and I think she rather resented my attempt to put her favourite pond below any other body of water. Beside that pond she had lingered, cherishing fairy fancies, many a happy afternoon. It was large enough for her. It is a lucky thing that the human imagination has a transfiguring power. What visions Mavis had beside that unpoetic pond I know not; they sufficed to cause her to disdain the sea.

I was beginning, so far as I can judge myself, to resemble in some degree Dr. Henry Romayne. I should have stiffened into omniscience, but for Mavis. She sang as freshly as the bird that was her sponsor. She was just in that serene, unconscious state which is charming in childhood—the calm of the stream before it leaps over the cataract, and the girl becomes a woman. There is a moment—I wonder how it comes, and when?—of transition from the romp to the lady, from the creature whose movements are those of a kitten to the grace that walks with the dainty dignity of the mother of Æneas, from the mere child to the true woman. You are sorry to lose the child, that pretty toy that has so much in common with bird and flower, and tree and stream. You are glad to greet the woman who loves all these things, but is so far above them all. Now where is the great poet who shall fix the marvellous moment of change?

It cannot be. With some the transformation is gradual, and there is an intervening period of shyness and gawkiness, painful to both the sufferer and her sympathizers; but in higher cases I take the change to be sudden, and that there comes the feeling of womanhood with an irresistible intensity. She is a woman to-day who yesterday was a child. Why? Simply because the spirit matures, the bud opens, the dream becomes life. It must of course be admitted that association with masculine youth sometimes precipitates the change.

Mavis I watched with much curiosity, as she passed on through her earlier teens, the gayest little graceful hoyden I had ever seen. Her feeling towards me was half daughter, half playfellow; she called me "papa" sometimes, but generally "Sir Edward;" for, since Romayne had found me out, it was vain to attempt continuance of incognito. Being, as I have said, thirty-five years older than Mavis, and having, as may clearly be seen, no interest in her except as a pretty little pupil, whose happiness I naturally desired, I was in a position to watch her development. I felt, indeed, much like a highly scientific gardener, who watches for the flowering of one of those astounding plants—aloes I think they are—that flower once in a century, with a noise like a park of artillery, and usually select some inconvenient hour for doing it.

Mavis went gaily on, in the unconscious happy childish state, to a later age than is, I suppose, common with young girls. So far as I recollect, it was one fine Summer morning, in 1832, that she came up to Beau

Sejour, with a look in her eyes that made me at once think Dot with the golden hair was a creature of the past. That aureate iota had become a woman. Why?

"Sir Edward," she said, with a quite amusing unaccustomed shyness, "will you come down to see us to-day? A cousin of ours arrived last night."

"If that cousin is not male," said I to myself, "I'll eat her, petticoats and all."

"I don't know how to tell you," she went on, coaxingly, "but Arthur has run away from school. Very wrong of him, I suppose; but they wanted to do something dreadful to him, and he didn't wait to have it done. He is mamma's sister's son; and O he *is* so handsome!"

Certain psychophysiological ideas crossed my mind. Had this runaway schoolboy already made love to Mavis, or was it only the little fool's natural tendency to find something poetic in the very first male creature she saw?

"Come along, Dot," I said. "We'll talk to your cousin Arthur. What's his other name, Mavis?"

"Hartopp," she said.

"And what is he like?"

"O, you'll see him presently," she said, "if you *will* be kind enough to come. Mamma does so want your advice about him."

I knew pretty well what my advice would be, if there were any chance of its being taken; give the young rascal a good flogging, and send him back to be flogged at school. But Helen Lee would have thought me a barbarian if I should offer such advice; wherefore I determined to offer no advice at all.

Mavis and I walked down to Ford Cottage, and found Mrs. Lee alone. Arthur had gone out; he was restless, and did not know what to do. At my suggestion, Mavis went in search of him, and Mrs. Lee and I talked over the matter.

"He only came here late last night," she said, "frightening us to death. I am sure I don't know how he found us out. He ran away from school, about thirty miles from here, because he had to be whipt for something or other . . . he couldn't satisfactorily tell what. I say a boy is a coward that doesn't suffer punishment quietly when he deserves it."

"Quite true," I replied. "How old is he?"

"Mavis and Arthur were born within a week of each other."

I was annoyed at the thought that this

runaway schoolboy, physically of Mavis's age, yet mentally many years younger, should by some unlucky chance have awakened within her that consciousness of existence. I was annoyed that he should be a coward, who would run away thirty miles to avoid punishment. I was annoyed that Mrs. Lee should be troubled with this youngster, and that Mavis should be thrown into his company.

Presently there was laughter in the garden—and in the two came, quite merrily. They were evidently on the best of terms, Arthur and Mavis. They might well be so, if form indicates spirit ; I never saw two people more alike ; they might have been twins. Arthur Hartopp was the most feminine boy of seventeen I ever saw ; he looked as if he were a girl dressed up. I saw now why he had become a fugitive.

The common English schoolboy is as hard as nails; he takes with equal power of resistance a birching or a tunding; he will fight a fellow twice his weight; he would rather have his head punched than read a hundred lines of Homer. Arthur Hartopp was as fragile as a china vase of the egg-shell manufacture. Human fragility could go no farther than this boy. It was clear to me that associating with him could do Mavis no harm. He was mentally more a girl than herself.

So, when Mrs. Lee asked my opinion, I meanly declined to give any. She had written to her sister (a weeping widow woman) and to Dr. Grindley, the master of the school, pleading for lenient treatment. The Doctor curtly replied:

"MADAM,—Send Arthur Hartopp back at

your leisure, if you think him worth sending back. He will be treated according to the ancient discipline of this school.

"CATO GRINDLEY, D.D."

I should be sorry to have to transcribe the weeping widow's crossed epistles; the burden of them was, "*Take care of Arthur.* Don't let him go where the birch-tree grows." So Arthur was taken care of, and was not sent back to Dr. Grindley's, as he ought to have been, and ran about the neighbourhood with my little Mavis.

Well, I saw less of her than usual. She was loving as ever to her old tutor, but this cousin of her own age came upon her like a charm. I was rather interested in their intercourse, from philosophic reasons. I desired to know whether a girl like Mavis could tolerate a young fellow like her cousin Arthur. He was the sort of boy that ought to have been put on a bench, with a pinafore on, to work a sampler. There are such weak creatures.

He tired Mavis, but he made interest with her mother, who thought him such a perfect young gentleman. Women, having reached a certain age, are apt to forget the days when they preferred a man to a milksop. To their daughters they commend the milksop. The daughters do not always entirely agree—small blame to them. However, Arthur Hartopp could not be in the company of my beautiful Mavis day after day without feeling that wondrous magnetic attraction that might even make a wishy-washy being like him feel heroic; wherefore I was not surprised when, one afternoon, Mavis came to me, and said he had asked her to marry him. She was very quiet about it. Indeed, there was a laugh on her lips.

"What do you think of him, Dot?" I asked, she having told her story.

You should have seen her. She drew herself up. She is not a short girl, my Mavis. She stood a moment, with her hands behind her gold-crested head, and looked very much like Artemis in a temper. I always mentally compared the little girl with Artemis, by the Latins called Diana.

"Think of him! Dear Sir Edward, he is dreadful! And I am so miserable about it. I somehow or other fancied I liked him. I made a man of him—picking up the pieces from my own imagination. And now he has *dared* to ask me to marry him. I was obliged to run away, for I was afraid of boxing his ears. Marry *him!* I'd rather marry my grandfather!"

"Well, little Mavis," I said, "will you leave the young gentleman to me? I think

I understand him. If he does what he ought to do, he may make a place for himself in the world; but he is not good enough for Mavis."

"Ah!" she said, "I was tired of Arthur so soon. He is pretty to look at, but, oh! dear me, how dull! If it had not been for mamma's wishing it, I should have run away. Dear Sir Edward, he is such a dreadful boy!"

I kissed the child's brow. What pleasure it gave me to think that, though association with this new-found cousin of hers had aided to turn the bud into a flower, she had a classic contempt for the said cousin. If only I could find some one worthy of my Mavis! I fear it is impossible.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRIALS OF MAVIS LEE.

"Malo, mavis, mavult."

THERE are some things in humanity very difficult to account for; among them is the behaviour of mothers to daughters. Mothers usually allow their sons to do much as they please; but they worry daughters abominably, treating them much as a hen-pigeon treats her female offspring. At Beau Sejour I have had ample opportunity to notice the habits of pigeons, and they certainly offer a curious caricature of the human race. The pigeon-mother's behaviour to her daughter is intensely human.

I could scarcely believe what I saw on Helen Lee's part. She took quite a foolish fancy to this silly boy, and would not send him back to Dr. Cato Grindley, who very soon would have thrashed him into form. She let him stay on at Ford Cottage, and make infantile love to Mavis. The love-making of a boy of that age is very mild, necessarily; and Mavis got so terribly tired of it that she took every opportunity of running up to me at Beau Sejour for protection and instruction. Her effeminate cousin Arther did not dare to follow her, for I frightened the young fool out of his life one day when he came prowling about my premises. I came rapidly down toward the gate, with a dog-whip in my hand, and followed by a leash of greyhounds that I had set up as companions, and he ran off as hard as he could, never re-appearing. So Mavis was safe enough while with me.

I said my greyhounds were set up as companions, but they were also of use. The moorland around Five Tree Hill has plenty of hares, and I had Romayne's permission to kill as many as I chose. So I bought a Norfolk cob for myself, and a little Exmoor to carry Mavis, and we had the merriest days' coursing imaginable. There was an old fellow called Yaddles, an earth-stopper, who came out with us and took charge of the dogs: and by-and-by I took him entirely into my employ, finding that he was trustworthy, and could turn his hand to anything.

How we enjoyed these coursing days, Mavis and I! The gay wind on Romayne Moor blew her brown tresses about, and her cheeks grew ruddy and sunburnt; and her mad little Exmoor stallion often ran away with her, just for fun. And then puss was started; and away went two brace of greyhounds after the cunning little beggar, at their swiftest stride; and it was all we could do to gallop fast enough to keep them in sight. Merry mornings! How she enjoyed them, my little Mavis! I could not stiffen into a likeness of Doctor Romayne, with Mavis and the greyhounds to keep life in me.

Much did I ponder concerning the future of Mavis Lee. Some old fogies might have fallen in love with a handsome high-spirited girl of seventeen, but I was not a fool of that description. I have had my love. I could not help feeling an intense and eager desire for this child's happiness; and I determined to leave her a few thousand pounds in my will. She certainly deserved a good husband. Though as full of fun as a girl in her teens ought to be, there was sometimes a curious gravity about her, as if she had very decided views concerning life. She would be quite amusingly matronly sometimes, and she has actually lectured me when she thought I had sat up too late or drunk a bottle of claret too much.

Arthur Hartopp remained at Ford Cottage much longer than seemed advisable; but I said nothing to Mrs. Lee on the subject, as she seemed to be quite fascinated by that effeminate youth. Such things come to an end. He bored her at last, almost as much as he had bored Mavis; and when she suggested to her sister that he had been almost long enough at Ford Cottage, that weeping widow woman wrote her one of those fierce letters which none but the disconsolate and lachrymose seem able to compose. Then I was called into counsel —having previously been rather out of favour, because I had encouraged Mavis to come and see me as much as possible during young Hartopp's stay at Ford Cottage. The conversation which I then had with Mrs. Lee satisfied me that this young fellow ought to be back at school again; so I sent for a carriage and pair, took Yaddles into my confidence, and carried Arthur Hartopp by cross country roads to Birchanger Hall, the residence of the Reverend Cato Grindley, D.D. The boy didn't half like it, but had not pluck enough to resist.

Doctor Cato Grindley's place is just what a boy's school should be—a fine old Elizabethan house, in about two hundred acres of park and farm. Doctor Cato himself is, or was, a model schoolmaster. I was delighted with him. He wore a cap and gown;

he might have been of any age from fifty to a hundred; he had a humorous twinkle about the mouth and eye, which showed that he was capable of understanding boys. He insisted on my staying to dine and sleep, and I was so amused with him that I could not help accepting. He introduced me to his only daughter, the lady manager of the household, about thirty, I should think, with a slightly suspicious and questioning look in her eye. It must be hard work for a lady of that age to arrange everything for a household of about two hundred and fifty people.

Doctor Cato Grindley gave me a glass of unquestionable port, over which I asked him what he would do with young Hartopp, and what he thought of him generally.

"Well," quoth the Doctor, "he will have to be flogged for running away. And then I suppose we must try to teach him something. His body and brain are of the consistency of jelly. He will always be useless. I would rather not have him here. But I never refuse a pupil unless he has done something dishonourable. The boy is flabby; when he is flogged he will only whimper, and wonder why it was done. There's no dealing with that class of youngster."

"What class do you like best, Doctor?" I said.

He laughed. His stern yet humorous scholastic countenance lighted up with whimsical reminiscences.

"I like a thorough rebel," he said. "I like the fellow who looks on his schoolmaster as his natural enemy. There is real fun in conquering a boy of that sort; they make my best pupils; that's where I get my high wranglers and senior classics. I wouldn't give a dolt for a boy without a spice of Safan in him."

"But are not such boys difficult to get into order?" I asked.

"Not at all. The flabby boys remain flabby to the end; the canting boys deceive you, and smoke bad cigars on the sly; but the real rebel becomes your best ally when you have conquered him. His rebellion arises from independence of character. I first make him obey; I then take the trouble to show him why it is worth his while to obey. I have one or two boys in the upper form of this school whom I could leave to manage the school if I were away a week. They were rebels at first."

"There is something in your theory," I said, "which suggests a wider extension. You make your rebels loyal. The same process goes on with the whole human race."

I enjoyed my evening with Doctor Cato Grindley more than I could have deemed it possible to enjoy an evening with a schoolmaster. We chatted much on many themes, and of course in time we came upon Pythagoras.

"I hope that theory is true," he said, pathetically. "I have been a schoolmaster so long that I should like to be a schoolboy for a change."

Leaving Master Arthur Hartopp to his fate, which doubtless involved an irritation of the cuticle, I returned to Five Tree Hill. A terrible shock met me on the threshold of Beau Sejour. Helen Lee was dead—of heart-disease, quite suddenly. My Mavis was an orphan. I rushed down to Ford Cottage at once, and found the poor child in a state of ineffable misery. O dear, how utterly impossible it is for a man to comfort a woman in her trouble! While, somehow or other, a woman knows exactly how to console a man. You can laugh with a woman, flirt with her, enjoy life with her, make love to her seriously or in fun, but I defy you to console her in any great grief. Yet in any great grief a loving woman can console a man, having in her a faculty of solace denied to manhood. After a pretty long experience of life, I have reached the definite conclusion that man is but a poor creature. There are, I am told, exceptions, but I never have encountered one.

What was to become of Mavis Lee? That question soon had its answer. There appeared at Five Tree Hill a short stout fussy plethoric gentleman, with a head as bald as a billiard-ball, and a chin closeshaven, dressed in black apparel, with white stockings and low shoes, and wearing the largest gold watch and the largest diamond ring I ever saw. He announced himself as Mr. Arundel Lee, of the Stock Exchange, paternal uncle to Mavis. He took charge of everything, Mavis included.

"My sister-in-law mistrusted me, Sir Edward Ellesmere," he said, "because I was always trying to keep poor Tom—that's my late brother—pretty straight. Tom liked to make ducks and drakes of his money; poor Helen always maintained he was quite right, till one day he went too far even for her. The story need not to be told; I wish my niece never to hear it. Somehow, though I did all I could at the time, Helen fancied I might have done more; so, though I have always managed her money matters for her, we were never quite such good friends after. I am Mavis's guardian and trustee, and, as I'm a confirmed old bachelor, I shall leave her all my money, if she's a good girl."

"She is a peculiar girl," I said, "but thoroughly good. She is sensitive and imaginative—fond of books and of nature out of doors. I don't think you will be disposed to cancel your will when you have known her for a little time."

This fussy little stock-broking uncle was thoroughly kind, and of course he had a right—indeed it was his duty—to take charge of Mavis. She, poor child, did not like it. In Mr. Arundel Lee there was nothing whatever, in mind or body, to attract her poetic temperament. He was too respectable for Mavis. That bald head and plain costume, *plus* watch, chain, and diamond-ring, were worth a fortune in the City;

they did not delight a girl whose studies and dreams were of knights and troubadours. When we talked of heroic men, she always said she preferred Walter of the Bird-Meadow ; he could fight, he could sing, he could love, and he endowed with his estate the winged minstrels of the air. Certes, that gentle patient lover of lady and lute, of battle and birds, was a hero fit for any girl's fancy. Alas ! there is no room in the world for the troubadour now.

Mavis was sensible enough to see that her uncle was very kind, and that it was his duty to take charge of her ; but she had a dread of the new life she would have to encounter. Mr. Arundel Lee lived at Clapham Common, in a noble old red-brick mansion, with ample grounds. But think of this wild Mavis, untameable as her namesake bird, exchanging for Clapham the wild free air of Five Tree Hill, and passing from St. Apollonia's lovely river-side chapel to the ugly Cockney church whereof Mr. Arundel Lee was churchwarden! It was impossible not to apprehend her being miserable, though her uncle evidently intended to make her happy, and thought he knew the way. There are natures that would rather be unhappy in their own way than happy in some one else's; and few people do more harm than those who lay down a plan of happiness, and expect others to follow it. Procrustes was a mild tyrant to these blundering benefactors to their species.

I take credit to myself for having done all I could to reconcile Mavis with her fate during the short period before she left Ford Cottage. I felt how dull Five Tree Hill must become when my pretty lively pupil left it; but I concealed my own annoyance, and looked forward to the time when I should have a good long yawn by myself. I was a downright hypocrite at that period. I tried to persuade Mavis that Clapham was Elysium, though I knew it was infested by the Clapham Saints; and when she asked what a stock-broker was, I tried to invest that vocation with a halo of poetry.

The day came. The poor child had to go. How she cried that last morning, in Doctor Romayne's back-room, with the sun shining on the garden and meadows and rivulet below. That happy laughing rivulet by Saint Apollonia's old chapel! To Mavis and me it was a friend; and we both at that moment thought of long joyous days passed within hearing of its endless song. Never more! This child was going forth into a world which I had vowed never to re-enter.

I, a recluse, must console myself as best I might for the loss of my spiritual daughter. Far better than Mavis I knew how utterly she was lost to me: but I made light of it to her, and encouraged her to expect a happy life . . . . at Clapham!

When the bald-headed and respectable Mr. Arundel Lee had taken Mavis away, I walked down to Saint Apollonia's Chapel, and pondered, while the stream sang a pleasant Summer tune. And the outcome of my meditation was that I had given too much time to Mavis, and had neglected those high studies dear to the hearts of Pythagoras and Henry Romayne. So I resolved (how often we resolve the impossible!) to forget Mavis altogether, and to resume my mystical philosophy, and to work out, in all its details, the great theory of metempsychosis. There were many points that demanded further analysis; one especially being the crucial question, whether souls have sex. This momentous point had occupied my attention for a long time; but Mavis had come between me and my philosophy, as a sunbeam shoots through the window on a schoolboy's *Euclid*, blotting out A B C and D E F, and bringing a vision of the green meadow and the flowing stream.

CHAPTER XVI.

ALONE.

I loved a girl, I loved her
  Without a reason why,
For she was a gay young giglot,
  And a careless boy was I.

I lost that girl, I lost her,
  And haven't a notion how ;
But, oh! I would give my right hand
  For a glance of her gay eyes now.

BALLAD : *tempore*, CHARLES II.

CERTES, I was lonely. I fell back on Dr. Romayne, and worked out some of those difficult corollaries to the theory of metempsychosis already indicated. I decided, after much investigation, that there *is* sex in souls; also that only two sexes are possible, although certain pseudo-philosophers have imagined a third. My treatise on this subject, written in Latin, since it was not addressed *ad populum*, will probably be printed at some future date. I was fortunate enough . . . but I must not anticipate.

To my surprise, old Yaddles set himself to work to cheer me up. He induced me to go out riding or coursing. It was dull business without Mavis; but Yaddles had a dry humour that amused me, and so I got into the habit of allowing him to persuade me to take exercise.

"You see, sir," he would say, "I know nothing about books, for I can't read, thank God and my parents, but I don't think books come up to horses and dogs. If you get on horseback you'll get an appetite for dinner, but I never heard tell of a book's giving a man an appetite.

With such arguments the old earth-stopper lured me into open air, and did me a deal of good thereby. But for the humble Yaddles I should at this time have got into a morbid state of deadly dulness. Mavis helped him, by the way, for she wrote to me. This was her first letter :—

"DEAR SIR EDWARD,

"I hate Clapham. I hate stockbrokers. O how dull they are! Uncle Arundel is very kind. I love you and Five Tree Hill. Do, do, do send me some wonderful problem to puzzle my poor little brain!

"MAVIS."

So I sent her some of the perplexing nonsense which clever girls have a fancy for. She liked absurd mathematical conundrums, and to have to show that, if there are more people in the world than any one of them has hairs on his head, there must be at least two people with an equal number of hairs on their heads. It is my conviction she contributed enigmas and mathematical paradoxes to that marvellous annual, the *Ladies' Diary*. When she was taken away from Five Tree Hill and given over to that confoundedly respectable bald-headed member of the Stock Exchange, with his big diamond, and his gold chronometric turnip, she was beyond reach of the influences that had made her what she was. No more mystical lectures in the old doctor's book-room; no more wandering in search of rare ferns where the shadow of Saint Apollonia lay across the rippling stream; no more coursing the cunning hare on pleasant mornings, before the mist had left the moor. No, it was all Clapham for Mavis.

Worse, by-and-by. The stockbroker uncle considered that her education had been neglected, and determined to send her to school, to learn what are called "accomplishments." The school was at Brixton, Clapham's uglier sister, and Mavis described the mistress to me as being something between Lady Macbeth and a washerwoman. The vigorous rules of this establishment compelled poor Mavis to pass all her letters through the mistress's hands. Thanks to that, and the high rate of postage, I had news of her but seldom.

Month after month at this time I grew more tired of the dulness of things, more inclined to settle down to my books and papers, and forget the outer world, with all its annoyances and all its excitements. I was growing tired. While that merry, suggestive little Mavis was about, prattling her nonsense, playing her pranks, finding delight in a wild flower, and fun in a sudden rainstorm, my spirits kept up. Now they began to flag. I looked back wearily on a lost life. A strange somnolence came over me ; my brain would not work ; I fell into a kind of apathy. Man delighted me not, nor woman neither ; nor the joy of morning, when the birds run wild to see the sun again ; nor the cloud-frigates in the sea of Summer sky ; nor books, learned, or humorous, or poetic ; nor my dinner. I seemed to have lost all appetite—I cared for nothing but sleep. In my long sleep I had delicious dreams—sometimes of my later years, with Mavis as my companion, and the heather-clad moor, and the greyhounds, and the old chapel ; oftener of the rose-garden at Twickenham, and Lucy's magic touch and mellow voice.

Sleep is a fragment of death, and dreams are a revelation of immortality. Some men don't dream. As Coleridge remarked, "Such men are never poets." Indeed, it may greatly be doubted whether they are not what Doctor Romayne, with graphic emphasis, called *dolls.* It is quite certain that dolls don't dream. What could they dream about except dolls of the opposite sex they had seen in the toyshop before they came out into the world?

A doctor from Redborough came over to see me now and then. His name was Tranter, and he was the most cheerful old boy I ever knew. 'Tis a pity doctors cannot always be cheerful; the infectious animal spirits of a doctor are of more value by far than all the drugs your scientific physician can order to be administered. Tranter used to laugh at my fancies, call me a hypochondriac, or some such name, wake me out of my lethargy by his own vital energy. Tranter was a dull fellow—all his schoolmasters laughed at him; but what they wanted to teach him was just what a plain healthy intellect like his could not assimilate. Offer Strasburg pie, with all its truffles, to a labourer used to bread and cheese and onions, and he will probably be disgusted.

Tranter did me good, I suppose. He kept me awake. I came to look for his visits. He was a brusque doctor, accustomed to scold poor people thoroughly if they did not get well when they ought. He used to tell me with great glee how he shocked the "lady" of a rich Redborough manufacturer. She had one daughter, about twelve, whom she spoilt, feeding her into chronic indigestion with all sorts of nice things, and allowing her to pass a lazy life, without movement of the mind. When Tranter was called in, he saw at once what was the matter, so he wrote a prescription in some such terms as these :—

"Whip her once a week at least. Make her learn to read and write. Give her nothing for dinner but roast meat and suet-pudding. Send her to bed at eight."

The lady was shocked. She called in a fashionable doctor named Ozanne, who had recently set up a system called homœopathy, which seems to mean the administering of particles of sugar in all diseases. Ozanne took the girl in hand, and made her a great deal worse. He did not kill her, however; and I have heard that she became a more languid fine lady than her mamma.

Tranter cheered me up, certainly. He always had a new story of politics or society. Between the papers and his clients he was always full of news; and he came into your room like a fresh breeze, waking you up by sheer vital force. He wanted me to "rouse myself."

"You are young," he said. "Living in this quiet way is not good for you. Why not go to London and amuse yourself?"

"I am not exactly young, Doctor," I answered; "but I believe your advice is good if I could take it. Nothing would amuse me now. I got past the age of possible amusement too early."

"Yours is a mental malady," he said, "and I have no medicine for a mind diseased. You have stayed in this old house, among old books, till you're as melancholy as an old rat that has passed all his life in the same drain-pipe. If you don't shake yourself up, you'll just fall into a state of permanent stupidity."

"What would you have me do?"

"Do! Anything fresh. Go to London and see the world; it must have changed since you settled in this corner so many years ago. It does any man harm to isolate himself, whatsoever his reasons. You are your own master, Sir Edward; pack your portmanteau, and change the air for awhile."

Such was Tranter's advice. I took it. Though threats of coming steam had saddened the heart of Timothy Short, steam was only rampant in the far north, and I had still the pleasure of travelling by stage-coach. I determined to be in London a few days only; so I took the least possible amount of luggage. I left the Romayne

Arms late at night; I reached the White Horse Cellar in Piccadilly early in the morning—so early that I went to bed, and slept off the fatigue of the journey.

When, a few hours later, I descended to the coffee-room and looked out upon Piccadilly, I thought that perhaps I had done wisely to leave my hermitage and take one more look at the great metropolis. I could not, however, help feeling my perfect loneliness in London. There were, of course, people who, if I found them out, would try to get up a languid interest in me, but I should be just like an old-fogyish ghost to them. I had no desire to re-appear in that way. I determined to look at the outside of London life, and remain unrecognised.

I walked into White's that morning. I had a right there, having kept my name on the books all these years. I was slightly stared at by gentlemen of my own standing, who looked a good deal older than I; and I consoled myself with the notion that, if Five Tree Hill had done nothing else for me, it had kept my skin from becoming vellum, and had left some vigour in my vertebræ. As I walked among men clearly my compeers, I felt as if I insulted them by being in such splendid form—"Tranter, thou reasonest well," I said to myself, after my first slight look at London.

I secured a stall at the Opera at Sams's; it was a great night . . . Grisi's first appearance in *Norma*. I am no musician, though I heartily love the concord of sweet sounds; but the young soprano's voice was so lovely, and her acting so perfect, that an uneducated fellow like myself could not help understanding her supremacy among singers. I often have wondered whether it is better to comprehend, or not to comprehend, the technic part of music. My friends have told me that I know good music from bad; I really cannot guess why. Only there is some music that is as thorough a charm as the song of nightingales, and there is some music that resembles the butchers' serenade of marrow-bones and cleavers.

I always sleep well after pleasant music. It excites the brain at the moment, and calms it afterwards. The effect is something like that of a waterfall; it dashes over the precipice with a myriad caprices of foam and sparkle; it sleeps tranquilly in the deep pool below. Montaigne's father always had him awakened by music; I should prefer being put to sleep that way, if I could get the sort of music I liked.

I don't think I have mentioned the unimportant fact that my hair and beard and moustache had, within the last year or two, turned very white, an excellent disguise for me in wanderings through London, when at any turn I might meet a friend. It would be impossible to put into words my feelings as I looked again at the old old places where I had lived my youthful life. Fancy me at the Horse Guards! 'Gad, how many a time I had turned out the Guards in that precious old Court Yard! What would they say to me now? I never drive when I can ride; so I hired a horse and groom, and went down to Clapham Common, to call on Mr. Arundel Lee, stockbroker. Unluckily, he was at home, and Mavis was not. He received me with that unpleasant mixture of servility and assumption which I often have perceived in persons of his class. He assured me that Miss Lee was greatly improved by the course of study which she had pursued at the Brixton seminary. Mavis came in while he was talking; recognised me, despite my whitened hair; shocked the stockbroker by throwing her arms round my neck, and crying as she kissed me. Why not, poor child? The uncle was a very good fellow, but I'll be hanged if he could understand my Mavis. He invited me to dinner, and I came and dined... and did not criticize, since Mavis's presence made up for his cook's and butler's blunders. He was very very slow; but he went to sleep after his first glass of port; and then my little girl came close to me, and put her pretty tremulous hand in mine, and wished she belonged to me. Yes, she ought to have been my daughter.

I got a box at the Opera for Grisi's Adelgisa, a night or two later, and the bald-headed uncle consented to come, and snored all through the performance. As we had put him in a back seat, it did not greatly matter. Mavis and I enjoyed our evening; only, the poor child's delight in seeing me was so great that I felt sure she would suffer from the subsequent reaction. She was content enough, I found, with her uncle . . . a kind dull fellow, who gave her all she wanted, except the difficult intimacy of the soul. He . . . was a financier. He thought money compensated all things. He regarded it as the common measure of human affairs. If a girl whom he liked had lost her father or mother, he would try to console her with a costly bracelet. You cannot get this fixed idea out of some men. You cannot teach them that it is absolutely impossible to buy the song of a mavis or of a poet . . . the love of a girl or of a dog. These are things beyond gold.

As we sat in our box that night, I, certain of unrecognition, swept the "glittering horseshoe" with a powerful opera-glass, to gratify my curiosity as to whether any old friends or acquaintances were in the house. Suddenly I started; a lady sat in the opposite box, her royally rounded arm leaning on the velvet verge. Her hair was as white as mine; it was sprinkled with rubies and flowers. She had been magnetized by the beautiful young singer, but my gaze had surpassed that magnetism.

She turned from the stage. She looked across the theatre. She knew me, and trembled. It was Lucy.

CHAPTER XVII.

LUCY.

"..... dies illa."

LUCY at fifty or thereabouts—a white-haired widow, yet still superb and noble—with a son of marriageable years. What a chasm to pass from the old Twickenham days! The knowledge that she had known me at first sight was a solace to me. I loved her still; although there is sex in souls there is no age—if there were, the soul could not be immortal. That which grows old, dies.

Sitting that night at my hotel, meditative, frugally supping on an anchovy and a pint of port, I asked myself whether I should go and see Lucy. I had ascertained that her husband was dead. I was heartily sorry for Lesbury—a thorough gentleman, who well deserved the good fortune of having Lucy for a wife—and to say a man deserved that, is praise enough for the noblest fellow that ever breathed. I thought over the matter till the morning seemed likely to overtake my ruminations; then I went off to bed, postponing my decision till the next morning. When morning came, I resolved that I would call. Nearly four decades had passed since we were obliged to separate, and those years must surely have brought to both the philosophic mind.

So I sought her that next afternoon, in St. James's Square, at the family residence;

and there I found her. She had expected me, denying herself to all other comers. She was in a room, half conservatory, half library, with a thousand different roses blooming around her. I thought of the Twickenham rose-garden. My strong and loving youth came back to me. The Duke of Rochefoucauld says that youth is a fever; ah, it is a fever too soon cured.

"I knew you," said Lucy. "I knew you would come. How much we have suffered through the folly of my poor brother! What we have lost!"

The whole thing was fresh in her memory still. She had been a happy wife, and was a happy mother; but the roses and nightingales of Twickenham still haunted her. Her half-century had not made her less a girl.

"As I had to give you up, Lucy," I said, "there was no man in the world save Lesbury to whom I would have so willingly resigned you. He was of noble mould, and I knew you would be happy with him. But now let us think of the past; let us try to drop all those terrible years that have whitened our hair and taken the vigour out of us. Let us recall the Twickenham rose-garden."

"And sing songs of the olden time," she said with a pleasant laugh. "Come, we two old fogies will have our flirtation. Ronald is gone abroad; I heard from him last at Venice; I wish he were at home, for I should much have liked you to see him. He is a good boy."

"It would be strange if he were not," I said, "being your son and dear old Lesbury's. I have lived a lonely life; but in my solitude I have learned many things, and one is, that self-sacrifice brings a reward. At this moment I feel strangely happy that yours has been a happy life with Lesbury, and that your son is a noble young fellow."

"Well, he *is* a noble young fellow," she said; "and if I can see him well married, I shall die happy."

I thought how Mavis might suit him, but I said nothing. I could make Mavis rich enough to be a good match for young Lord Lesbury. However, I said nothing, which perhaps was fortunate. It did not occur to me that Lucy might be mistaken as to her son's nobility of character. She was.

"Will you come and dine with me at Twickenham to-day?" said Lucy—Lady Lesbury.

"At Twickenham?"

"Yes. Will you think me a fool? Ralph didn't. He bought the house for me, and there it stands, furnished in its old fashion; and I often go down to look at the roses. Ralph was never jealous of my memory of you, sir; he often wished you could be persuaded to come and see us; but he knew your obstinate temper far too well to ask you."

"Ralph Lesbury was a man of royal nature," I said. "I wish I could grasp his hand, and thank him for his kind remembrance of me. We shall see him again, Lucy—you and I."

"Oh, yes," she said. "His soul was immortal. But now, will you come to Twickenham?"

"Will I not?"

"We will play at boy and girl again. We will try to conjure up the old, old days. Goodness me, how things have changed! We were at war with Bonaparte, weren't we? Now we are only at war with each other. People are beginning to travel by steam, I hear. And they have passed a Reform Bill; but I couldn't get anybody to explain what it meant."

We dined that day at the old house at Twickenham. 'Twas a curious reminder of my youthful past. Lucy and I had some stewed eels, and lamb cutlets with asparagus, and an iced pudding, and drank champagne therewith, and made believe very hard that we were as young as we had been ere the century approached its teens. We enjoyed our absurd little comedy. We went out amid the abundant roses, and did our best to regard them as the roses of the past. The wise world would have regarded us as a couple of old fools; but we had real pleasure that evening, nevertheless. When men and women are old, it is something that they can remember their youth. Happier those who can renew it.

Lucy and I had our pleasant talk in the dear old rose-garden; and I said to her, over and over again, that the soul grows not old. She was a girl that night, and I a boy; what were the toil and moil and wear and tear of life to us? We were young again. I was quite as much in love with Lucy the widow, as I ever had been with Lucy the maid.

Although loth to leave London, and Lucy and Mavis, I left at last; feeling that the whirl of the metropolis wearied my brain. Of Mavis I saw very little after this period, for she had fallen in love with somebody or other, and was enjoying the new sensation. I learnt before I left town that he was one Charles Marchmont, a stockbroker, and that Mr. Arundel Lee fully approved the match. I was the less loth to leave Lucy, because her son was coming home to be nursed, having caught a low fever in Rome. So I went to my den at Beau Sejour, and was not sorry to shrink into my shell, like a snail.

The history of the next few years is very void of incident. I found myself gradually feebler than of yore. I could not read, or write, or walk as before. Yaddles helped me; Yaddles turned out the prince of helpers; the faithful fellow slept on a rug at my chamber door, that he might be ready to help me, if I were ill. What could I do to requite such dog-like kindness? I left him a hundred a year in my will, and I devoutly hope it was not too much for him.

Doctor Tranter was good enough to say that he thought my brain was softening. I don't think it was. I sank gradually into a kind of luxurious apathy. I passed hours in meditative quietude, thinking over all I had learnt from dear Doctor Romayne. An ode of Horace, a mutton-chop, and a glass of port, formed my usual refreshment. I began to feel very much like a tortoise. But there were moments when I awoke, and there came a lightning flash of power, and I wrote an epigram or a sonnet.

It was, I believe, about the Spring of 1840 that I became of very little use to myself or anyone else. My fast life had told on me, and, though what I call a young man, I was growing weaker daily through a general decay of the faculties; so I grew more and more tortoise-like, and less and less liable to surprise. Wherefore I was not surprised at all when, one day, Lady Lesbury appeared at my bedside, and took complete charge of me. Dear Lucy!

There is nothing that requires scientific investigation so much as the severance of the soul from the body. In a large number of instances it occurs suddenly, and there is no time to think about it; also, in many cases it occurs in connection with keen physical pain, which paralyzes thought. It would be the germ of a great scientific discovery if you could take a famous professor (say Tyndall or Huxley), put him to death by very mild and very gradual means, and take down his remarks as the events occurred.

In some such way I died, without remarks. There were days when my poor old worn-out brain woke up again, and Lucy and I had quite pleasant little flirtations. She entirely understood me at this period, and knew the vanity of my attempt-ing what was beyond me, and wisely advised me to leave the general inquiry unprosecuted. " If a man can't die quietly in the country, I've no patience with him," was the remark made by an unromantic maid-servant. Lucy and I made merry over this utterance of hers, wondering how she would fret when should come the time for her to shuffle off this mortal coil, and pass into the Infinite Presence.

It was for me a happy thing indeed that the only lady I had ever loved could sit by my bedside at this crisis. There was no malady possible, Lucy being present. It would have been ridiculous to feel illness while her keen eyes looked at me—while her merry laughter cheered me. She was a splash cf sunlight on the world, leaving warmth and beauty wherever she passed.

Still, though *clara luce refulsit*, she could not bring one immortality. I think the thing might be done if a man were taken young enough; but I had lived far too fast to be a worthy theme for experiment. I began to wish for a change of *venue.* There is no knowing what the future may be, I thought. It would be confoundedly hard if I did not get a better innings than on the present occasion. I began to regard myself from the point of view of the *spectator ab extra*, and to wonder what would happen to the *corpus vile*, when the spirit took its flight.

There is great difficulty in severing what I discerned and actually knew at the time, from what I learnt in long succeeding years. This is certain—Lucy was with me to the last. Gradually I grew weaker and weaker, less and less caring for the actual world, more and more ready to enter another world, which I had never dreaded. It had always been my belief God did not create you to be afraid of Him; that opinion has grown to certainty during my unparalleled career. What He desires from His creatures is faith and love.

Faith and love waxed stronger in me as material force waxed weaker. I seemed to see the world across the inevitable river of death. I felt a happy relief in a nobler and less mutilated future. It is quite impossible for me to make intelligible to my readers the joyous certainty that came upon me. I tried very hard at the time to explain it to Lucy, but could not raise energy enough to find the necessary words. I was passive, awaiting the touch of the Death-angel's releasing wand.

I can remember the sweet Summer evening, with windows wide open, at Beau

Sejour, and exquisite music of bird and brook. I can remember the sunlight streaming aslant into my room. I can remember Lucy by my bedside—yes, the very same Lucy for whom roses were wont to grow, and nightingales to sing. I can remember how she talked of the past as she held my attenuate hand in hers, how she called back the irrecoverable days, the happy hours of evenglome, the time when we were to be one for ever. I can remember the doctor, Tranter, who sagely said,

"Lady Lesbury, you will make yourself ill if you wait upon our patient so carefully. It really is not necessary."

Lucy said nothing, but held my hand in hers.

I can remember a lawyer coming, to know if I would add codicils to my will; but I had left the bulk of my property to Lucy and a nice little settlement to Mavis, and was quite satisfied. I can remember the Rector of Redborough coming to administer my final communion, when I amazed him by quoting an ancient hymn of the Church that haunted my worn-out memory—

"Surgit Christus e sepulcro,
Solo Deitatis fulcro
Nixus, dum humanitas
Superat miserias,
Ut nos surgeremus rei
In humilitate Dei;
Nobis est victoria."

Ay, as I lay there, gradually severing soul from body, gradually moving forward to solve the great secret, the words *Nobis est victoria* sounded through my heart like the triumphant call of a bugle.

I died! When I died, Lucy held my hand, while it grew colder and colder, sitting silently by my bedside. When the servants came upstairs, to see if anything was needed, they found me dead. They found Lucy dead also. Her sweet pure loving spirit had taken flight with mine.

"Nobis est victoria."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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