Stretton

Henry Kingsley

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Stretton

Henry Kingsley

Chapter 1.

Does Nature sympathise with disaster? Of all poets' fancies, that is the most foolish. Is “the wind to be howling in turret and tree" whenever disaster, and sin, and terror are walking abroad? We should have fine weather, I trow, were that the case.

The crystal purity of a perfect evening at the end of April was settling down over the beautiful valley which lies between Shrewsbury and Ludlow; on the one hand, the Longmynd rolled its great sheets of grouse−moor and scarps of rock up, fold beyond fold; while, on the other, the sharp peak of Caradoc took the evening, and smiled upon his distant brother, the towering Plinlimmon; while Plinlimmon, in the West, with silver infant Severn streaming down his bosom, watched the sinking sun after Caradoc and Longmynd had lost it; and when it sank, blazed out from his summit a signal to his brother watchers, and, wrapping himself in purple robes, slept in majestic peace.

Down below in the valley, among the meadows, the lanes, and the fords, it was nearly as peaceful and quiet as it was aloft on the mountain−tops; and under the darkening shadows of the rapidly leafing elms, you could hear, it was so still, the cows grazing and the trout rising in the river. Day was yet alive in some region aloft in the air, loftier than the summits of Plinlimmon or Caradoc, for the democratic multitude of the stars had not been able as yet to show themselves through the train of glorious memories which the abdicated king had left behind him. The curfew came booming up the valley sleepily, and ceased. It was a land lapped in order and tradition; good landlords, good tenants, well−used labourers, if ever there were such in late years in England. Surely a land of peace!

Who comes here, along the path, through the growing clover? Who is this woman who walks swiftly, bareheaded under the dew? Who is this strange−looking woman, with an Indian shawl half−fallen off her shoulders, with clenched fists, one of which she at times beats on her beautiful head? Can it be Mrs. Evans, of the Castle, or her ghost? Or is it her in the flesh, and has she gone mad?

Such were the questions put to one another by a young pair of lovers, who watched her from beneath a plantation where they were innocently rambling. The young man said, “That is a queer sight for a fellow courting,” and the young woman said, “There was too much love−making there, I doubt.” And the young man said, “How about the banns next Sunday?” And the young woman said, “Have your own way about it, and don't plague me," which I suppose meant “Yes."

We must follow this awful, swift−walking figure of poor Mrs.Evans, and watch her.

She was an exceedingly beautiful woman, in exact age forty−one, with that imperial dome−like head, and splendid carriage of that same head, which the Merionethsbire people say is a *specialité* of the Merediths, though I have seen it elsewhere. If you had told her that she had Celtic blood in her veins, she would probably have denied it; but she was certainly behaving in a most Celtic manner now. Anything more un−Norman than her behaviour now, cannot be conceived. The low, inarticulate moans—the moans which mean so much more than speech—the wild, swift walk, the gesticulation, the clenched fists, all told of Celtic excitability; yet she was no Celt. It is only the old, stale story of *Hibernis ipsis Hiberniores*. She was behaving like a Celt because she had been brought up among them; but there was a depth of anger and fury in her heart which must have come from the conquering race.

As she neared her husband's Castle, she grew more calm, adjusted her shawl, and put her hair straight; for she feared him, gentle as he was. He would have lain down so that she should walk over him; but he would have been angry with her had he seen her in her late disorder. And she had never seen his wrath but once, and that was towards his own son; and she did not care to face it, for it was as deep and passionate as his love. So she bound up her hair, left off clenching her fists, pulled her shawl straight, and, stepping in by the flower−garden, let herself in by the postern, and appeared before him, as he stalked up and down the library.

“Is it over, darling of my heart?” he said.

“It is all over,” she said, spreading her ten white fingers before her.

“And how is she?” he asked.

“She is dead!” answered Mrs. Evans.

“Dead! dead! dead!” she was going on hysterically, when he caught her in his arms and kissed her into quiescence.

“Be quiet,” he said; “there is trouble enough without more. What have we done that God should afflict us like this? Is the child alive?”

“Yes; but it cannot live,” replied Mrs. Evans. “It is a weak thing: but God forgive us, there is no doubt about its father.”

In the house of Evans, the qualities of valour in war, of faith to the death with friends, and of strict probity towards the women of the estate, were always considered to be hereditary—more especially the last quality. The servants in the family were always taken from some family resident in the 11,000 acres which made the estate. Such of them as were traditionally supposed to require the quality of good looks, the ladies'−maids and the pad−grooms, were always selected from three or four families notorious for those qualities. Again, even in such a strong family as the Evanses, nurses were often required, and were selected always, if possible, from one of those three or four families: so that, in fact, most of the servants, male and female, were actual foster−brothers of some one member of the house. The idea of any wrong was actually incredible; but it had come, and there was wild weeping over it.

The prettiest girl of all these good−looking families had been the very last admitted into the Castle, as companion and lady's−maid to that splendid beauty, Eleanor Evans. Admitted, do I say? She had been admitted when she was a wailing infant of a week old, as foster−sister to the equally wailing Eleanor: for Mrs. Evans had not been so lucky as usual, and had kept about a little too long. Elsie grew up almost as much at Stretton as she did at her own cottage, and had been as free of the Castle as was her foster−sister Eleanor.

Perhaps, because she had had only one nurse while Eleanor had two—who can say?—she grew up very delicate and small, though very beautiful. Eleanor (I was going to say Aunt Eleanor, but must not as yet) grew up so physically strong that the wiser old ladies, after looking at her through their spectacles, pronounced that she was very splendid, but would get coarse. We shall see about that hereafter.

It was on the eve of Waterloo that the gentle little maid was fully accredited for the first time to her full powers of being thoroughly bullied by Eleanor. “Now, you little fool, I have got you, body and bones,” said Eleanor, when they went upstairs together, “and I'll make you wish you were dead in a week;” which made the little maid laugh, and yet cry; upon which Eleanor bent down over her and kissed her. “What is the matter with you, you little idiot?” she said. “You want bullying, and you shall be bullied. Come up, and take my hair down.” And the little maid did as she told her.

“Set all the doors open,” said Eleanor, “that I may walk to the end of the corridor and back. A dog would not sleep tonight. Oh, Charles! brother of my heart, acquit thyself well! My father and mother are praying for the heir of the house, but I—I, girl, cannot pray! Why are you weeping, girl?”

“I was thinking of Master Charles and the battle, miss.”

“What is he to you? How dare you cry while I am dry−eyed! Idiot! Good Duke! Good Duke! Tarre! He should wait behind Soignies for Blucher; but he knows. In front of Soignies there are open downs. Child, why do you weep? Is it for your brothers, who have followed mine? I do not weep for *my* brother—”

Yes, but she did though. Broke down all in one instant, while the words were yet in her mouth. But it was soon over. She was soon after walking up and down the corridor, with her hair down, speculating on the chances of the war.

Late at night she came to her father and mother's bedroom. They had not gone to bed, but sat waiting for news, which could not possibly come for a week. “Mother,” she said, “I can do nothing with my poor little maid. She has got hysterical about her two brothers at the war, and keeps accusing poor Charles, who, I am sure, never tempted them.”

“What?” said Mrs. Evans, sharply.

“Keeps on accusing Charles in the most senseless manner. I am sure—”

“Go and sit with your father,” said Mrs. Evans. “Engage his attention; keep him amused. I'll see to the girl.”

She went and saw to the girl; but took uncommonly good care that no one else did. She was an hour with her. When she came back to her husband's bedroom she found Eleanor sitting up, with a map of Belgium before her, chatting comfortably, but solemnly, about the movements of the armies.

She had seen the girl, she said; and the girl was hysterical about her brothers, and accused Charles of leading

them to the war. The girl was weak in her health, and would be always weak. The girl had always been a fool, and apparently intended to remain one. The girl must have change of air and scene. She had an aunt at Carlisle, who kept a stationer's shop. The girl must go there for a time; for there was trouble enough without *her* tantrums. Charles, with his furious headlong way of doing things, was almost certainly killed, &c., &c., with a sly, kind eye on her husband and her daughter.

They both were on her in a moment, at such a supposition. She, when she saw that she had led them on the wrong scent, recovered her good temper, and allowed them to beat her pillar to post, while they proved that the allies would carry everything before them, and that nothing could happen to Charles (except accidents of war, which are apt to be numerous). Yet, complacent as she was, there were times when her hands caught together and pulled one another, as though the right hand would have pulled the fingers up by the roots. These were the times when she was saying to herself, about her own darling son, “He had better die there! He had better die there!”

For the rest nothing was to be noted in this lady's behaviour for the present, save that the new lady's−maid was sent to Carlisle, that Mrs. Evans seemed to take the news of Waterloo rather coolly, and that she received her son, now Captain Evans, with extreme coolness on his return from Waterloo, covered with wounds and glory.

She thought him guilty. Why should she say to him, “Honourable conduct is of more avail than glory?” He was chilled and offended, for he felt himself innocent.

What was he like at this time? For the present we must take his sister Eleanor's account of him, who says that he was the very image of his son, Roland,—which must be very satisfactory to the reader. The ladies may like to know, however, by the same authority, that if my friend, Eleanor, is right, and that Charles Evans was like his son Roland, that he was also, by the same authority, extremely like Antinous.

Antinous Charles had been brought up with this poor, pretty little maid, Elsie, and he had fallen in love with her, and she with him, which was against the rules of the house of Evans, for she was foster−sister of *his* sister. They loved like others. In what followed, Charles's own mother was against him, and gave him up as a villain who had transgressed the immutable traditions of the house. One of the girl's brothers was killed at Waterloo, one came home with Charles, as his regimental servant. Charles gave out that he was going to London; but his silly servant came home to Stretton and vaguely let out the fact that Captain Charles had not been to London at all, but had been to Carlisle to see his sister, Elsie.

Mr. Evans's fury was terrible. He wrote in a friendly way to the colonel of Charles's regiment, begging him, as an old friend, to recall Charles instantly, and save him from what he feared was a very low intrigue. He sent old Mrs. Gray, the girl's mother, off to Carlisle after her daughter at once, bearing such a letter as made Charles avoid home in returning to Chatham at the peremptory summons of his commanding officer.

Let us say but little about it, as it is not among such painful scenes as this that we shall have to walk together. Charles had not been very long at Carlisle, but he had been too long it seemed. The unhappy girl came home, and was confined in six months' time. She died that night, but the child lingered on, and on.

Did Mrs. Evans wish that it should die? Who can say? Did she wish the disgrace buried and ended? Who can say? I think, however, that she slept none the worse after Mrs. Gray came to her and told her that the child was dead.

It had been baptized, and so was buried and registered—the illegitimate son of Elsie Gray; the sexton patted down the turf, and all the scandal was over and done. Old James Evans said that Charles was now free for a new start, and had better go to India on his roster, and had better not come home first. And so a pale and rather wild−looking young captain paraded his company on the main deck of the East India Company's ship, *The Veda*, and sailed for India accordingly.

“Taking things rather coolly,” you say. Why, no; but somewhat hotly: yet submitting. This young fellow of a captain had violated every traditional rule of his house, and felt guilty. Yet he was not without sources of information. He dared not face his family in the state of things as they were; and he dared not see the woman he loved best in the world. He consoled himself and her by passionate, wild, foolish letters, carefully transmitted, and carefully and tenderly answered, not only to poor Elsie, but also to his sister Eleanor, whom we shall see again. When unhappy affairs of this kind take place, there are apt to be domestic scenes. I will give you one.

At breakfast, one bright May morning, some two months before the child so soon to die was born, Eleanor had a letter, and was reading it. Her mother looked at her father, and her father looked at her mother, and at last her

father, Squire James Evans, spoke:

“My dear Eleanor, you have a letter from your brother Charles. Will you let me read it?”

“No, I won't,” said Eleanor.

“Is that the way to speak to your father?” said Mrs. Evans.

“Yes,” said Eleanor, “if he proposes to read letters which are not directed to him. The letter is from Charles to me; if he had intended to let my father see it, he would have directed it to him. He, on the other hand, has directed it to me, and I mean to keep it to myself.”

Mrs. Evans wept.

Squire Evans said, “This is well. My son has been a villain, and my daughter backs him up.”

“You do ill to call your son a villain, sir,” replied Aunt Eleanor. “Call him fool and coward; but you do ill, you two, to call him villain.” And so Aunt Eleanor, then, by the way, a very beautiful young girl of eighteen, takes up her letter, and scornfully sweeps out of the room, with her nose in the air. Fine times indeed!

Poor Elsie Gray was with her mother, as we said, and that devoted woman had more than one trouble on her hands at a time. It turned out now that young Robert Gray, the soldier−servant of Charles, had quietly, without leave of his commandant, without the slightest means of supporting her, married a pretty girl two parishes off, and now wrote coolly to his mother from Chatham to announce the fact, and inform his mother that the young lady would come to her for her confinement.

This child, as Mrs. Gray could tell, was born at the same time, or nearly, as the other. And the soldier's child lived, while the child of his master died. Little Gray grew up, and grew strong. And we shall have to see a great deal of him in many positions. It was about three weeks after Mrs. Evans came wringing her hands through the green lanes, lamenting the dishonour of her husband's house and her own, that the other little child wailed itself into silence, into peace, into death, and was heard of no more.

Chapter 2.

Was Mrs. Evans sorry? Who can say? Those Merediths and Ap−Merediths, who call themselves Celtic, yet are as Norse as they can look at you out of their two eyes, have a singularly un−Celtic trick of concealing emotion. Eleanor could not say whether her mother as sorry or glad,

It was not the custom, in families of that class, for the mother to allude, even in the most distant way, to her daughters on any points regarding marriage relations. Mrs. Evans broke through this rule once, and when her daughter and she were alone, said, very quietly, “That child of Gray's, the soldier, is growing strong and hearty. You are old enough to understand that if things had gone right, that child would have called you aunt. His father is the brother of the woman whom you should have called sister, had it not been for the incalculable villainy of Charles.”

“Mother, leave Charles alone. I will not have Charles abused.”

“A most maidenly, daughterly speech,” said Mrs. Evans, scornfully.

“Mother, I mean all duty; but circumstances alter cases.”

“This is well,” said Mrs. Evans. “This is uncommonly well. There is some old cross of the Evans blood coming out here. This is the Duchess of N—'s blood, I doubt, which is now defying her own flesh and blood.”

“Don't talk like that, mother.”

“I will not,” replied Mrs. Evans; “but allow me to tell you that if Lord Homerton had heard you utter such atrocious sentiments, he would at once cease his visits, and would not propose.”

“Oh, he has proposed,” said Eleanor. “He proposed yesterday.”

“What did he say?” said Mrs. Evans, eagerly.

“Well,” said Eleanor, coolly, “he merely, as I believe men do (and dreadful fools they look when they do it), asked me if he might consider himself engaged to be married to me.”

“And what did you say?” asked Mrs. Evans.

“I said that I was at a loss to conceive what he had seen in my conduct which induced him to take such an unwarrantable liberty.”

“Good heavens!” said Mrs. Evans. “Then are you off with him?

“I never was on with him that I know of,” said Eleanor. “He is a good fellow, and I like him well; but I don't see why I should marry him. We shouldn't get on. He is not religious, and does not care for his estate.”

“Your influence would have made him care for both his estate and his religion,” said Mrs. Evans.

“Not a bit of it,” replied Eleanor. “George is a man, although we never hit it off together.”

“Is it hopeless?” said Mrs. Evans. “How did you dismiss him?”

“Well, I kissed him, and as he went out of the room, I gave him a pat on the back, and I said, 'Go on, George; go off to Greenwood. There is a girl there, worth fifty of me, who is dying for you. You would never have made such a fool of yourself about me, if it had not been for our two families.' And then he wanted to kiss me again, but I would not stand that. And so he rode off to Greenwood, and I think you will find that Laura Mostyn will be announced as Lady Homerton next week.”

“You will never be married at this rate,” said Mrs. Evans, biting her lip.

“Never mean to make such a fool of myself,” replied Eleanor.

“A woman must marry to get position and station,” said Mrs. Evans, looking keenly, and in a puzzled manner, on this radiant young beauty of eighteen.

“I have both,” said Eleanor. “I have the Pulverbatch Farm, and that will bring me in £500 a year, and take up all my time. I tell you that I don't choose to have any husband but one, and he is my brother Charles. Let us drop this perfectly vain conversation and tell me what you want done about this child.”

Mrs. Evans was beaten by that inexorable, beautiful face. She said, after a pause, “I wish you quietly to be godmother to it, and when I am dead, to look to it. We have done evil enough to that family as it is.”

“Is it to be brought up as a gentleman?” she asked.

“Certainly not,” said her mother; “only respectably. I wish you would undertake it for me, for the sight of the child and of the whole of that family is distasteful to me.”

Eleanor said, “Yes,” wondering. But when she said yes she meant yes, and she did what was desired of her.

Chapter 3.

The sudden and very lamentable death of Squire James Evans in the hunting−field threw a gloom, not in the mere newspaper acceptation of the term, but in reality, over that part of Shropshire, for nearly a week. He was a most deservedly popular man, and what they wrote on his tomb was every word of it true. He *was* a good son, a good husband, a good father, a good landlord, a pious churchman, a firm friend, and he died without one single enemy. One little fact was omitted from his tombstone: he died without being reconciled to his son, at least formally. There may have been a reconciliation at heart, and those low, inarticulate moans, as he lay dying in his groom's arms in the ditch, may have been the attempted expression of it; but the mouth was loose in death before they were ever uttered.

Mrs. Evans was not long after him. She was aged and worried, and she moped and brooded until she died. The old clergyman who attended her at the last, left her at the very last with a dissatisfied and rather puzzled face. Eleanor she would not see for the last four days.

Well, she died. And it took nearly six months to communicate to Squire Charles his most sudden and unexpected succession. He came home at the end of a year, and found Eleanor, his sister, in possession, keeping all things square for him: receiving rents, bullying attorneys, walking up and down among the farms, in a dress which was considered remarkable even in those times, and attending to the wants of the tenants. She had practically given one of the family livings away, quite illegally, though the young curate to whom she gave it took possession as a matter of course. On the other hand, she bad been rather tight with the tenants on the subject of repairs; and, it is reported, used the word “humbug,” just then coming into fashion, on more than one occasion. They tell an idle tale, those Shropshire folks. They say that she and the steward were standing together on the terrace, when Squire Charles rode up, on his return from India; that the steward said, “Thank Heaven, he has come at last!” And that Aunt Eleanor said, “I quite agree. Now you and he take the estates in hand, for I am sick of it; and a nice mess you will make of it together, you two."

They did nothing of the kind, however. The property did rather better under the more liberal rule of Squire Charles than under the near and close rule of his sister, Eleanor. Women are apt to be very near and mean in business. They will *give* as few men will *give*, but they will haggle about sixpence, while they are irritating a good tenant. Was not the Antiquary, as near a man as another, upbraided by his usually submissive womankind for “raising the price of fish on them”?

Eleanor the beautiful whiffed away from her brother's establishment at once, leaving him to manage his somewhat irritated tenants, and retired to her own farm at Pulverbatch. She marched off with her young child Gray.

The scandal about Charles Evans and Elsie Gray was known to very few persons, and was now almost forgotten even by those few: scarcely half a dozen all told. As for the county, they had never heard of it, and even if they had, would have taken small note of it, for there were plenty of scandals of the same kind in any one *their* families. If it had got wind, the more ill−natured of them would have been pleased at such a fiasco occurring in such a saint−like family as the Evanses. But then it never did get wind, and Charles Evans was welcomed to his ancestral halls by the county generally, with lute, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all manner of musical instruments. He lied a little, I doubt, at the very first reception, for on being inquired of by the county, where was his Eleanor, he replied that she was not well, and having been overpowered by his sudden return, had gone home to her farm at Pulverbatch: whereas, the truth was that she was perfectly well, and had told him the day before that she was not in sufficient temper to meet all these idiots, and walked off to Pulverbatch, promising to come back to him as soon as he had got rid of his fools.

Yet they had had a pleasant meeting these two: worth giving perhaps. He took her in his arms, and she wound her fingers in his hair. And he said—

“Love all the same, sister?”

And she said: “Not all the same, but more.”

“Has anybody been?” said the brother.

“I should like to see them,” said the sister. “My dear, I must marry you. No other arrangement is possible. Get rid of these fools, and find yourself a good wife, and I will come back and marry the pair of you.”

“But who is to marry you?” said the brother.

“You,” said the sister.

Chapter 4.

It was a long time before Squire Charles married, but at last, when he was five−and−thirty, he married a Miss Meredith, a very distant connection to him by birth, who, as Eleanor said, had been kept by her parents for him, till, like a brown Beurre pear, she was running a chance of being mildewed. Eleanor came to the wedding and signalised herself by utterly routing and defeating a Squire Overley, a most estimable man, of great wealth even in Shropshire, who was seeking her hand in marriage. She was very civil to him, but refused to speak of anything except medical science and the management of nursing sisterhoods. She beat that estimable young man, and saw that she had done so. “Heigh ho!” she said, as she got into bed. “One more goose choked, and another fool married. I'll be back with my pigs to−morrow. Overley is a good fellow though, and I'll find him a good wife. I wonder if Charley will let me have that sixty acres that Pilgrim wants to give up. If he don't I must give up my pigs; for buy meal, I won't.” And so the great Shropshire beauty went to her bed and slept the sleep of the just.

Charles's marriage was one of the most happy ones which ever took place, either in Novel−land or Earth−land. Within a year Roland, whom I hope you will get to like, was born; and Eleanor was asked to be godmother. She, dating from Pulverbatch, replied that she hated boys, because they were always wanting their ears boxed. She would undertake this part of a godmother's business with the greatest pleasure, but as a conscientious woman she could not, in this case. She had invested, for her, heavily in old Berkshire pigs, which took up the main of her time, and as a boy's ears always required to be boxed on the spot to produce the proper effect, she doubted that she could not be always on the spot to box them, so she declined, and bred pigs, not even coming to the christening.

The next year was born Edward, whom I also hope that you will like. Once more Eleanor was asked to be godmother; once more she refused, but she came to the great christening party, as she did not to the first one. No one, not even her own brother, knew if she was coming or not. A splendid present of plate for the child had arrived from her, but she put in no appearance until just before the second lesson. Then she swept in, splendidly dressed in grey silk, and sat down among the poor folks by the organ.

Old Major Venables said, afterwards, “That woman made a sensation; but don't you think she meant to do it? I tell you that those Evanses mean what they say, and do what they mean, and the deuce can't prevent them. What the deuce Eleanor means, I can't say. But she'll do it.”

Chapter 5.

It soon became evident what she meant to do. Although she protested against any religious responsibility towards Edward, she nevertheless undertook any amount of physical responsibility. She even determined to assist at his education, to attend as far as she could to his diet, and to define and develop his character, which latter part of her programme she accomplished by allowing him to do exactly as he pleased, and giving him everything he asked for. Mr. Evans told her that she would spoil the child. “I want to spoil him,” she said. “He wants spoiling. I intend to gain an influence over him by that means, and use it for good. Our young one is a very sensitive and affectionate young one, and must be treated accordingly.”

Meanwhile she had fairly done her duty, and her mother's behests towards young Allan Gray, the soldier's son. She had quietly and unostentatiously got him well educated at Ludlow, and at his own request had apprenticed him to a jeweller's in Shrewsbury. She nearly considered herself quit of him; and his distant connection with the family was scarcely known by any one except herself, and almost forgotten even by her.

Among the tastes early developed by Master Edward, under his aunt's direction, was a liking for jewellery, for bright and glittering things. One of the greatest pleasures of his life, for some little time, was riding into Shrewsbury to shop with his aunt. Aunt Eleanor had given him a watch and chain, and on this chain he had the fancy to hang brelogues; fish, lizards, crosses, lockets, which you will. And this shop, where young Gray—Aunt Eleanor's other *protégé*—was located, supplied things of this kind, of Palais Royal manufacture, cheap, soon dimmed in rust, soon cast aside. Young Evans soon got over this fancy of his for glittering things, though he always retained his passion for gaudry; yet his continual going into this shop, to get these twopenny Palais Royal trifles, led to a result with which we have to do. It led to an acquaintance between him and the youth, Gray, who was deputed to sell them to him. And the youth Gray was as fond of glittering and gaudy things as was Childe Evans. And so the youth and the young boy, setting their heads together, “Ye'll no hinder them,” as the Scotch say, from getting uncommonly fond of one another. Roland always disliked him, as far as his gentle nature could allow him to dislike any one. But at any time, when Roland denounced young Gray as a sententious young Methodist, Edward would plead so well with his deer−like eyes, that he would cause Roland's objurgations to die away into silence.

Roland and Edward, when old enough, were sent to a school, which I will call Gloucester, to avoid personality, reserving always for myself, in case of action for damages, the right of fixing my own dates.

Our young jeweller's master moved from Shrewsbury to Gloucester a short time before Roland and Edward went into school there together; and so Edward and Allan Gray were once more brought together. The acquaintance between Gray and Childe Evans got cemented there, not much to Roland's pleasure. Edward bought no jewellery now, but got himself taken to strange places of worship by this imperial−looking young jeweller's apprentice, who could look at the splendid Roland as though he were an Oliver (forgive me). Roland did not like it, any more than the Doctor. The Doctor said that Roland should speak to Edward on the subject. Roland, though only fourteen to his brother's thirteen, declined.

“It would bring a cloud between Eddy and myself,” said the boy, “and I intend that there shall be no cloud between Eddy and me till we die.”

Of course, with a fool of fourteen like this, there was nothing to be done. The Doctor pitched into Eddy. “It is not unknown to me, sir, that you have been in the company of an apprentice of this town, not only to a Dissenting place of worship, but also to the Papist chapel. It is the greatest scandal which has occurred at this school since its foundation. I shall write to your father.”

“I wouldn't do that, sir,” said poor little Eddy; “we were only looking about for ourselves. And we don't like either the one thing or the other.”

“*You* like!” said the Doctor. “*You* like! Here, I'll sort *your* nonsense pretty quick. What was last week's memoriter?”

“Non ebur neqne aurem,” began the poor boy, “Mea renidet in—”

“Write it out twenty times, sir, and keep school,” said the Doctor. “We will have a finish and an end of all this.”

Roland did his brother's task for him, and was furious against the Doctor. But as Roland's fury against the Doctor will have to keep six years, by which time it had become changed to love and reverence, I will say little about it. Merely mentioning the fact that there was a third member of the Evans family, a pretty little girl, I will leave the Evans family—for what will be to you a few minutes—and describe another Shropshire family.

Chapter 6.

Old Mordaunt, of Mordaunt Hall, used to say that his wife always had twins. When this statement was examined, you found that Mrs. Mordaunt had but two children—Johnny immediately after her marriage, and Jemmy twelve months afterwards, yet when

The petrified spectator asked, in undisguised alarm,

which was Johnny and which was Jemmy, the problem used to be solved by saying that Johnny was the fatter. But, then, neither of them *was* fat.

One—the elder—was broader, and less symmetrical than the younger one, James, more commonly called Jimmit. During the holidays, part of which young Edward Evans spent with his Aunt Eleanor, these two youths were frequent guests at her house. She pronounced them to be entirely similar, and utterly devoid of character. In which opinion she was not wholly right.

The Evanses and the Mordaunts both went to Gloucester together, and, as neighbours, saw a great deal of one another. Both families also had a little girl, younger than either of the brothers, with whom, at present, we have nothing to do—they were in the school−room still; and I have been turned out of the school−room by the governess at lesson−time too often to try and enter it again. By the by, are governesses so dreadfully bullied and ill−treated as it is the custom to represent? For my part, ever since I was six years' old until now, I have been almost as afraid of them as I am of a schoolmaster, and have been used to see them have pretty much their own way; but there are families, and families, no doubt.

I must quit speculation to give a letter, which was written at the time when these four lads were at ages ranging from seventeen to nineteen, and were all going up to matriculate at St. Paul's College—at either university you like. It came from the headmaster at Gloucester Grammer School, himself a man from Trinity College, Cambridge, and was addressed to the senior tutor at St. Paul's−his old friend and contemporary.

“Dear George,—You have asked me more than once to send you a boy or two, and I have always hesitated because I have always disliked your college, its ways, and its works. Now, however, that P—E— and O— have married off altogether on college livings, and have undertaken cures of souls (their creed seeming to be that gentlemen's sons have no souls, or, like the French marquis, will be saved by rent−roll); now that you are first in command practically, I send you, my dear George, not one boy, but a batch of four. And, take them all in all, they are the finest batch of boys I have ever turned out.

“Let us speak plainly to one another, for we have never fairly done so. The reason of our clinging so strenuously to university work was the disappointment about Miss Evans. Well, we have never spoken of it before. I only ask you to stick to it a little longer, if it is only to see this batch of boys through.

“I don't know whether I am justified in sending them to you. You know, my dear George, that your college has been under the management of your old master and the three men who have retired to the cure of agricultural labourers souls very fast, very disreputable, and most extravagantly expensive. Nothing seems to have done well but the boat, which, having less than a mile to row, has, by developing a blind, furious ferocity, kept the head of the river. And in the schools you have only had a few first−class men, all of your training, with second, third, and fourth blanks.

“You say that you will mend all, and raise your tone. Of course you will. If I don't die, like Arnold, over this teaching, I will send you any number of boys in two years, when your influence has begun to work, and when the influence of the three pastors so lately sent out from high table and common room to catch agricultural sheep by the leg with their crook (Heaven save the mark!) has died out. But at present I am dubious. However, I have *done* it. Mind you the issue, as you will have to appear before God.

“Now, I must tell you about these fellows, and must go through them. In the aggregate, they are an extremely queer lot. They are extremely rude and boisterous, as my boys generally are, though perfect gentlemen if you put them on their mettle. They are absolutely innocent of the ways of the world, and will, no doubt, get thoroughly laughed out of all that by your young dandies, whom I, as a Cambridge man, most entirely detest. To proceed about the aggregate of them, they are all very strong and very rich. The total of their present income is

considerably more than you and I shall have the spending of when we have worked ourselves to the gates of death, and they have taken to boat−racing—a thing I hate and detest from the bottom of my soul, as being one of the most stupid and most brutalizing of all our sports. I know, however, that you do not think so. If there was any chance of their losing all their property together, we might make something of them. As it is, you must back up my efforts to make something of them. Nothing stands in their way but their wealth.

"Now, I will begin with them individually, and I begin with Roland Evans. Do you retain your old Platonic love for perfect physical beauty, perfect innocence, and high intelligence, and ambition? If so, you had better not see too much of my Aristides, Antinous Evans. The lad wonders why I laugh when I look at him. I laugh with sheer honest pleasure at his beauty. He is like the others, a boy of many prayers, but of few fears. If he could get his influence felt in your deboshed old college, he would do as much as you, old friend. But he is so gentle, and so young, that I fear he will not do much for you at once.

"I pass to the elder Mordaunt. The elder Mordaunt is a wonderfully strong, bull−headed lad, whose course at school has been perfectly blameless, fulfilling every possible duty, but declining to show any *specialité* except wonderful Latin prose. There is something under the thick hide of him somewhere, for I have seen it looking at me from behind that dark−brown eye of his a hundred times. Can you fetch it out? I have not been able. I have often been inclined to throw the book at the head of this young man, in return for his quiet contemplative stare; but I have never done so. I flogged him once, because Sir Jasper Meredith (a cripple) let off a musical box in chapel, and I thought it was the elder Mordaunt. It was arranged between the Mordaunts and Meredith that the elder Mordaunt was to take the thrashing, because little Sir Jasper was not fit to take it. Sir Jasper Meredith came crying to me afterwards, and told the whole business. I never had occasion to flog the elder Mordaunt again. Be careful of this fellow, George. I don't understand him. You may.

"I come now to the younger Mordaunt. And now I find that I have to tell a little story. Young Mordaunt was an unimpressionable lad, quite unnoticed by me, and nearly so by the lower masters, under whose hands he was passing, who only made their reports on him to me for extreme violence and fury. I have often had to flog this boy—you say what a nice employment for an educated gentleman—*cela va sans dire*; and on one occasion I held him ready for expulsion. It was the most terrible case of bullying which had ever happened: four fifth−form boys, just ready for the sixth, had set on a sixth−form boy, just about to leave us for the army, and beaten him with single−sticks to that extent that he had to be taken to the hospital, as it appeared, with his own consent, for he made no complaint. The younger Mordaunt was one of the beaters, one of the attacking party, and I was going to expel them all, until the elder Mordaunt, backed by my brother, the master of the lower third, explained the circumstances, upon which I did a somewhat different thing. I held my tongue, and gave the beaten boy a chance for a new life.

"The elder Mordaunt and the elder Evans, Roland, lately grandfathers of the school, have always respected and honoured one another. But between the young Mordaunt and the elder Evans there was for a long time a great dislike. I have it from a former monitor, now Balliol scholar, that they actually fought on three occasions. Of course they were no match; the older Evans easily beat the younger Mordaunt, while the elder Mordaunt, although an affectionate brother, positively declined to give his younger brother even the use of his knee during these encounters.

"The reason of the reconciliation between these two was odd. The cause of these encounters was the persistent bullying of the younger Evans, who was the fag of the younger Mordaunt. I have always forbidden bathing before the tenth of May, and have seldom been disobeyed. On one occasion, however, the younger Mordaunt disobeyed me, and before the winter's water was run off, determined to bathe in the weir, and having told his intention to a few, started, taking his fag, little Eddie Evans, to mind his clothes.

"It came to the ears of Roland Evans and old Mordaunt, who followed quickly with some other six−form boys, and were happily in time. You, as an Oxford man, know what lashers are: you knew the Gaisford and Phillimore monument, set up to warn boys, if they could be warned, of the deadly suck under the apron.

"Well, the younger Mordaunt stripped and headed into the furious boil. He was in difficulties directly. Instead of being carried down into the shallow below, he was taken under, and disappeared. He rose again, and with infinite courage and coolness, swam into the slack water, and tried to hold on by the Camp's heading. But it was slippery, and he was carried again into the race, and turned over and ever.

"When old Evans and old Mordaunt came, angrily, on the scene, all they saw was young Evans tearing the last

of his clothes off. He knew his brother's voice, and he cried out, 'Shut down the paddles; he has come up again.' And then, forgetting cruelties which he had suffered, and insults which he had wept over in secret, he cast his innocent little body into the foaming dangerous lasher, and had his bitter enemy round the waist in one moment, trying to keep his head above the drowning rush of the water. Of course, Roland was in after them in a few seconds.

"Cool old Mordaunt, who should be a general, I think, had, while rapidly undressing, let down the paddles. The pool was still now, too terribly still, they tell me. The two elder lads, swimming high and looking for their brothers, saw neither, until the handsome little head of Eddy Evans rose from the water, and said, 'I had him here, this instant, and he will be carried back by the wash.' Roland Evans, a splendid shoulder−swimmer, was with his brother in a moment, and saw young Mordaunt drowning on the gravel beneath him, spreading out his fine limbs, like a Christopher's cross, with each of his ten fingers spread out, taking leave of the world. Never seen it? Better not; it is ugly; I have seen it several times, and don't like it. Well, the two Evanses had him out on the shallow before his brother, a slow breast−swimmer, could come up, and saved him. That is all my story.

"But it has changed this younger Mordaunt's life in some way. The great temptation of our English boys is brutality and violence, and this bathing accident has tamed him. The boy prayed more, as I gained from his brother, and desired that thanks should be given in chapel for his preservation, coupled (fancy that! to me) with the condition that the names of the two Evanses should be mentioned with his. I refused to do so: Heaven knows why! Whereupon the boy turned on *me*, and, face to face, refused to have any thanks given at all. He said he would give his own thanks.

"He is entirely tamed, if you can keep him *en rapport* with these two Evanses. He will follow them anywhere, and do just as they tell him, whether that be right or wrong. I never liked him, and I still think him boyish in many ways, though innocent almost to childishness in the way you wot of. He has brains, more brains than his brother. But he is a disagreeable boy. He has a nasty way of sitting straight up and frowning, and there is a petulant preciseness about him which I cannot bear. Try being civil and kind to him—I have never been. You have more power in that way as a Don than I have as a schoolmaster.

"Now I come to my last boy, young Evans. I won't say anything at all about this boy: I leave him to you. If you can stand his pretty ways, I can't.

"These boys will be a terrible plague to you. They make so much noise: don't stop them in that if you can help it. My best boys are noisy and outspoken. Coming from me, you need not doubt their scholarship: keep it up. They are, to conclude, an innocent lot of lads, dreadfully rich, and have taken up, I fear, with this most abominable boat−racing, which, however, is not so bad as steeple−chasing.

"Now good−bye. I have sent you a team fit for Balliol in scholarship, for Christchurch in breeding, and, I very much fear, for Brazenose in boating. Why Providence should have placed so many of our public schools near great rivers, where the stock gets steadily brutalised by that insane amusement, I cannot conceive. Old religious foundations, you say, always near rivers, then highways, and in the neighbourhood of fish for fast days. Fiddle−de−dee! It all arises from the perversation (misrepresentation) of the edicts of the first original council, in the year 1, when it was agreed that everything was to be where it was wanted. The only dissentient, you well remember, was the devil, who moved, as an amendment, that there should be full liberty of conscience, that every one should say the first thing which came into his head, and everybody was to do as he pleased. The great first council rejected, if you remember, this amendment with scorn; but we are acting on it now. Let us take the benefit of the new opinions. Come over and talk Swivellerism to me, and I will back myself to talk as much balderdash as you. But don't talk any of it to my boys. I insult you, my dear George, by the supposition.

"P.S.—A tall, handsome−looking young booby, from Eton, comes with them from Shropshire. His father, calling here with the fathers of the other boys, asked me to say a good word to you on his behalf. I would if I could, but I don't know anything at all about him, except that he is to be married to Miss Evans, by a family arrangement, before he is capable of knowing his own mind. He has been brought up with the Evanses and the Mordaunts, and therefore cannot be very bad. But you know my opinion of Eton, and indeed of all public schools, except my own."

Chapter 7.

Furnished with this important epistle, the Dean of St. Paul's (college) felt a natural curiosity to see the young men who had attracted so much of the attention of undoubtedly the very best of the day, since the *dies infaustus* when Arnold's old pupil came down to breakfast with fresh questions, and heard that *the* master had called for *his* master, and that he had arisen and followed him speedily.

The Dean was a dry man, and a man of humour. St. Paul's was, in those times, a queer, wild place; it was partly “manned” by county gentlemen's and county parsons' sons, from the counties of Gloucester, Worcester, Shropshire, and partly from two grammar schools in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire. The two sets of lads never spoke to one another. The former set were always perfect gentlemen in their manners, though not always in their morals: the latter were mainly gentlemen in their morals, but never in their manners. It was vinegar upon nitre with them, and the dry, shrewd, caustic Dean looked with great anticipation of amusement for the curious “team” which the headmaster of Gloucester had sent him up.

He had undertaken the Latin prose lecture of that somewhat scholarless college, and had repeatedly said that it would bring him to an untimely grave, but after a fellow−commoner translating “The Art of Mingling in Society” in English of Addison, into Latin of his own, the Dean had dropped the Latin prose lecture, and had taken to the Greek. “You are safer in Greek,” he said. “I am not good in Greek, and so I may live the longer. But I couldn't stand the Latin any more.”

So it was in the Greek prose lecture that the Dean expected his young friends, with great curiosity. They were the first who came, very early, and they came sidling and whispering into the room one after another, and sat down in a row, each one saying as he went by, “Good morning, sir,” while the Dean stood and looked at them. Can one not see him now, with his broad shoulders, and his keen eyes looking out from under his wig?

They sat down in the chair opposite to him, and he had a good look at them. The first who came in was Roland Evans, evidently leader among them, a splendid upstanding young fellow, with short curling hair, who carried his head like a stag. “A fine face and a good head,” thought the Dean. “I wonder what is inside it?” Next to him came his brother—a small, slight, bright−looking lad, rather too pretty to please the Dean's taste, but pleasant to see, with a wistful look in his clear brown eyes, which the Dean did not disapprove of. Next came the elder of the two Mordaunts, gigantic, somewhat stolid in appearance, looking as the Dean thought with Falstaff, “land and beeves.” Then came the younger Mordaunt, gigantic also, and rather cross−looking, but with a good square head; as he passed on, he gave one look at the Dean, and let him know unmistakably that he considered him in the light of his natural enemy. Last of all came the “booby” who was to marry Miss Evans, and when the Dean looked on him, he thought at once: “The rest are a puzzling lot, but there is no doubt about you; you carry your turnpike−ticket in your hat; you are a good fellow, and so I think is that Roland Evans.”

But he was puzzlingly amused by them on one account: four out of the five seemed strangely cast in the same mould. Here were two pairs of brothers, and a fifth young man, and they were all cast in the same mould, with the exception of the younger Evans, who seemed poetical. Had this batch of lads come under his notice with any other recommendation than that of the shrewd Doctor, he would have set them down for four young louts of the landholding persuasion from the western counties, and have thought no more about them; but his friend had sent them to him as four of his picked boys, and Balliol would have opened her gates to them; yet there they sat in a row before him, silent and apparently stupid, occasionally sneaking their eyes up at his, as though to see what he was like, but dropping them again directly. “*Is* there character here?” the Dean asked himself. “K. should know; he said they were boisterous and troublesome. They are quiet enough now.”

The odd contrast between the apparently stupid insouciance of the Englishman at one time, and his violent fury at another, seemed to be hardly known to the Dean as yet: he got an illustration of it.

The other men, to the number of some thirty, dropped in, and the lecture proceeded. Anything more saint−like than the behaviour of the Shropshire five was never seen. The lecture consisted in turning “Spectator” into Greek prose, and after half an hour, every one being ready, the Dean called on Roland Evans, who stood up, and on being told that he might sit down, was very much confused. He read out his few sentences of Greek prose, and the Dean leant back in his chair.

“That is really splendid, Mr. Evans. I could not write such Greek myself. Read it again, please, and listen to it, you others.” Roland did so.

“Do you all write Greek like this at Gloucester? This is refreshing. Good Heavens! when I think of the trash my ears are dinned with. Here, Mr. Mordaunt the elder, read *your* piece next: let me see if it runs in families, or is common to the school.”

Old Mordaunt—sitting, as we used to say at school, one place below young Evans—did so, and his piece was very good.

“Now, young Mr. Evans, read yours.”

It appeared that these youths were under the impression that they could *take places*. They had come in and sat down in their old Gloucester class form. Young Eddy Evans had in his piece a passage of Addison's or Steele's in which occur the words, “pray do not deceive yourself on this matter.” Young Evans gave it “*meplanasthe*.” Whereupon both the Mordaunts rose to their feet, and cried with one voice, “I challenge.”

Before the astonished Dean could say one word, the two brothers were at it tooth and nail.

“I challenged first,” said old Mordaunt.

“You did nothing of the kind,” said the younger. “You read the fourth chapter of Acts, and see what happened to Ananias and Sapphira.”

“That's a pretty thing to say to your own brother,” said old Mordaunt.

“Not a worse thing than trying to cut your own brother out of a place. Why do you challenge?” said the younger brother.

“Because it's Greek Testament, and wrong in person,” said the elder, scornfully.

“Testament Greek is good enough—better than you could write. I challenge on other grounds. Ask him, sir, what letter he puts before the sigma.”

The younger Evans, confused and directed by his evil genius, said hurriedly, “Epsilon.” The younger Mordaunt at once sank back in his chair with the air of a man who had done a happy thing, and, addressing the Dean, said—

“This, sir, is a specimen of the scholarship of the Doctor's house−boys. If a commons−house boy had made such a mess, he would have been cobbed by the school.”

At which dreadful words wrath and fury were depicted on the faces of the two Evanses, and of Maynard, who was engaged to their sister. Young Evans rose, perfectly calm, and, addressing the Dean as “Dominus,” said that as the rules of English society prevented one boy from personally asking any explanation from any other boy in class, and indeed, in any place but the playground, whether he, the Dominus, would be so good as to demand, *in* his character as Dominus, of Mordaunt minor, when he was caned last, and what it was for. Whereupon Maynard, who had taken no part as yet, cried out, “Go it, young Evans!”

“It was your brother who pressed the spring and set it going,” said old Mordaunt.

“It was nothing of the kind; and no one knows it better than yourself,” said Roland Evans. “I never touched it; what did he want with it at chapel?”

“I suppose he could take his musical snuff−box into chapel,” said old Mordaunt, now, after the preliminary skirmish, in close alliance with his brother. “I suppose he had as good a right to bring his musical box in as you had to bring in your Buttmann's Lexilogus.”

“Well, you need not turn up old things like that,” said Roland Evans.

“Then you leave my brother alone, and I'll leave you alone. As for you, young Evans, you ought to have the Lexilogus banged about your stupid young head, and you would have had three months ago.”

The Dean had by this time partly recovered from the stupor into which he had been plunged by this unexpected and violent storm. He found breath enough to say, “Gentlemen, I must really request, and of necessity insist, that this unseemly objurgation ceases at once.” After a few growls and sniffs the lecture proceeded. The Gloucester boys' Greek was all nearly first−class, and then the Dean waded away into a slough of miserable stuff, which was furnished to him three times a week by the other men of his college.

A deaf fellow−commoner was blundering along through his piece, and the Dean thought that everything was going right, when the younger Mordaunt, who had been frowning and bristling for some time, finding his recollected wrongs too great to be kept in any longer, suddenly broke into articulate speech. To the unutterable terror and confusion of the whole lecture, he said, in a loud voice:

“Those two Evanses double−banked young Perkins in the play−ground one Saturday afternoon, when the fellows were bathing, and took his money from him. And they took nineteen−pence−halfpenny, and all he ever got back was a shilling and a sixpence, and the shilling was bad.”

“It was the same shilling we took from him,” cried Roland, “and your fellows have double−banked ours a hundred times.”

“What became of the three halfpence then?” said old Mordaunt.

“They spent it in Banbury tarts,” said young Mordaunt.

“There were no coppers at all,” said young Evans. “And you can't get one Banbury tart under twopence. Now then, what do you think of that?”

The Dean again recovered himself.

“In the whole course of my experience I never saw anything like this,” he said. “I insist on perfect silence. You five men will remain after lecture. I insist on silence. Mr. Jones, go on.”

“Now we shall all get lines, and liberty stopped,” said young Mordaunt, aloud, “and it was that young Evans began it.”

“It was not,” said young Evans, emphatically.

“*Will* you hold your tongue, sir,” said the Dean, in a voice which they knew they must listen to. And so the lecture went on and was finished. When it was done, the five remained, and young Mordaunt whispered to old Evans, “He won't flog the lot.”

The Dean began on them: “Gentlemen, your Greek is excellent, but your conduct has not been good. My friend warned me that you were boisterous. I have no great objection to juvenile spirits—in fact, I like them; but I must most emphatically insist that you will not quarrel in my lecture. You no longer take rank as schoolboys: we give young men of your age brevet rank as men. I must request that this does not happen again.”

Old Mordaunt shoved young Mordaunt, who shoved young Evans, who shoved Maynard, who shoved Roland Evans, by which he understood that he was to be spokesman. His speech was so odd, so very simple, so very provincial, so full of the argot of a provincial school, that the Dean scarcely understood it. He said:

“Sir, we are very sorry to have offended you; for myself, I have always been dead against barneying in class, for the mere purpose of spinning out the pensum. I have also tried most consistently to make friends between doctor's boys and common−house boys, principally, I will allow, for the sake of the boats. But these jealousies do exist, sir, even among friends, as we are: I am sure all true friends. But these jealousies have existed for a long time, and are not likely to cease. I will take it on myself to say, sir, that they shall be stopped in class; and not carried into play−ground, and that we would rather, having begun so unluckily, be punished by task instead of by stoppage of liberty.”

The Dean impatiently paced the room, and scratched his wig. “What the deuce,” he said to himself, “am I to do with such boys as these? An Eton or Harrow boy would know more of things at fourteen. Why does K. keep his boys back like this? they are as innocent as children. I never saw such a thing in my life; they fancy they are to be punished. Hang it all, let me see how green they are. Mr. Evans, how old are you?”

“Nineteen, sir.”

“You have behaved very badly. Suppose I was to cane one of you.”

“We understood, sir,” said Roland, “that we could not be caned after we came here. If, however, you decide on that course, the only one you could cane would be my brother. No boy is ever caned over eighteen, and my brother is only seventeen.”

“And it would be no use caning him!” exclaimed the irrepressible young Mordaunt; “he has been caned a dozen times for laughing in chapel. And last half I tried him to see whether he had got over it. I showed him a halfpenny in Litany, and he went off, and was taken out, and caned.”

“I would gladly, sir,” said Roland, “take my brother's punishment on myself; but being over eighteen, I cannot, and should, in fact, resist; it would be almost cowardly, sir, to put the fault of all of us on my brother.”

“Do go to Bath, and keep me from Bedlam!” exclaimed the irritated Dean.

And they fled off, and apparently had a free fight on the stairs; for as the Dean put it, sixteen out of the five seemed to tumble down instead of walking down.

“This is K. all over,” he said to himself, when they were gone; “this is his system; sending his boys up here babies instead of men. I wish he had sent them to Balliol,—I wish he had sent them to Jericho. I have no

stand−point with them. I can't get at them. They are a noble lot; but they are five years too young. And this hotbed of sin! Come in!”

Chapter 8.

There seemed some difficulty about the person who knocked at the door coming in, as indeed there was. There was a curious pegging sound, then a gentle turning at the door−handle, and then a heavy fall. The Dean dashed out, and found a little cripple lying on his back on the landing, laughing.

“I shall do it once too often,” said the cripple. “My servant puts me into bed, but I direct my energies to tumbling out of it. I live in the gate which is called Beautiful, and am happy there but St. John and St. Paul are in Heaven, and have never said to me, 'What we have, we give thee.' Will you help up a poor little cripple, and set him on his legs, and give him his crutch, Dean? Be St. John to me, Dean?

“Sir Jasper Meredith!” exclaimed the Dean.

“I thought I should creep so nicely up, and I came one stair a time. And I made fair weather of it until I tried to turn the handle, and then I lost my balance, and fell on my back.”

The Dean had never seen anything like this. He was a man of the cloister, and had heard of human ills, and of baronets with 14,000 acres, and of cripples also. But to find a feeble cripple, with 14,000 acres, flat on his back before his own door, on the landing, was a sensation for the good Dean. “And he is from Shropshire also,” he considered. “Shropshire will do for us in time.”

He picked the little cripple up very carefully, and brought him in. “What can I do for you, Meredith?” be said, gently.

“Give me leave to get my breath, my dear sir,” began the little man. “Thank ye. Oh! that's better. I can't get on anyhow. The doctors say that it is my spine, and I say it's my legs, and I expect that I know as much about it as they do. My legs have separate individualities; in fact, I have named them differently—Libs and Auster—and they always want to go in different directions, which brings me to grief—don't you see? I suppose you have never noticed the same thing with regard to your legs, for instance, have you?”

.”No,” said the Dean, glancing complacently at his well−formed legs. “I never experienced anything of that kind—lately.”

“No,” said Meredith; “your legs do look like a pair. Now mine, you will perceive, if you will do me the goodness to look at them, most distinctly are not.”

“You are certainly afflicted,” said the kind Dean, “and I am sorry for it.”

“We will speak of that on some future occasion,” said the little man. “I am not at all sure that *I* am. Being afflicted in this manner, do you see, brings you so many kind friends, and such sympathy, that I am not sure that I would change it even to be Roland Evans. Well, that is not what I came to speak about. I came on a matter of business, and I am taking up your valuable time in talking of myself. Cripples *will* talk about themselves, you know.”

“My time is yours, Meredith,” said the Dean, pleased by the kindly little ways of the cripple.

“Now that is very kind of you. May I take a liberty? I have been a petted boy, and am used to take liberties. May I hav one little sprig of that Wustaria which is hanging your window with imperial purple? I half live in flowers, Dean. They are the purest forms of mere physical beauty which can be brought to me, and I cannot travel in search of beauty, you know.”

The Dean got him one at once, saying, “There is one form of physical beauty which comes to you very often, I fancy—Roland Evans.”

Yes,” said Meredith; “I believe that he *is* very beautiful. But I, for my part, having known him so long, have lost the power of seeing *that*. If he were a cripple, or a leper, it would make no difference to *me*.”

“You like him, then?” said the Dean.

Meredith laughed quietly, and very absently, looking at the carpet.

“The brain is always affected in these spine diseases,” said the Dean to himself. “The poor little fellow is wool−gathering.”

Then he added, emphatically, “We were speaking of Roland Evans, Sir Jasper Meredith. You like him, do you not?”

In an instant one of the keenest, shrewdest faces he had ever seen was turned up to his, and he stood astounded.

“Like him!” said the cripple. “Yes, I like him very much indeed. You know that you yourself would like a noble young man like that (supposing that you were a cripple, which you are not) who left habitually his own amusements, in which he excelled, to attend to you; who could put you in the best place to see his innings at cricket, and come running to you after a race to tell you about it. You would like such a man as that, would you not?”

The Dean, interested, said “Yes!”

“Ah! So I like him. And in a similar way, I like his sister, who is Viola to Sebastian. And I like the whole lot of them—the two Mordaunts, Maynard, and Eddy Evans. They are all good. I came here on a point with regard to them. I am afraid they have been behaving very badly?”

“They have been quarrelling so dreadfully,” said the Dean.

“They always do in class,” said Meredith. “It is an old Gloucester dodge for spinning out the work, if one of the set has not got up enough lines.”

“If that is the case,” said the Dean, angrily, “I must request you to tell your friends that I will not suffer it again.”

“It will not happen again,” said Meredith. “They thought—I declare they did—that you would set them impositions. They are on their honour now.”

“They are an extraordinary lot of greenhorns.”

They are,” said Meredith, “with the exception of shrewd old Mordaunt. I suppose you know that none of them have ever been to London?”

“I know nothing about them,” said the Dean, “except that K. sent them here. I never saw such an extraordinary lot of fellows in my life. But you must tell them that I will not stand disturbances in lecture−time. You said that you came here to speak to me about them.”

“True,” said Meredith. “I ought to have had notice to quit before. I will do my business. The butler tells me that, as a fellow−commoner, I must sit at the high table with you. Do relax your rule, and let me sit at the Freshman's table, with the Evanses and the Mordaunts. They help me in a hundred ways. Do let a poor cripple have his dinner among his kind at the Freshman's table.”

“Your request is granted, certainly,” said the Dean, laughing. “But you must tell your friends not to be so turbulent. We were told last night that the younger Mordaunt and the younger Evans fought for a plate of meat, which both claimed, and were fined by the senior man at the table.”

“My groom told me this morning,” said Meredith, quietly, “that the Bible clerk had sneaked. Young Evans certainly ordered the chicken, but then young Mordaunt, as senior boy, considered that he had a right to change dinners, not liking his mutton when he saw it. I am sorry that they fought over it, but boys *will* fight over their victuals, you know. I daresay you have done it yourself.”

There rose suddenly on the mind of the Dean the ghost of a certain Bath bun which he had struggled for at a certain lodge at a certain school nearly twenty years before, and which had ended in a great fight in the playground with a certain great general, who was just now engaged in the reduction of Sebastopol. The Dean had the best of it, as did not the general.

“But,” said he, “they behave like schoolboys. They are ranked as men here.”

“They were schoolboys yesterday, and are schoolboys still,” said Meredith. “It rests with you to make them men. What sort of men you are going to make of them is more in your line of business than mine. Lord help you through it! for they are a rough lot. It rests with you to take up Dr. K.'s work where he left off. He has sent them here in trust to you.”

Chapter 9.

Pulverbatch, one would think, was (at least in the old coaching days) as far, intellectually speaking, from anywhere, as any place could be. It was even out of the then road from Shrewsbury to Ludlow—one would have thought a very quiet road—and was intensely sleepy.

The Grange, Miss Eleanor Evans' inalienable property, was a heavy old Grange, with an actual moat, in which Miss Eleanor lived as a Mariana, though with a difference. There were eight hundred acres of fat meadow and corn−land around it, washed down from Caradoc, Lawley, and Longmynd; every acre of which this strenuous lady held in her own hands.

When she took possession of it, after the lapse of a bad tenant's lease, and announced her intention of farming it, her brother gave her a little good advice.

"It is worth two pounds an acre, Nell, now that the Dower Farm has fallen in, even after Dell has scourged it so. 1600*l.* a year—I'll find you a good tenant."

"Thank you," she said, "but I am going to find a good tenant in myself."

"You will make a mess of it."

"Why?"

"Because you can't farm."

"Fiddle−de−dee," said Eleanor, "I have been bored to death with it all my life; I ought to know something about it by this time. And, besides women are much sharper than men. Any one can farm; don't tell me. I will take my four thousand a year off that land, or I will know the reason why."

"My dear Eleanor," said her brother, "I know you to be shrewd and determined; I will allow that you have quite sufficient intellect to manage the property."

"That is to say, as much intellect as Dell, who has 780 acres of yours. Thank you, for I am very much obliged to you for comparing me with a tipsy, muddled, uneducated old man like him. Go on," said Eleanor.

"You are angry, my dear," said her brother, "but you must remember that farming is a second nature to him."

"What was his first?" she asked.

This was one of those pieces of pure nonsense which scatter men's nonsense. Squire Charles picked himself up as well as he could, and said somewhat heavily—

"Supposing that you could actually get this farm in order, and get money's worth off it, you would be beaten at marketing."

"Why?" said Eleanor.

"Because, not being able to go to market yourself, you would have to send your bailiff, who would cheat you."

"But I am not going to have any bailiff. And I am going to market my own self."

"The farmers will be too much for you," said Charles.

"Will they?" she said; "they must have had a sudden accession of brains then."

"Do you mean to tell me, Eleanor, that you are actually going into Shrewsbury market with samples of oats?"

"Certainly."

"It will be thought very odd, and some will say improper."

"I know nothing about your last epithet. With regard to oddity, now look round among the county families around us, and say whether or no there is not a queer story among every one of them. There is an odd story in our own family, Charles."

"You mean about me."

"I mean about you. But I want to finish about this farming business. I am going to do it. I pay rent to myself; I have quite as much knowledge of farming as Dell, and ten times his intellect; why should I not do well?"

"You will be beaten in market," said Charles.

"You will see about that," said Eleanor.

She certainly was right, for she "gave her mind to it," and became one of the best farmers and keenest marketers about. Her scourged land recovered, as if by magic. She had good years and bad years, but she made money and a good deal of it; as a diligent and clever person, with no rent to pay, and over seven hundred acres of

fine land, may do. As time went on her brother saw that he was wrong, and he told her so; and added, “And you seem to be very happy, Eleanor.”

“I am as happy as the day is long,” she said. “I have no time to be otherwise. I am interested and amused all day long, in all weathers, and I have perfect health, and no cares. Women are frequently very great fools to marry.”

“Yet it would be well to have another to care and work for,” said Charles.

“I have got Eddy; he is my son, and I know he will be extravagant, and bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. I have spoilt him,” she added, laughing, “therefore I must work to meet his extravagance. As I have brewed, so must I bake; I have made my bed and I must lie on it, as regards him. I gave him a new watch last week.”

“So I saw. I hope he did not ask for it?”

“Oh, no; he never asks for anything, only he looks so pretty when he is pleased, and he likes bright and glittering things. I must work and save for him.”

“You will not save much with those new cottages,” said her brother; “you ought never to lay one brick on another till you see your way to a clear 7 per cent., exclusive of bad debts; and you will never see three there.”

“Say two and a half,” said Eleanor; “but it pays me indirectly on my own estate. I have my labourers on my own ground, close to their work. What would you say of the wisdom of a slave−owner who made her niggers walk three miles to the cotton grounds?”

You will raise the rates.”

“I don't care. Oh! by the by, your head keeper has been asking me whether he may rear some pheasants in my large spinney, and I have told him that I should like to catch him at it. Your partridges I will protect for you, but I won't have pheasants, rabbits, or hares; you have plenty of ground of your own without bothering me.”

Squire Charles laughed, and left her admiringly.

So she went on, busy, happy, quiet, contented, until I regret that it becomes necessary to pick her up at the age of forty−four years, just at the time when that extraordinary set of boys, which I have previously described, had begun their most eccentric career at St. Paul's College.

The Grange at Pulverbatch was like so many Shropshire houses, a place worthy a long summer−day's visit. It was a low stone house, shrouded in and darkened by great dense groves of elms. Sooner than touch one bough of which, Eleanor would have sold her watch; though she had very much spoilt the scenery of the valley, by slashing into her hedge−row timber elsewhere most unmercifully, and cutting down her hedges to the famishing point. I am not antiquarian enough to say who built it or why it was built, but Eleanor had chosen to get it into her head that it was built by a small country gentleman, at the time, as she put it, “when the greatest of all Englishmen for all time, Oliver Cromwell, ruled the land, and had one Milton for his Poet Laureate.” A mild antiquarian, on one occasion, by way of making himself agreeable, told her in a mild voice that her house was formerly a religious house, a cell of the larger house of St. Lawrence at Stretton.

“It was nothing of the kind, sir,” she answered, indignantly.

“I think you will find that I am right,” said the mild man.

“I don't believe a word of it,” said Eleanor. And the mild antiquarian said no more.

“It was moated around on all sides, for defence,” she said; “Carp−ponds,” said the antiquarian; and this moat was part of her belief in the place.

There were carp in this moat, and although she was shrewd enough to prefer the splendid trout which came out of the stream running through her estate for her own eating, yet on state occasions she always, as a great treat, gave her guests these abominable masses of dry bones out of the moat. They were to her as a haggis or a sheep's head is to a Scotchman. She used to send them to her neighbours, as rare compliments and presents. Well, she had few prejudices, and those were very innocent.

We shall see more of her kind, innocent, wise life as we go on: a little more about her house, and herself, and she will be sufficiently fully introduced.

I should think, from what I have observed, that almost the first ambition of every clever woman was to have *a room of her own*, a place where she was mistress, and could do as she pleased (surely some clever woman has said this before, though I cannot recollect where, but it is true). I have seen such rooms; I know at least two; and I guess that in these maiden bowers, women, whether poor or rich, symbolise their own souls, or the phases of

them. I know a bower, hung with crude oil−sketches and photographs of great pictures; again, I know another, full of saints, angels, and crucifixes. I suppose that every woman would have such a nest—alas! how few are able. Eleanor, however, had her nest, which most decidedly symbolised her pursuits.

Eleanor's nest was what her brother called “the dining−room,” but what she would insist on calling, out of contradiction mainly, I think, “the best parlour.” It was a dark wainscoted room, with a large stone−jammed bay−window at the end furthest from the door, in front of which her great library table, with innumerable drawers, was placed, and by which the only available light was let into this wonderfully uncomfortable room. At this table she could look over her beloved moat, and write her letters. Here she received her men, and her poor folks; and here she sat one afternoon, soon after the boys had gone to St. Paul's, reading her letters and answering them.

She was in her usual riding habit, and had been on foot or on horseback since six o'clock in the morning. As the light from the only window fell upon her face, you could see that, although her complexion might have suffered (or been improved) by wind, weather, and hard work, there was no doubt that she was still a singularly beautiful woman.

She had had all kinds of letters by that post, and she had read them, and laid them aside for answer. Mr. Sutton, of Reading, informed Miss Evans that he did not approve of such a large admixture of triticum in the grass−seed intended for soil washed from lime−stone hills, but had executed the order under Miss Evans's direction, and begged to inform her that the “Student” parsnip, from Cirencester, was well worth a trial. Barr and Sugden informed her that they would, if possible, execute her small order for 5,000 snowdrops, but that a regular customer had come down on them for 14,000, and they were at present uncertain. A neighbouring miller wrote to say that if she would thrash out at once, he would chance the four big ricks at 54 (to which she said, “I daresay"); under all of which there was a letter from her lawyer, telling her that the dispute about the old arrears, hanging on since Dell's time, was settled against her; and several begging−letters.

These were put aside for answering: *they* caused her no thought. It was the two she had just read which made her sit with her handsome head in the light, and really think. Let us look over her shoulder. The first was from young Allan Gray, the young man who was the son of the soldier Gray, and who, by natural laws, was nephew of Charles and Eleanor Evans, and cousin to Roland and Edward.

It ran thus:—

“MY DEAR MADAM,—I enclose you Mr. Secretary's Cowell's receipt for the very noble donation to our poor little work. I know that the pleasure you had in giving it is even higher than is ours in receiving it; I am requested to thank you for it, madam, and I thank you accordingly. Mr. Taunton, one of our best helpers, offered prayer for you to−night, madam, in the general prayer and by name. This I know will be gratifying to you.”

(“Well, and so it is,” said Eleanor. “I am sure we all want it.")

“I wish, madam, that you could come and pay us a visit here, say when you come to the Cattle Show, at Christmas. I wish that such a shrewd and yet kind heart as yours could see what actual good we are doing among the misery and guilt around us.

“With deep reverence and gratitude, I remain, dear madam, your devoted servant,

“ALLAN GRAY.”

“Yes,” said Eleanor, “you are a good boy, and a shrewd boy, and a grateful boy; but I doubt I can't like you. You would be glad to be rid of your obligations to me to−morrow. I ought to like you, but I can't.”

She was a shrewd, hard woman, this Eleanor Evans; not given to show sentiment, yet when she opened the next letter she kissed it, and said, “My darling, now we will have *you*, after this Methodistical young prig. All the flowers in May are not so sweet as you, but you might write better, you know.” The letter was from Eddy, and she read it with concentrated attention, weighing every word, this sensible and keen lady, going over the sentences three or four times to extract their meaning (of which there was but little). Don't laugh at her; a love as keen and pure as hers is not ridiculous. Perhaps Gray's letter was more sensible, but this boy's nonsense was infinitely dearer to her.

“DEAR AUNT NELL,—You know that in one of our delightful, confidential talks the other day, you, in laying down our mutual plans for the future, said that one day I must get a good wife, and come and live with you. You hinted that you would, in the case of such an event, make over the main part of your personal property to me;

only reserving to yourself one single room. You remember the alacrity with which I fell into the arrangement, and the extreme anxiety I have always shown to carry out your wishes. Consequently, I have kept my weather−eye open for above a fortnight, and after long and painful consideration, I am able to declare myself suited for life.

“To a well−balanced mind, such as I believe mine to be (it is your look−out if it is not), wealth, position, nay, even beauty itself, weigh as nothing in the balance in a choice of this kind, in comparison with solidity of character. Gain that and you gain everything. I have gained it.

“Of course I should not think of moving definitely in such an important matter as this without consulting you, my more than mother, to whom I owe so much. By−the−bye, this last remark reminds me that I may as well owe you a little more, while we are at it. Roland has boned all my money because young Mordaunt and I gave half−a−sovereign a−piece to a young man we found on the Trumpington road, with scarcely shoes to his feet, just come out of Reading Hospital. So do send me some; make it a tenner, if you can; as much more as you like. I am sure that you must have thrashed out the three ricks by now, and must be in cash. Don't you hold your corn back in the way you do, raising the market on the poor. You thrash out, and send me a ten−pound note, and I'll bring you a present, if there is any of it left.

“I suppose this will be the first intimation you will have had of our splendid success. Roland has done such a thing which is simply unequalled in history. To be continued in our next, provided you send the money.

“Yours lovingly,

“EDWARD EVANS.

“P.S.—I bought a squirrel of a cad in the meadow, who said it was tame. On calling it to our rooms, it bit me to the bone, and ran up the chimney. This is a wicked and ungrateful world. I doubt I am already night weary of it.”

Aunt Eleanor put this letter aside, and answered young Gray's first.

“MY DEAR MR. GRAY,—I must beg that in any future communications to me, you will omit mentioning any obligations which you conceive you still owe to me. Such obligations certainly existed at one time, but they exist no longer. I therefore request, sir, that they may be no longer mentioned between us.

“At my mother's desire, I did all I possibly could for you. You on your part have repaid me a thousand−fold, by turning out so well, and by leading such a blameless, godly, and, I hope, prosperous life as you are leading. What I did for you was from a sense of duty, and not on any sentimental grounds, for you and I never liked one another, which you know as well as I do, if you choose—(last three words erased). Consequently, my dear sir, now you have risen to your present honourable position, I must tell you that these continual protestations of gratitude towards a woman you always disliked are not good *ton*.

“It seems strange that two people so utterly separated as we are by every thought and every feeling should be engaged in the same work, that of ameliorating the condition of the poor. But it is so. If you wish to put *me* under obligations, you will show me how I can further assist you in your very noble work, and further how I can, in ease of your requiring pecuniary help yourself, assist you. I can admire you without liking you; and I am told by Mr. Cowell, whom I knew before you did, that you are decreasing your own income by these good works.

“ELEANOR EVANS.”

When Allan Gray got this letter, he rose with set lips and walked up and down the room. “A bitter, bitter, hard, cruel woman,” he said; “an insult in every tone of it. Well, if she can be bitter, I can be bitter too;” and so he sat down and wrote:—

“MADAM,—I very much regret that a few expressions of personal gratitude, which since your last letter are no longer felt, should have caused you such very deep annoyance. The cause being removed the effect will not reappear.

“With regard to my personal pecuniary matters, madam, they are in good order. With regard to the Refuge, send as much money to us as you possibly can. 'Sell all that thou hast,' if you like. With regard to our personal relations, madam, I can only say, as a man who never told a lie, that I respect and reverence you deeply.

“ALLAN GRAY.”

"The fellow has got go, though," said Eleanor: "but a brimstone temper; well, we are rid of *him* for a time. I will send them some money, and go and see them."

Now we come to the answer to Eddy's letter, and the reply to *that*. A bitter, hard woman, was she, Master Gray? Bitter to you: bitter to one who showed her every day and all day that he disliked his obligations to her, but not a bitter woman, though shrewd of tongue, towards the world. Was she strong? certainly; as strong a woman as most. Was she weak? she was weaker than water to some few; to a very few. She could fight and beat her brother easily, and he was an "upstanding" man. Young Gray she could beat as the dust under her feet; yet he was as self−contained and as mentally powerful a young man as most; you will see that for yourselves. Yet where she loved she was utterly powerless. And among others, she loved Eddy: nay, she loved him the dearest of them all.

Her brother went about with her on the subject of spoiling Eddy. He pointed out to her that her power over him was great, that her responsibilities with regard to him were great, amid that she should not let him have his own way.

"I can't help it," she said.

"You, so strong−minded and energetic," said her brother, "allow yourself to be made a perfect fool of by that boy!"

"I tell you I can't help it," said Eleanor, somewhat emphatically.

"You should. You will spoil him," said her brother.

"I never spoilt you, at all events," flashed out Eleanor. And Squire Charles, with certain schoolroom reminiscences in his mind, was obliged to admit that she certainly never had.

Now, with the almost cruel, almost vulgar tone of the answer to young Gray fresh in one's mind, let us turn to her answer to that bright little nephew of hers, Eddy Evans, and see whether or no there were not two sides to this woman:—

"DEAREST EDDY,—Your letter gives me the deepest interest. I congratulate you sincerely, my dear, in having found a partner for life. I go this afternoon to take the joyful intelligence to your father and mother, who will, no doubt, be made as happy as I am. Pray give my dearest love to your dear one, and say that I shall be happy to receive her on a visit as soon as she chooses, and to present her to her new father and mother−in−law.

I think it of all things important that a person of a character so frivolous and empty as yours, should early become imbued with a sense of responsibility, and on those grounds I am delighted that you have taken this important step.

"I have not thrashed−out yet; the steamer comes to−morrow; but I have found an odd ten pounds. Do get out of that foolish habit of giving your money away like a baby. You will probably hear from your father the day after to−morrow on the subject of your grand alliance.

Write to me, and tell me what Roland has done, what 'your great success' is, and what share you had in it. I can quite understand that Roland has done something unexampled in history, for I believe Roland to be capable of anything; the only thing which puzzles me is that you should have had any hand in it. Write and explain. I will do anything at any time, my dear, to give you pleasure."

After a few pleasant days among her turnips and her beasts, during which she was observed to have very often a smile of amusement on her face, Aunt Eleanor got Eddy's reply:—

"DEAR AUNT,—If you are willing to do anything to give me pleasure, you had better send another cheque for ten pounds (unless you like to make it twenty), because that gave me the deepest pleasure, as it did also to Jimmy Mordaunt. We have spent some of it in riot and dissipation, but have still some of it in hand. You have no idea of the temptations of this place, the facilities of credit, and the easiness with which young men of my personal appearance and of my expectations can raise money from the lenders at ruinous interest. If I sent a son here, the first thing I should take care of would be that he was supplied with large sums of ready money, and so kept from all risk of temptation. Believe me that such is my experience.

"With regard to the young person of whom I spoke to you in my first letter (I never spoke to her), I doubt if she will do. She is a barmaid down the river. I don't think she will do; but, as you have told father, I will keep my eye on her, with a view of keeping her hanging over his head, and keeping him civil.

"We never were frivolous so long together before, aunt. Suppose we drop it; but this place is a perfect atmosphere of chaff. I don't like it half as well as the old place. *There*, between−whiles of racket and horse−play, we were serious. Well, there is not much that is serious in what I am going to tell you, except that old Roland has

suddenly become a kind of hero in the University. Roland is the first man who ever won the University sculls in his first term, and my share in the victory was running along the bank and howling at him.

“I need not remind you of the Doctor's objections to our having Robert Coombes to Gloucester to teach us to row, and how his objections were overcome by our father and Mr. Mordaunt; at all events, as far as money went. The fruits of that teaching have come out now.

“The third day we were here, Roland and I went early in the day, before the others were on the river, and Roland began trying sculling boats at the principal place where they are let. He was a long time before he found one to suit him, and kept going up and down in front of the barges, trying one after another, and changing frequently, during which time I noticed that he was attracting the attention of the people who were standing by. At last he found one which he said he could feel, and sent a waterman and myself to the tow−path side, at which time I observed that the principal boat−proprietors, and at least a dozen other people, had crossed, and were standing about, or walking slowly down the tow−path.

“He kept us waiting for a long time, but at last he came raging down, bare−legged and bare−headed, at a racing pace: and I said to myself, ' I should like to see some of these University oars.' The waterman and I got our elbows up and went after him, and, as we went, I heard muttered exclamations of wonder and admiration. I felt as if I was the proprietor of a show.

“He went down to the starting−post and rowed over, steered by the waterman. As we neared the barges we found others running with us, and Roland rowing more splendidly every minute. His last rapid rush home was Imperial—with a large I.

“When he stopped, there was perfect silence among the boat−builders and watermen. They were bent, as I have understood, on business, and were none of them inclined to commit themselves. I said to the man—a most respectable tradesman, as rich as you, I believe—who had let the boat to us, 'My brother rows well for a Freshman.' He answered, 'I have not time to build him a boat, sir, but would earnestly beg him to use the one he is in, and not change.' I thought, of course, that he was afraid of our going to his rival over the water, till that rival came to me, and said: 'I should be glad of your custom, sir, but do urge your brother to stay in that boat. I have no boat in which he could show his form as well as in that. Beg him, sir, not to train down; it is only a fortnight to the race.'

“I was utterly puzzled at all this, and looked for Roland. He had locked his boat to a punt in front of the University barge, and was talking to Jasper Meredith, who lay in it on cushions. I hailed them, and they took me in. I told them what I had heard. Jasper answered:

“'I have been trying to persuade your brother from entering for the boat−race,' said he to me. 'His answer is that he will not run against these older men. I watched you two this morning, and crutched it down to follow you, and see Roland row—a thing which delights me—and I have few pleasures. And I have been here, and heard those cads making bets on our own Roland; discussing the points in his body, as if he were a horse—his legs, his arms, his chest, his thighs—nay more, his manner of living, and his morality. All I can say is, that the whole business was immeasurably indecent. Since the days of Commodus, there was never such a thing done as for Roland to go down into the arena. It is a pleasure to *me* to see him row, but if he had heard the expressions those cads used about him, he would never row again as long as he lived.'

“'You are looking only at one side of the question,' said Roland. 'I only match myself against another gentleman.'

“'Yes; but on what terms?' said Jasper. 'I heard one of them say, “If a cove could only persuade him to train, what a pot of money a fellow might put on.” He did not say “fellow,” but I spare your ears. And Roland has dropped to this!'

“Roland, laughing, said: 'I am not sure that I am going to row, and I don't think I am going to win. I only know that I am not going to bet.' And he shot away and left us.

“But he rowed and he won. He had infinitely the worst side, and Jemmy Mordaunt and I ran through the Meadows with punts over the ditches, to steer him, The thing was easily done, Roland rowed his man—a Henley winner—down, and after the first half mile, kept him working on his wash. Although he had scrupulously practised in public, few believed in him against the Henley winner, and the cheers were very slight. He came into the University−barge, as did the other man, and they got locked together. Roland said: 'We cannot all win, sir. I am sorry you have lost, but I am glad I have won.' The other man said: 'I give you my shoes, sir, and I think you

will wear them well.' And then I took Roland out of his boat, and put the waterman in, and we stood alone on the barge.

“Not a soul knew us personally, and so not a soul would speak to us. We wanted to get the cup, but did not know whom to ask about it. We were not likely to speak to men who would not speak to us, and there we stood like fools; Roland, in breeches, with his legs bare (for these barbarians row in trousers). How long we should have stood, I cannot say, but the President came, parting the throng, and made Roland's acquaintance.

“His influence here is so great that it broke the ice at once. He had actually called on us that morning, it seemed, which gave him the right of introducing us. So one happy result of the race is that we, with our charming manners, and our splendid personal appearance, have a new world opened to us. I was not aware, until I went to other colleges, that our college was a marked and disliked one; but it is. So much for Roland's boat−race.

“On the Meadows we picked up Jasper Meredith, and, strangely enough, the young man to whom I gave ten shillings, who is now one of his servants. 'For heaven's sake,' said Jasper, 'don't begin talking about the boat−race. I am sorry he has won. Give me the address of this man, if you know it. He is a friend of yours.' He wanted the address of Allan Gray, for what purpose I did not ask him. Send it to him, for I have not got it. He has moved.”

Chapter 10.

See Aunt Eleanor's writing−table in the bay−window once more, with a lady writing there—a lady, but not Aunt Eleanor. The light of the window fell, this time, on the head of the most delicate little fairy ever seen: on the head of the girl who had taken her aunt's place as the great Evans beauty: on the head of Mildred Evans.

The cross which the handsome Evans had made with the still more beautiful Meredith, had resulted in her, and she was very splendid indeed; very small, very fragile, very blonde, in every attitude graceful; yet not without a rather quick, decisive way of changing from one perfectly unstudied pose to another.

Without shadow; all light as morning; light in hair, light in sapphire eyes, light in her dress. She had dressed herself in white, and she had got a red rose from the garden and put it in her hair, and she had got a pink rose and put it in her bosom, and had put a geranium and rose in a glass vase before her, and thus fortified, had sat down, at our unsympathetic Aunt Eleanor's desk, to write her innocent little love−letter, which the reader will be glad to be spared.

She had just finished when the door was opened widely, and in came Aunt Eleanor, in a riding−habit, accompanied by a girl, also in a riding−habit, who looked exceedingly like Aunt Eleanor's ghost.

A very tall girl, with a singularly upstanding carriage, and a well−set−on head, covered with fine brown hair, combed back into a knot; a very fine girl, very large and strong, but not in the least coarse. Ethel Mordaunt, of whom her brothers used to say that she was the greatest brick in England, whom Squire Charles was apt to pronounce a trifle coarse at times, though never within his sister's hearing, and whom Aunt Eleanor pronounced to be a perfect lady, far too good to marry any one except Eddy.

This young lady, still holding her riding−skirt under her left arm, threw her whip on the table, and said:

“You are the best judge, Miss Evans, being so much older and wiser than I am; but even a girl just out of the schoolroom has an opinion, and my opinion is that you allow your good−nature to be abused in countenancing these two women.”

“I don't encourage them. Mrs. Gray is most respectable.”

“Is she?”said Miss Mordaunt. “Ah, I daresay she is. But I don't like her, for all that. I don't like the way she talks to my brothers, for instance, though perhaps my brothers may. She is both familiar and slangy.”

“I don't know what you mean,” said Aunt Eleanor. “Her grandson and herself were left in my care by my mother, and I have striven to do my duty by them; and slangy is not a nice word, Ethel."

“My brothers use it,” said Ethel. “And then there is old Phillis Myrtle again.”

“Mrs. Myrtle has her faults,” said Aunt Eleanor; “but these are matters which you cannot understand.”

“Papa says she is a tipsy old thing,” said Miss Mordaunt. “Look here, Miss Evans, see if here is not our sweet little bird, writing her love−letter, and dressed up in flowers to do so. What an innocent little love it is. Put it in strong, Milly, my love. Leave no doubt about the state of your sentiments, my dear. Don't let him have the slightest doubt of your mutual relations, and let me read it after.”

“It is sealed up,” said Mildred, turning round and laughing.

“What a pity!” said Miss Mordaunt. “I have seen a few of his, but I never saw one of yours. I should like to see one, because I don't know how I shall have to write to your brother Eddy, when he, driven to exasperation by your aunt here, proposes to me. Do you ever write to Eddy?”

“I am going to write now,” said Mildred.

“Tell him that his aunt's heart is set on our union and that if he will summon up the courage to propose, I will have him—conditionally. He must add a cubit to his stature, to begin with; and there are other conditions also. Will you write that for me? That, do you see, Miss Evans, will crown your kind plan.”

“I have no plan now,” said Aunt Eleanor. And standing in her place, with her riding−skirt tucked up under her left arm, she looked steadily at Miss Mordaunt, standing in her place, also in the same attitude, and also looking steadily at Aunt Eleanor. But as she returned Aunt Eleanor's stare, the veins in the girl's throat began to swell and throb, and a flush spread upwards over her face, until that face was scarlet. At which time, Aunt Eleanor went up and patted her on the shoulder, and said in her ear, “It was so with me once, my dear, long ago, long ago; that is the reason why I never married.”

The girl said nothing, but Mildred Evans, turning round from the table said, suddenly:

“I have got a letter also from Roland.”

The blood fled back from Ethel Mordaunt's face as fast as it had come, and told the story full well—the story which Aunt Eleanor had nearly guessed that afternoon, during their ride. An old story, and generally a sad one, of childish friendship ripening into love on the woman's part, but only into kindly, friendly indifference on the man's. “She loves him,” thought Aunt Eleanor, “and *I* shall never prate her out of it. No one ever prated *me* out of it, even after I had *her* children on my knee. God help the poor child!”

Ethel Mordaunt had as well−cut and well−carved a head on her shoulders as had her brother James, whose carriage of his head had been before alluded to. This head was very nearly down on Aunt Eleanor's shoulder, but it was suddenly and imperiously drawn up again, and turned towards the door; for a footman opened that door and said, “If you please, ma'am, here is Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Myrtle.”

Every fibre of Ethel Mordaunt's body became rigid as these two women appeared. “Send beauty away,” she said, almost imperiously, pointing with her head, negro fashion, to Mildred Evans. “It is not fit that she should breathe the atmosphere with these two."

Aunt Eleanor chuckled internally, but did not let her laughter show outwardly. “Mildred,” she said, “would you kindly be so good as to go and see whether the—I mean, be so good as to go upstairs and look out of the window and see if—but I cannot do it. Would you be so kind as to take yourself out of the way, my dear?”

“I can understand that, Aunt,” said Mildred, laughing, and slid out of the room, with her precious letter in her band, making two pretty little obeisances to Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Phillis Myrtle as she went out, which those good ladies returned with deep reverences.

“Now you go too,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“I am going to stop where I am,” said Ethel Mordaunt.

“What is not fit company for her is not fit company for you.”

“Nevertheless, I am going to stop where I am. I am clever, and wish to study character.”

“You will go if I tell you to go,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“Of course; now have them in.”

And they came in. Two very different−looking women, Mrs. Gray first. A tall old woman, with the remains of a certain kind of aquiline beauty, very upright in her carriage, and an expression in her face—a look of cool, careless impudence, which might either take the form of contemptuous badinage, or of utter scorn. She was very well dressed, and in good material; but her whole appearance, striking as it was, was utterly repugnant both to Eleanor and Miss Mordaunt, for different reasons.

Phillis Myrtle was an entirely different person. A little, roundabout old lady, with an apple face and a perpetual smile. To Eleanor she was possibly more repugnant than Mrs. Gray.

It was natural that these two women should be utterly repugnant to her, even if they had been the most estimable characters in the world. These two women were the only two left who knew of, or cared to remember, her brother Charles's escapade with Elsie Gray. It was a secret between them, though it was never mentioned at all; neither of the three knew how much the other knew. Who knew most, we shall see.

It was a life−long annoyance for a very high−souled woman, impatient of control, to keep this secret with two such women; yet it had to be kept, for these women had the power of annoying her brother seriously. Squire Charles had done well by Mrs. Gray. She lived in a cottage rent−free, and had a fixed allowance, but the cottage was Eleanor's, and the allowance was paid by Eleanor's hand. Once, and once only, had the Squire spoken to Mrs. Gray after his return from India, and that was to say, “Mrs. Gray, our more recent intercourse was a very sad one; I think that the wisest thing we can do is to forget one another.” And Mrs. Gray said, “Your honour shall be obeyed.” Nothing more; and had accepted her position quite quietly, merely curtseying to the Squire when they met. Here she was now with old Phillis Myrtle, the nurse, staring fixedly and boldly at Miss Mordaunt, as if she was weighing or appraising her, and here was Miss Mordaunt looking out of window instead of returning her gaze, and drumming with her horse−whip.

“I am afraid I have kept you waiting,” began Eleanor.

“Not at all, miss; I have been accustomed to wait on gentlefolks all my life, and my husband's family have been vassals to yours for centuries. Coming from the manufacturing countries as I do, this vassalage seemed strange at first, but I have got to it. The world uses you well, Miss Eleanor, and I hope it will use you as well,

Miss Mordaunt, when you are as old as a Eleanor. Why, miss, you are three−and−forty; you must think of marrying soon."

"I am sorry to say I *am* three−and−forty, my good Gray; and as for thinking of marrying, I have thought of that all my life, and the more I think of it the less I like it."

It was so good−humouredly said that Mrs. Gray smiled a gaunt smile, and continued the conversation with Miss Mordaunt, who, by−the−bye, had not said one word.

"You will poison Miss Mordaunt's mind against marriage, Miss Eleanor," she went on, audaciously. "Beauty like hers should not go unsued. Mordaunts and Evanses must not fail in the land; beauty, worth, valour, perfect openness, and perfect truth, are too good qualities to be lost in the land; and where are they to be found unless among Mordaunts and Evanses? Ah! We may see Miss Mordaunt mistress of Stretton yet." Whereupon Miss Ethe1, with her crest in the air, marched out of the room, with her riding−habit under her arm, and a look of high, cool, unutterable contempt on her face. "I will come back, Miss Evans, when woman is gone," she said; but she might have gone upstairs without bruising her clenched hand against the banisters:

"Mrs. Gray," said Eleanor, angrily, "you are taking great liberties."

"Only with a Mordaunt. I love it; I love to make one of those snake−headed Mordaunts put their heads in the air, like an adder just before he strikes; I do it with the boys. They are a red−handed old lot. Why, that youngest one, Jimmy, *her* brother, nigh tortured your own nephew, Edward, to death at school, that *you* know. Mad love and bitter hate. I love to play with a Mordaunt. Ha! Ha!"

"I'll trouble you not to play with an Evans, if you please," said Eleanor, calmly furious.

"No! no! not with a she−Evans. They get their stuff from the Mereditihs. Do you remember your mother? Ah! to see her bare−headed, with her hands held up over her head—well, don't look like that. She was a Meredith, and so are you; your brother is an Evans. All the men−Evanses are soft; you can do anything with 'em you like, except resist them when they plead. Your brother took two of my sons to Waterloo, and only brought back one. They would have gone to the devil after him—and then—why, and then another man−Evans, your nephew Edward, kisses you, strokes your hair, calls you his foolish old woman, and makes you, a woman of spirit, do just as he pleases. And he will live to break your heart as his father broke mine. You wait till you are old, and see him spending your hard−earned money on them that will despise you. Wait till you see him getting impatient for your death, and then remember my words."

Aunt Eleanor rose. "Now look here, Mrs. Gray, and have the goodness to attend to me. I am not going to have this, or anything in the remotest degree approaching to it, for one instant. Go out!"

"You had better hear my errand first."

"I will not speak to you. Go out!"

"You may get your servants to turn me out if you like," began Mrs. Gray.

"I shall not get my servants to do it; I shall do it myself in less than half a minute," said Aunt Eleanor. And as she rose she looked so extremely like doing it, that Mrs. Gray turned round, not one bit abashed, and broke into a loud laugh.

"I'll go," she said; "and I'll hold my tongue, too. This woman will tell you what we came about. There is no bad blood between us, Eleanor; I like you the better for your anger." And she was gone.

"The old *witch*," said Aunt Eleanor, dropping back in her chair. "For her to have dared—"

A low sigh, and a dropping, or rather dribbling, of honey−sweet words reminded her that Phillis Myrtle was still seated in the easiest of easy−chairs, rolling her head from one side to the other, and using her pocket handkerchief.

"You may well say dared, my dear young lady," began Mrs. Myrtle: "audacious as dear Mrs. Gray can be, I never thought she'd have burst out on this day of all days in the year. And witch you may well say, Miss Eleanor: witch she would be if she could, for I have watched her. But it ain't biling things in a pipkin as makes a witch—no, my dear, Lord forbid! If she has asked me for black spells once, she has asked me a dozen times, and I replied to her, 'Mrs. Gray, I don't use them; I am old, and I think of my soul!' And she has said to me, 'But, you fool, you know them,' as heaven help me, I do. And I have set her off with white spells, for bunions and king's evil. But now going for good and all, and how her pious grandson will like it, I can't say.

"As I was saying, my dear young lady, she comes to me, and she says, 'You half−hearted witch,' she says, 'he will have you all the same, if you won't give me a black spell. If you won't let me make acquaintance with your

master, at all events give me a white one.' And I said I would do anything neighbourly, not against my conscience, only that I should want a new crown−piece. Then she told me what she wanted. She says, in her own words, 'I want a love−spell. That girl, Ethel Mordaunt, is in love with young Roland Evans, for I have watched them, and he don't care for her. And I want something to put in his wine, or his drink, to make him love her; for there will be mischief afoot if he marries her before they have studied one another's character. They will fight for the mastery, and there will be your master to pay.' And I gave her some dill−water, and she put it in his drink."

Eleanor groaned. The secret she had found out that day was known to this terrible Mrs. Gray; and how many others?

“Therefore, my dear young lady, it is as well that she goes away. It is indeed.”

“Is she going away?”

“Her grandson has offered her a home in London, my dear young lady, and she goes to him, and a nice mess they will make of it altogether.”

“Did you two come here to tell me of this to−day?” asked Eleanor'

“Yes, my dear lady, partly. And partly to ask if I might have her cottage. There is no one but us two knows anything, and no one but I and yourself, and your dear mother, now in glory, and the Squire as knows a certain part of the truth; and there is no one but my own self knows the whole and entire truth. *She* thinks she does, but she don't. The Lord help you, if she did.”

“What do you mean by the whole truth, Mrs. Myrtle?” said Eleanor.

“Parcelling all together,” said Mrs. Myrtle. “Not parts and parcels, but the whole biling.”

“Well,” said Aunt Eleanor, rubbing her nose, “I suppose you had better have the cottage rent−free. I need not mince matters with you. It is of great importance that my brother's first marriage should not be talked of——”

That silly old trot, Phillis Myrtle, was down on her knees before her in an instant. “She don't know of that, my lady. Oh! for heaven's sake keep it from her for ever.”

“Does she believe my brother a villain, then?”said Eleanor, indignantly.

“Oh! let her believe so, my lady. Oh! for the sake of the mother that bore you, and the brother you love, let her believe so. Listen to me, a foolish old woman. Think of what her claims would be if she knew it; and nobody knows *that* much but you and I—no one alive. Think, dear Miss Eleanor, what would be the effect of bringing it up now—how Squire Charles had made a shameful marriage in Scotland over the broomstick, but legal. Think of what Madam Evans would say when she found it had been kept from her. Think of the effect on the boys. Think of my darling Roland, whom I nursed, how his head would be bowed; and think of your poor little Eddy. Think of him, miss. Don't let that woman think there was a marriage. You have concealed before. Go on concealing: it is no new sin. Think of Eddy, miss.”

“You plead well,” said Aunt Eleanor. “I think you are an affectionate woman, though you must own yourself to be a great fool. Will that woman, Gray, speak, think you?”

“No, my lady; she is too proud; and she don't know all. I did not think as you knew as much as you did. I thought you thought as she thought. But I am the only one that knows all. Leave well alone, my lady.”

“Leave ill alone, you mean. Well, I suppose I had better. You can have the cottage.”

“Well, aunt,” said Mildred, coming in with her arm round Ethel's waist, “are the two wretches gone?”

“Don't talk to me for a time, you two. Kiss, play, fall in love, quarrel, do anything you like, but never give yourselves to a deceit. It will grow out of a little lie, like the thin clouds of summer, darkening and darkening, till it breaks, in ruin and confusion.”

Chapter 11.

Stretton Castle lay on the north side of the valley, under Longmynd; Mordaunt Royal lay upon the south side, nearly facing it, with Caradoc at its back.

When the Evanses and the Mordaunts first came into that part of the country, and began quarrelling, is lost in the mist of antiquity. All down through the history of the county, however, you will find that the Evanses and the Mordaunts did nothing but squabble, and now and then intermarry, mainly for the purpose of patching up a worse quarrel than usual. There was, however, such a furious hurly−burly about marriage settlements, dower lands, appanages, and so forth, that the remedy had been found to be worse than the disease, and had been tacitly abandoned. These disputes had been settled with lance in the tilting−ground, with rapier in the meadow, and with red tape in Chancery; but at last the old jealousies and disputes had died out, and they were exceedingly good friends. The last case of enmity between the houses was when James Mordaunt so shamefully bullied Eddy Evans at Gloucester. Even that was past and gone now.

In the great civil war, the then Evans declared for Parliament—and, of course, the then Mordaunt for King. This was a very pretty quarrel indeed, and the great statesman tried to utilize it not knowing, as the Maynards and Merediths, or any Shropshire folks, could have told him, that the Evanses and Mordaunts only quarrelled between themselves, and that, in case of a Evans or a Mordaunt being assailed in any way by an outsider (even a Maynard or a Meredith), the other family would at once fly to the rescue, and defy creation. Consequently, during the Revolution, the Evans of those times did nothing more than watch his pestilent neighbour, Mordant; and during the Restoration, Mordaunt did nothing more than go bail for his traitorous neighbour, Evans. Obligations in this way were mutual; and what is more to the purpose, they both kept their lands under their feet, their heads on their shoulders, and what concerns us most, their houses over their heads.

So that now, as of old, Stretton stood a little up the hill—a long mass of dark grey, blazing with roses, with an oak wood behind it, and sheets of moorland rising behind; while before it, the deer−park steeped down, like a cascade of green turf, into the valley, unaltered since the time of Henry VII. For a similar reason, the dark red−brick, James the First house of Mordaunt, buried among its dense elms and oaks, on the other side of the valley, kept its form unaltered through all political changes.

Either house, or either estate, were possessions which, to poor folks, seem almost fabulous. Yet there are thousands as good, or much better, to be seen anywhere. One of my neighbours, a commoner, has 20,000*l*. a year; another, just in sight, has 60,000*l*.; another, also a commoner, within four miles, has just died worth 5,000,000*l*. The figures, with regard to the Evans and the Mordaunt properties, drop terribly from these real, everyday sums. Mr. Mordaunt is reputed to have about 7,000*l*. a year, and Squire Charles Evans 8,000*l*. We have only to do with the last estate, and I only mention figures to show that it was a very desirable one for a moderate man. Though not by any means as good as the *New York Herald*, and but little better than Mr. Ward Beecher's church, it was worth fighting for.

There was a pleasant, orderly luxury about the place which was extremely agreeable, and was rather wonderful to contemplate, when one considered the beggarly income. It is perfectly certain that Charles Evans could never have done what he did with his limited means, but for one thing: he never went to London, except to lodgings, and Mrs. Evans did not dress.

But he did everything else. To begin with, he sat in Parliament, for one thing, three elections, which somewhat took the gloss off his income; and then he sat a fourth at a greater expense than before—an expense which made even him open his eyes, and brought in a furious remonstrance from Eleanor. He sat, I say, a fourth time, for three weeks, after which time he was unseated in a scandalous manner. There was no doubt at all about it. Outraged Britannia held up her hands in sheer horror; and six thousand odd of good money gone to the bad for nothing! After this, Charles Evans retired into private life, cursing his attorney, consoling himself with the fact that “the other fellow" had spent more money than he had, and so let public affairs go to the deuce as they liked.

Consequently, although he kept the hounds at his own expense, his estate was not injured in any way. Hounds can be kept very well for 2,000*l*. a year; and he kept them till he made the brilliant discovery that you could get as much sport out of them if you let some one else keep them, and only galloped after them yourself. So he gave up

his hounds.

Then he bred race−horses, and, indeed, he won the Oaks, to Eleanor's intense exasperation. “Now we *are* done for,” she said: “this is the finish and end of us at last.” But she was deceived. Charles bred a colt, such a colt as was never seen, and he, a consummate horseman, taught one of his stable−boys to ride it, and he won the Two Thousand, and Eleanor gave the house up for lost; but no. He came back to her the next day, very quietly, and told her that he had sold his horse, with its engagements, for 5000*l*., and had netted 14,000*l*. in bets. “You are not going on then,” she said. “No,” he answered; “it is so slow.”

Sailing−yachts eat nothing, and so his yachting cost him little. And now that his Parliamentary career was done with and finished, his sole dissipation was his yacht at Aberystwith. His was a most desirable property, perfectly unencumbered, all ready for Roland, who seemed to be worthy of it.

Most worthy. The good Doctor's estimate of his character was being confirmed day by day. The Dean had gone out of his way to write to Squire Evans about his two sons: they were both of them patterns (in spite of a slight tendency to boisterousness), but Roland was a paragon. The schools, and consequently the world, were at his feet—he might do anything—there was never anything like him. Old Mordaunt wrote to his father: “Roly Evans has won the University skulls, and has made a blazes fine speech at the Union. I heard it. There ain't a man to hold a candle to him here. He is getting petted and flattered; but I don't think they will spoil him.”

Jim Mordaunt also wrote to his sister. I hardly know why, but I feel as if I was violating confidence in writing down what he wrote. It ran thus:—

“*He* has done a thing five hundred times greater than winning the university sculls—for my part I hate to see him rowing. The question before the house was the Eastern war, and the ultra−Radicals were against it; and Roland got on his legs, on the Liberal side, and did so cast about his beautiful, furious words about national death and national dishonour, that he carried the house with him. You should have seen the way he raised his head and sent the well−thought−out syllogisms rattling through his white teeth: it was a sight! Johnny says that his logic was all fishy in the major term, and that his whole argument was bosh; but you know Johnny. As for me, I would sooner bear Roland's buncombe than any one else's common sense. So would you, my sister. They are all flattering him, but they will never spoil him. I get up a fight with him and his brother to−night. Pretending to cut Eddy's hair, while I was flourishing the scissors I got the enclosed off *his* head. He is in an awful wax with me, for he has missed his curl: he little dreams where it has gone. Mind you never, under *any circumstances*, let him see it; he would never forgive me.”

So after their successful two first terms they all came back, full of hope, health, and high spirits, to their two beautiful homes. I suspect that of all the men in the world, a young English country gentleman, of good name, of good repute, of tolerable intelligence, with good health, and of innocent life, has more chance of happiness than any other. Most human cares are impossible for him he has plenty to do, plenty to think about, and his work is all laid ready to his hand. I cannot conceive of any man of finer chances than a rich young squire—the world and its temptations seem put out of the way in his case; yet he frequently makes a fearful fiasco of it too.

There was no blot on the prospects of the young Mordaunts or the young Evanses on the morning after their arrival home, any more than there was a cloud in the June sky, which stretched overhead a sheet of glorious, cloudless blue. All possibilities of any disturbing causes seemed absolute nonsense. The chances were so infinitely in their favour. Money was to be had for the picking up; they had talents, prospects, health, high spirits; the world was theirs, in a way, if they cared to go into it and succeed; or if they failed, here were two homes of ancient peace ready for them to come back to. Misfortune, thanks to settled old order, seemed in their cases to have become impossible.

The Mordaunts had come over to breakfast with the Evanses, and Maynard was spending the first part of his vacation with them for the purpose of being with his beloved Mildred Evans. Aunt Eleanor had come from Pulverbatch to see her darling Eddy; and so they were all assembled in the morning room at Stretton.

Aunt Eleanor was the first person who sauntered out through the open window into the bright, blazing sun. The boys stayed behind eating more, and yet more, of marmalade and honey, and the others sat because they were contented, until at last Eddy cried out, “There is Aunt Eleanor having a row with Deacon Macdingaway;” and, indeed, Aunt Eleanor's usual expletive “Fiddle−de−dee,” was plainly borne to the ears of the assembled company.

“Let's go and hear the fun, you fellows,” said the younger Mordaunt—a proposition which, as it stood, was innocent enough, but might have been carried out with less boisterousness. They need not all of them have rushed

to the window at once. Likewise, there was no necessity of a free fight between Eddy Evans and young Mordaunt, which ended in Eddy being cast on his back in the middle of a bed of geraniums, with young Mordaunt atop of him. However, they soon were beside Aunt Eleanor, determined to back her through thick and thin against Deacon Macdingaway. With which heed the younger Mordaunt, on arriving at the scene of action, by way of taking up a formidable position, said to Macdingaway, “She did nothing of the kind.”

Macdingaway was the head Scotch gardener, who, in an evil moment for him, had confessed to one of these madcaps that he had held an office in his church, after which they had christened him “Deacon.” He turned on young Mordaunt, and said, “Her ladyship threepit—”

“That I emphatically deny,” struck in Eddy, who had got his breath.

“Her ladyship threepit that the roses should no have been budded till the first week in July,” said the inexorable Macdingaway; “and I took the liberty to disagree with her.”

“That alters the case altogether, of course,” said Eddy.

“You are quite right, Deacon. Aunt, you have not got a leg to stand on, you know. You had better leave him alone: he has much the best of the argument. Here are the others: let us come to them.”

As they went away from him, old Macdingaway shook his clever old head. “A' folly together,” he said. “If your father had na lived before ye, where would ye be?”

All the others were now standing on the terrace. Squire Charles Evans, a handsome man of fifty, in a short velvet coat, perfectly cut trousers and well−made lace−up boots; very grey, with slight whiskers and moustache. Squire Mordaunt, a full−necked, brown−faced thickset man, without a hair on his face, in grey breeches and gaiters, with a grey shooting coat. He was a very bucolic−looking man, this Squire Mordaunt, but he had a shrewd deep−set eye under his heavy eyebrows too. He stood looking at the group as they approached, with his head thrust forward, and his hands holding a whip (for he had ridden over) behind his back, and he was the first who spoke.

“What new trouble has my friend Miss Evans been getting into?” he asked, in a rather grating voice. “She seems to be borne back in triumph from some new victory by these four foolish boys.”

“Nothing but a dispute with my dear friend and admirer, Macdingaway, George Mordaunt,” she replied, with her head in the air; “nothing worse than that *this* time.”

“I am glad of that,” said Squire Mordaunt. “Edward, you can come out of your aunt's pocket. My dear Miss Evans, once more, will you let me have that right of way through your two orchards for watering my horses at Gweline Farm?”

“No, I won't,” said Aunt Eleanor, with a dangerous look in her face. Stroking Edward's bare curls, who, although he was not in her pocket, was certainly leaning idly against her. “No, I won't.”

“But why not, my dear Miss Evans?” said Squire Mordaunt.

“Because *you* ask me, and because you ask me with that look in your face. I would sooner let every gipsy on the country−side camp there than let one of your dogs through, if you look at me like that, and ask me like that, now then! What do you think of that, for instance?”

The other boys had heard nothing of this; but Mrs. Evans, who was *en passant* a pretty woman, and Mrs. Mordaunt, who was not pretty, but clever, interposed.

“Surely,” said Mrs. Mordaunt, “I shall have to quote Dame Quickly on you two some day. You cannot serve heaven well, that you never come together without quarrelling. Do be quiet.”

“A wilful woman must have her way,” said Squire Mordaunt.

“And indeed she must,” said Aunt Eleanor; “you never said a truer word than that. I am going after the boys.”

Young Maynard and Mildred Evans had marched off, and were courting somewhere or another; there remained only the four boys and Ethel Mordaunt, who were standing together, and apparently all talking at once. The Mordaunts, with the exception of Mrs. Mordaunt had ridden over, and so Ethel Mordaunt was in her riding−habit, though bare−headed. Aunt Eleanor, as she approached them, heard that the four boys were discussing what they would do with themselves on this happy summer's day, and saw that Ethel was listening to them: she, also in her riding−habit, and bare−headed, stooped, and pretended to weed one of Macdingaway's well−weeded flower−beds.

“I vote,” said young Eddy, “that we ride into Shrewsbury, have ices, and see the boats go. And we might buy a piece of salmon, and Jimmy Mordaunt might bring it home in his pocket.”

“I wouldn't be a fool if I was in your place,” said the younger Mordaunt. “You have had plenty of opportunities of eating yourself blind at the University; and I am sure we have had boating enough.”

“Let us go fishing,” said the elder Mordaunt. “What do you say, Roland?”

“It is too bright for fishing, Johnny,” said Roland; “I'll tell you what *I* should be inclined to propose. Let us take Rory, our old Irish pointer, and ride away over the Longmynd and see what grouse there are. What do you think, Ethel?”

“I think that would be very pleasant,” said Ethel. “It is certainly an improvement on Eddy's proposal of eating ices in Shrewsbury, and also an improvement on Johnny's equally idiotic idea of going fishing. I am for it,” said Young Mordaunt.

“Do you think, Johnny,” said Ethel to her elder brother—“do you think that I might come?”

“*No*,” shouted young Mordaunt; “we don't want a parcel of girls with us.”

Young Mordaunt had said this in sheer recklessness, expecting that his sister, as her wont was, would have given in to him. He was rather astonished, and very much ashamed, when his imperial sister turned gently to him and said:

“I won't be much in your way, Jimmy. I can ride as far and as fast as any of you. And you too have been a weary while away; let me see something of you now. Let me come, Jimmy.”

“I believe,” said young Mordaunt, impetuously, “that I am the greatest brute on earth; of course you are to come. I shouldn't go if you didn't. Come on, you fellows, and let us get the horses.” And away they all went towards the stables.

And Ethel following, passed Aunt Eleanor, pretending to weed a flower−bed, and Aunt Eleanor said:

“So you are bent on going with him then?”

And Ethel said, “I can't help it. One long summer's day beside him is not much to ask out of eternity.”

Aunt Eleanor said, “You are binding a burden for your back which you will find hard to carry before you have done with it. *I* know, and your father knows too: though he might have kept his tongue between his teeth this blessed day. Are you bent on going?”

“Oh yes, Miss Evans. Let me go!”

“I am not stopping you. Which way are you going to ride?”

“Over Longmynd, to look at the grouse.”

“And so on to Maynard Barton to lunch,” rejoined Aunt Eleanor. “Go by all means.”

“They said nothing of Maynard Barton,” said Ethel. “We shall hardly get so far.”

“You foolish child,” said Aunt Eleanor. “Why, if you had set out this day to ride over Caradoc or Lawley, if you had set out to ride to the top of the Wrekin, your destination would have been the same. Roland can make these boys go where he chooses, and sometime in the day you would have found yourselves by some excuse at Maynard Barton, and would have found Roland talking to Mary Maynard. Will you go now, you fool?”

“Yes! yes! It is twelve miles to Maynard Barton, and twelve miles is something. It would have been something to you once, Miss Evans.”

“Heaven knows it would!” said Aunt Eleanor. “Well, my dear, when it is all over, and you want to eat your own heart in peace and quietness, come to the old woman at Pulverbatch, and begin a new life with her. You won't die over it, you know——you have too much chest, and are too active in your habits; but if you think you are going to get out of this without deep pain and misery, you are mistaken. See, they are calling for you. Run, my dear—and put the knife in delicately under your fifth rib.”

She did not hear the last sentence; but running up to the door, found her mother with her hat ready for her, and immediately afterwards, having received a tremendous kiss of reconciliation from her brother Jim, was pitched on her horse by him, and they all went away through the lanes towards the mountain.

The horses were of course good, and they all rode well (according to the English standard—a ridiculously low one compared to South America). They could, however, ride better than French people, and their horses were well trained and quiet: so they enjoyed themselves.

They were soon through the lanes, and out on the heather. Roland Evans and John Mordaunt rode in front, and the old pointer was sent out before them. Behind them rode abreast Eddy, Jim Mordaunt, and his sister Ethel, who were more than once cautioned by the two elders in front about making so much noise; for Eddy and Jim were furious and fantastic in their horse−play, and Ethel laughed loud and long at them. “They seem jolly behind there,

those three," said John Mordaunt.

"Very jolly. Keep quiet there: we shall have the birds up," said Roland.

"Quiet there, Ethel," said the elder Mordaunt, calling back to them.

The old dog had pointed five times on the slope of the Longmynd, and had been whistled away. "There are at least four packs here," said Roland.

"And we are not half over the south side," said stolid old John Mordaunt. "We shall spot at least four or five packs more on this south side: send the dog on."

"I should like to try the north side," said Roland. "Have you any objection?"

"Not in the least," said the elder Mordaunt. "You mean towards Maynard Barton? I have not the slightest objection to going there or anywhere, so long as one understands where one is going. Northward ho! you three jawers. We are going to eat among the bilberry slopes towards Maynard Barton. Ethel, you mind the blind ruts. We will lunch with old Mother Maynard, d'ye hear?"

"Are you going to Maynard Barton to lunch?" asked Roland.

"We had better, I think," said time eider Mordaunt. "We shall know how things stand."

"I don't understand you," said Roland.

"I don't think you do," said John Mordaunt.

"Twelve miles out of all eternity," she said, and here was her reward. Not one single word from him during time whole ride; nothing but the tomfooleries of her brother and Eddy Evans. And at last, when they found themselves dismounting in front of the low, dark−red façade of nearly the oldest and perhaps the most prosperous of Shropshire houses, only this for twelve miles' ride. Mary Maynard, wonderful pretty, and silly almost to idiocy; and Roland bending over this doll, this fool, with his really fine genius flashing from his eyes.

Old Mrs. Maynard was the very mother you would have selected out of a dozen, as the mother of the strong, good−humoured, good−looking giant who was at that moment daundering about with Mildred Evans at Stretton. If you had to compare her to flower it would be to a cabbage−rose, extremely beautiful, but rather stout—a rose which budded well, but which opened coarsely. Compare her to a bird, she was a pouter pigeon, full−breasted, fussy, affectionate, and never for one instant silent. She was a widow, and intensely interested in love−making, as she was also in eating and drinking. She was in her flower−garden when our party appeared, and having given one glance at them, went swiftly indoors, and gave tremendous orders for lunch.

The elder Mordaunt, who had by far the oldest head on his shoulders of all our party, in spite of his blockish look, noticed that this good dame, whom he know very well indeed, was a little distraught and not quite herself. He had reason to think that he might as well watch matters this day; and he watched her.

Mary Maynard was out in the porch to receive them, and when they had dismounted, and were all standing about on the terrace, talking to one another, Mrs. Maynard rejoined them. Roland had gone at once to Mary Maynard, and they two were apart, laughing together; and John Mordaunt, watching keenly, noticed that Mrs. Maynard on her arrival darted a sudden, quick, impatient, and yet puzzled look at Roland and Mary, but the next moment was all smiles. He wondered deeply, did this young man. "Hang it!" he said to himself; "the old girl ought to be satisfied with *that*."

"Now, this is good of you," began Mrs. Maynard. "The very first day too: to come over all this way to see me. I need not ask where Robert is; I am sure he is where I wish him to be. Tell Mildred to send him over as soon as she can; a mother must wait under such circumstances—must she not, John Mordaunt? Roland, you have never paid your compliments to me. Come here and pay them—−are these your university manners? Mary, go in and see that they are getting lunch. Roland, I was saying" (she was not), "that it was so good of you to come over and bring Ethel with you the very first day."

"My brothers gave me leave to come," said Ethel, quietly.

"To be sure, to be sure," said Mrs. Maynard. "So kind of your brothers to bring you over the very first day. Well, well, come in, and we will see what there is to eat. Roland, give Ethel your arm."

"Thank you, I am not lame," said Ethel.

"Well, well! Lame! no indeed! Lame, she says; that is good; conceive a Mordaunt lame—no, no! Or an Evans either, for that matter. Come into the drawing−room—it is rather dark coming out of the sun. I keep the sun out of the room to spare the carpet; for Robert will be bringing your sister here some day, Roland, and I must quit. Take care of the footstools, Ethel. Roland, she will break her neck; guide her."

“I can see as well as Roland,” said Ethel; and they all sat down in the darkened drawing−room.

If it was difficult to keep Eddy Evans and Jim Mordaunt quiet in the class or lecture, it was hopelessly impossible to keep them quiet, without legal supervision, after a twelve miles' ride, when they were both petulantly expective of their victuals. They fell out instantaneously, and cast away the scabbard; and Ethel sat and laughed at them.

Eddy deliberated where he should sit down, and while he remained standing Jim Mordaunt remained standing also, with his eyes fixed upon him; of which fact Eddy was not unconscious. At last he said, looking at a sofa, “I shall sit here.” Whereupon James Mordaunt bore down swiftly on that same sofa, saying, “I am going to sit there.” A tremendous single combat ensued, during which James Mordaunt, who was as strong as a bull, managed to take away Eddy Evans' watch, chain, and money, and transfer them to his own pocket. After which he sat quietly down in a chair by his sister, and called her attention to the pictures.

Eddy was beginning his plaint. “I have been robbed in your house by a ruffian, Mrs. Maynard, while my brother sat and looked on,” when he stopped, and every one started, Mrs. Maynard included; for a quiet voice out of a dark corner said—

“The boy, Mordaunt minor, will restore the property to Evans minor, and will write out the first book of Euclid.” Whereupon the elder Mordaunt said to himself, “So *that's* her game: well, I have no objection, I am sure.” And Mrs. Maynard said, somewhat querulously in spite of herself, “My dear Sir Jasper Meredith, how you frightened me! I thought you were gone.”

“Gone, when I was ordered off? Why, no,” said Sir Jasper Meredith. “I wanted to stay and see my friends. I shan't go without my lunch now. Roland or Johnny Mordaunt, or any of you but Jimmy and Eddy, give my poor bones a hoist into the dining−room, for there is the butler announcing the vivers.”

There was a general outcry of recognition, for he was a great favourite; and the bull−headed elder Mordaunt took him on one arm, and carrying his crutches in the other, carried him into the dining−room, and set him down between himself and his sister; James and Eddy skirmished in, Eddy, half begging, half fighting for the recovery of his property, and the rear was brought up by Roland and Mary, who sat side by side.

Not a soul spoke to Mrs. Maynard except in the way of politeness: matters were gone out of *her* hands, for good or for evil. Such of the company as glanced towards Roland and Mary might see that he was bending his face towards hers, and talking so low that no one could catch what he said, and that she was answering him by very few sentences, each of which was accompanied by a bland, vacant giggle. Eddy and James Mordaunt misconducted themselves as usual, James saying that Eddy was over−eating himself, and Eddy saying that James was drinking too much wine. The spectacle of these two fresh, innocent lads, with their babyish horse−play of taking the food off one another's plates, might have been amusing at another time, but was passed without notice now. There were several anxious hearts at that table, and possibly the widow Maynard's was the most anxious of all; though, indeed, Ox Mordaunt, looking across Sir Jasper Meredith to his beautiful sister, was in his way anxious too. For Ethel, there was no anxiety shown in *her* face. When her bright clear eye was not looking down in pity and admiration on Sir Jasper Meredith, it was raised to her brother's honest broad head, and he could look back to her—well, as she asked her brother to look at her.

And with one of these glances of affection from brother to sister, across that unconscious cripple, Sir Jasper Meredith's head, there went this unspoken sentiment. “he *can't* be such a fool." Apparently, however, he was; for Mary Maynard and Roland were whispering and giggling down at the lower end of the table, and Dame Maynard's brow grew darker and darker.

The only reasonable conversation at that table was that between John and Ethel Mordaunt, and Sir Jasper Meredith; the little baronet, lying, a heap of deformed bones, at the bottom of his chair, just able to feed himself, and no more, with the ox−like Mordaunt on one side, and the beautiful Ethel on the other; he considered himself in good company, and said so.

“There seems to be a strength comes into my bones when I sit between you two,” he said. “I wish you hadn't got any money, you two.”

“Why so?” said Ethel.

“Because then I could give you my money to sit alongside of me and talk to me, as you are doing now.”

“But we will do that without your money,” said Mordaunt, “and our conversation is not worth much.”

“You are not clever, you two; but then you are so good. I should like my Roland to be with me too, for he is

handsome, and you are not handsome, you know. At least you are handsome, Miss Mordaunt, are you not?"

"Don't you think so?" said Ethel.

"*I* don't know, bless you," said Sir Jasper, "I am too blind to see you. I can see Roland's beauty when he is bareheaded by the shape of his head, and I cannot see your head for your hair."

"You are not so blind as you pretend to be," said John Mordaunt.

"Indeed I am. I can see nothing in quiescence; I can see things in motion well enough, and I am getting stronger in my sight. I like to see Roland row, though I abuse him for doing so."

"I think you are quite right," said old Mordaunt; "I back you up there. But this blindness of yours, there is a little affectation about it, is there not?"

"Well, perhaps a little," said Sir Jasper, laughing. "There are none so deaf as those who won't hear, and none so blind as those who won't see. And I won't see the girl who is giggling down there, charm her mother never so wisely."

"What! it is as I thought, then?" said John Mordaunt.

"I don't know what you thought," said the little cripple. "I know that the estates come entirely into Robert Maynard's on his coming of age, and that the widow Maynard, his mother, has only a fortune of 1000 *l*. a year, and that she and her son do not hit it off very well. I know, moreover, Miss Mordaunt, that Mrs. Maynard is so fond of good living and of a good establishment that she would sell her daughter to an articulate skeleton like myself to secure it; do you see?"

"I see perfectly," said Ethel, in the coolest way in the world. "But surely the Evans' connection, which seems to be progressing so favourably there, will suit all parties."

"It will suit all parties but one. Of course it is evident that Roland is desperately smitten with Mary Maynard; and it is equally obvious (although you may be disinclined to believe it) that she has sufficient mind of her own to prefer Beauty to the Beast. The only person that the Roland−Mary connection would not suit would be the old woman."

"He is a precious good catch for her," said John Mordaunt.

"Yes, but he is not such a good catch as *me*," said Sir Jasper. "Roland!—I have hardly patience at his impudence in daring to compete with *me* in a matter like this!—Roland has no qualifications comparable to mine. His father will live thirty years longer; mine is dead. In ease of Mary's marrying Roland, which seems, after to−day, certain, Mrs. Maynard will only have an elder son's house to retire to; in case of Mary's marrying me, she would have a house of 14,000 acres to retire to, and no one to stand in the way of her management but her own daughter, who is as clay in her hand, and a miserable cripple like myself, who cannot get up−stairs without his valet."

"Mary Maynard must have a will of her own," said Ethel, "or would scarcely go on with Roland as she is doing, without her mother's consent."

"She is only allowed to do so to−day," said Sir Jasper, "because I, steadily declining to come to book, Roland is kept string to the old woman's bow. That old woman her daughter to the Cham of Tartary, and the girl would never wince at the bargain. Look at her with Roland now."

"She seems quite devoted to him indeed, and he to her. How ways are?"

"Very pretty indeed," said Sir Jasper. "You mean her pretty little way of turning her head up into his face when he speaks to her?"

Ethel said, "Yes."

"Ah, it is very pretty. I engaged a new groom the other day, and he was brought in to see his new master, and I saw the look on that young man's face when he first set eyes on this ruined heap of humanity, which his fellow−creatures call Sir Jasper Meredith. I saw repugnance in his honest, uneducated eyes, a repugnance which I have removed since. Yet, Miss Mordaunt, that pretty girl, now using her pretty ways to Roland, has been all this morning using them to the very same heap of disordered bones which is sitting beside you, and which shocked a coarse groom!"

"You don't shock us. We love you. And, therefore, why need you have shocked her?" said Ethel. And the elder Mordaunt said, "Right, Ethel! Well said!"

Said Sir Jasper, airily, "There is not much to shock in her. However, you two hear me to the end. The old woman will have Roland if she can't get me, and she is not going to get me. And now, mark me: I will die in the

workhouse (which, with my wealth, is improbable; or in the hospital, which is extremely probable, in case of my attempting the crossings at Hyde Park Corner, or at Farringdon Street, indeed I have made myself a life−governor of both institutions, with a view to such a contingency), but Twill never let Roland's life—a life of such unexampled promise—be ruined by marrying that girl."

Could he hear Ethel's heart? Professor T— tells us that a slight nervous twitch in one of his legs was enough to puzzle a party of spiritualists. If the good professor's legs are subject to such terrible nervous manifestations as Ethel Mordaunt's heart, we should be inclined to ask him, as a man we cannot do without, to give up his Alpine excursions. Her heart thumped, and beat, and throbbed in a way to puzzle any number of spiritualists; but the heap of bones lying in the chair beside her never heard it, and her face never betrayed it.

She said, very quietly, "Get me some of those cherries, Johnny; not the May−Dukes, but the Morellas; I like sour cherries. My dear Sir Jasper, if you would kindly take the trouble, at some leisure moment, to put it to yourself what extreme nonsense you have been talking, I think that your death−bed, whether it be St. George's or Guy's, will be all the easier."

"As how, then, Beatrice?" said Sir Jasper; "give me some of your cherries, or tell him to get me some more. No; I want yours; your brother has picked out the best for you, and I want them. Hand them over."

"I will give them to you; but it is not very polite of you to want them," said Ethel.

"I am not going to be polite," said Sir Jasper. "Disabuse your mind of the idea. I want your cherries. What were you going to ask me?"

"I was going to point out to you the nonsense you have been talking. You say that you will prevent this match from taking place, which is utterly foolish and wrong; and as a matter of curiosity, I should like to know what business it is of yours, and what means you are going to employ?"

"My reasons against the match are that I don't choose it to take place; and my means are—well, they are so numerous that I could not even give a catalogue *raisonnée* of them. But I won't have Roland's life destroyed by marrying that chit of a girl."

"How are you to stop it?"said John Mordaunt. "It is gone too far for you, I doubt. Look at them now."

"Well, it *is* a strong flirtation," said Sir Jasper; "but I won't have it. At times I have thought of marrying the old woman myself (she would have me fast enough), and keeping the girl as an old maid for her to bully. At another time I have thought of opening Roland's eyes; but then he is decidedly in love with her, and would resent anything I said of her. At another time I have thought that if he had not been an idiot he would have fallen in love with—with some one else. However, that is all over: there they go. Look at them. Confound—but it shan't be for all that."

"Looks as if it was all over," said bull−headed old Mordaunt; "does it not, Ethel?"

"It seems so," she said, quietly and naturally. "They have got their heads close together there in the garden, haven't they? Let us get up and go."

How much do cripples, and blind people, and deaf and dumb people, and people who are cut off from the ordinary means of human intercourse see or feel more than we do—who can say? Sir Jasper Meredith, lying there in his ruin, had some dim idea that there was something in the nature of a cloud, and the only way which he knew of dispersing a cloud was by the old Shrewsbury trick of nonsense.

There might have been a little cloud in her eyes: there might have been a slight tendency to expanding her bust, and casting her head back like a snake about to strike, which, according to Mrs. Gray, was a *spécialité* of the Mordaunts. Sir Jasper Meredith could not say why, but he felt it necessary, and more than that, imperatively necessary, that some one should talk nonsense to her. "She looks a deal too old for her age," he said to himself. "She does not like that arrangement. Let me make her laugh. It is impossible that she can care for Roland, and yet she is angry at this."

Ethel had risen, with her beautiful square head on one side, and her riding−habit gathered under her left arm, and had said, "It is time we went home." When Sir Jasper said, "My dear Miss Mordaunt, will you sit down again, for I wish to speak on a matter of business, and your brother being present, no time can be so good as this?"

Ethel sat down at once, and her brother ate cakes.

"I wanted to ask you, Miss Mordaunt," said Sir Jasper, "whether you would like to marry me, and become Lady Meredith?"

Ethel looked at him for one moment, but took time at her answer. She was puzzled for an instant, but she saw

that he meant to please and amuse her, and she met him.

"You might do worse," she said, bending her beautiful face towards the heap of bones, "and again you might do better; you might marry Mrs. Maynard, or her daughter. Give me your qualifications."

"Twenty thousand a year," said Sir Jasper.

"Nineteen thousand five hundred too much," said Ethel. "I shall marry a parish doctor, learn nursing, and get something to do. At any rate, I will not have a word to say to you. And besides, sir, you are false and faithless, for you love another. No, sir."

Merely a wild random shot of nonsense, kindly meant; but she saw that her arrow had hit, and had gone deep. No one saw the slight spasm which passed over Sir Jasper's face as she said these words, and she held her tongue honourably.

"Mrs. Maynard," she said aloud, "Sir Jasper Meredith has just made me a proposal of marriage, which I have refused in the most peremptory manner. I really think that after such a dreadful ordeal as this, I ought to go to my mother—you always do go to your mother in a case of this kind, do you not? Assist me with your experience."

The experience of Mrs. Maynard was so different from that of this frank, bold, honest girl, that she really had nothing to say. As for her having sufficient humour to see that the whole thing was a joke between two people who had been children together, and were mere brother and sister, that was not in her. She did not doubt that the thing had taken place, and that she saw before her a girl who had refused a man with twenty thousand a year, and coal under his property, and he a cripple, which was such an immense advantage. She was simply dumfounded. She rang the bell, and ordered round the horses, and Sir Jasper took occasion to order his pony−carriage.

It was very awkward. No one spoke for a long time, until Sir Jasper, in a wicked croak, said, "Think twice over your decision, Miss Mordaunt. You will never get such another offer in your life. Just think an instant. Twenty thousand a year and a cripple! Think of that, a helpless cripple! Why, bless you, Miss Mordaunt, you are entirely unable to see the wonderful advantages which you are refusing. You have only to take away my crutch, and you are absolute mistress. You could cut up my deer−park for the coal that is underneath it, and double your income, while I lay powerless on the sofa."

"It is of no use," said Ethel; and they all crowded out.

Young Evans and young Mordaunt could not, of course, mount without riot and confusion; but at last they were all fairly under way. Ethel had been put on her horse by her elder brother, and had ridden forward with young Evans and young Mordaunt—ostensibly to pacify their great quarrel, in reality to aggravate it; for in her heart she loved nonsense and fun, as did Aunt Eleanor. James Mordaunt entirely refused to give up Edward Evans' watch and chain, although he had restored his money. On being appealed to by his sister to give up the watch, he replied that there were certain cases in which the ordinary laws of social morality were held in abeyance, and that this was one. He had thought the matter through, and had concluded to retain the watch, more particularly as it was a better one than his own.

Old Mordaunt said to Roland Evans, "Well, old boy, I congratulate you."

"On what grounds, Johanne mi?" said Roland.

"On your engagement with Miss Maynard," said the ox.

"Are you mad?" asked Roland.

"Are you?" said old Mordaunt. "You *can't* be a humbug; you may be an ass. Are you not engaged to her?"

"Certainly not," said Roland. "What could have put *that* into your head?"

"What put it into your head to keep it so close to hers, old fellow?" said old Mordaunt.

"I was only talking about her brother, who is to be married to my sister. There is nothing between us. The girl is a fool. Why, your sister Ethel is worth fifty of her."

"So I think myself," said old Mordaunt.

"But I don't want to be engaged to any one. *I* shall never marry, bless you."

"Then I would let that be understood," said old Mordaunt. "The girls say you are good−looking. I don't see it myself, but they say so. And if you keep your head so close to Mary Maynard's as you did to−day, you ought to mean something."

"You are a perfect fool, Johnny," said Roland. "To prove what a perfect fool you are, I will go and do the same thing with your own sister. I suppose that I am not suspected *there*? Perhaps you would like to get up a scandal between Eddy and Aunt Eleanor. I leave you to your thoughts."

He went forward and detached Ethel from the squabbling lads. He rode beside her all the way home, and he led her away from the others. He called the old pointer to him, and on the north side of Longmynd he took her down a little glen, alone. The old dog stood, and Roland, laying his hand on Ethel's, guided her horse gently in front of the dog, until he showed her the old grouse, swelled out with indignation, in the heather, and the chicks running after her, “peet! peet! peet!” “Is it not a pretty sight?” he said, with his hand still on hers, looking into her face.

It was a very pretty sight indeed, that beautifully imperial head, with the large speculative eyes. He did not mean that. He was speaking of the grouse−poults.

“It is a very pretty sight,” she said. “We had better go home now we have seen it.”

“I am sure that it was a pretty sight,” said Roland, “for the beauty of it is reflected on your face. Good gracious! don't tell your brother that I said that, or he will be wanting to make out that I am in love with *you* next. He has accused me of being engaged to Mary Maynard this blessed day. After that he is capable of saying anything.”

“Then there is no truth about this between you and Mary Maynard?”

“No more than there is between you and me,” said Roland. “Why, she is practically my sister.”

Ethel might have wished it otherwise, but she was quite contented on the whole. So on the long summer afternoon she rode beside the man she loved, her loveless lover, through the heather—idle, foolish, aimless.

Come elsewhere with me, if you please. We have had nearly enough of these silly, ornamental people for the present. Let us see how another life or two, with the most important bearing on these summer butterflies, are wearing on. Keep, please, in your mind, the picture of beautiful Ethel, and the beautiful Roland; she loving him beyond everything created; he not loving her better than his pretty brother Eddy, or young Jim Mordaunt. Leave those two sitting on their horses, whose knees were bathed in the summer heather, and come away with me elsewhere—into the squalor of London.

Chapter 12.

This life of the rich English country gentleman would seem wonderfully beautiful. In a well−set, well−ordered, well−trained house of this kind, you get almost all the things which are supposed by ordinary people to make life valuable. To begin with, you get rules of life and conduct, in which you believe, and which are easy to follow: the following of which (such as going to church in the morning and being as respectable as another generally) gives you the prestige of being a respectable person. Next you get an *entourage* of accumulated beauty and accumulated tradition. No one ever knows of the accumulated art−treasures in any old country house, until a sleepy and tangle−headed housemaid burns it down. There you have enough to eat and drink; all of the best. There you have air, light, exercise. The beauty of horses, the beauty of dogs, the beauty of your grass−lands in spring and of your corn−lands in summer. The beauty of your budding oaks in May, when the soft note of the wood−pigeon tones down the slightly vulgar and too vivid green, and the beauty of intertwining beech−twigs in winter, when the woodcock rises like some swift, dim, noiseless ghost, and you have to concentrate your whole intellect—all that is in you—into that second when you press your trigger, and the pretty innocent bird lies dead, with out−stretched wings, on the dead leaves before you.

Then, again, there was a greater beauty and a greater charm than any of these things in a highly−toned English country−gentleman's house. I mean the relations with servants; the relations between master and man, between mistress and maid. One would be inclined to think that no relations could be much more pleasant than those between a good master and a good servant. These things, like much else, have passed away; one only alludes to this relation in saying that the lives of such lads as the Evanses and the Mordaunts are more to be envied, in many ways, than those of any lads in Europe.

Now we will leave these Evanses and Mordaunts, and go to Camden Town.

That great outcome of one side of British genius is one of the first things which an intelligent foreigner should be taken to see. As an example of the national genius displayed in architecture, I conceive that it is unequalled in Europe, and also in America; and in this opinion I am confirmed, after consultation, by intelligent travellers, who go with me in saying that it is absolutely unique. There is a depth of vulgarity about it with which the Nevskoi Prospect and the Hausmann Boulevards compete but feebly. The Russian and the Frenchman have each made an effort at soulless, characterless vulgarity, but they have failed because they have brought in the element of size or bigness, the only thing which saves Niagara from being one of the ugliest cascades in the world. Now, in Camden Town we have surpassed ourselves. We have had the daring greatness to be little, mean, and low. We have banished all possibility of a man's expressing his character in the shape of his house: that is nothing—have not mere French prefects done the same? But we have done more. Over hundreds of acres we have adopted a style of house−building which is, I believe, actually unique in the history of the world. The will and genius of a nation often—nay, generally—expresses itself in architecture. Nineveh, Paris, San Francisco, St. Petersburg, Pitt Street, Sydney, the Pyramids, are all cases in point. With regard to Axum, of the Ethiopians, and Caracorum, of the Tartars, one has little reliable information, but I have no doubt that they would bear this out, and assist one in rendering the theory arguable, that the genius of a nation generally expresses itself in its houses.

It would be unwise to commit one's−self. With Chatsworth and Buckingham Palace before us, it could not be asserted that the very curious taste for gregarious vulgarity of opinion among the least vulgar, and really the most independent people in the world, has culminated at Camden Town. It is possible to say that, if Arminius were to see Camden Town he would remark, “Here is the genius of the English nation in bricks and mortar. Stone don't pay. You can't get at best more than four per cent. out of fair Ashlar, and you ought never to build under seven.”

Yet there are about one million people, of good education, who live in these Philistine ghettos in London, and never grumble. Is there any reader who does not know some family living in one of these artistically abominable terraces—some family shut up, with not too much money, in a hideous brick box—a family which, in spite of its inartistic surroundings, exhibits every form of gentleness and goodness? Any reader who does not know such a family is exceptionally unfortunate.

Some, whose souls are elsewhere, never think of its being inartistic and squalid. Others, the people who habitually eat their hearts, beat against such a prison like caged tigers. Until his grandmother came to him, young

Gray never thought of finding fault with the decent, quiet little home he had prepared for her. When she came, he wished she had never come, for he saw at once that she disliked him, and only knew afresh that he disliked her; and now that she had come, she took good care to prove to him, not only that she disliked him, but that she hated Camden Town; and what was still more unfortunate, utterly hated his ways and his works. A glance at him would not be amiss.

I have heard this gentlest, tenderest, and least cruel of men compared to a bloodhound in face, because of a certain solemn and majestic carriage of the head, and a lofty, uplooking, speculative habit of the eyes, which the bloodhound has among dogs, above all other dogs. In mind, Gray certainly resembled the bloodhounds: in this, at least, being nearly the gentlest amid kindest of created beings; here the fancied resemblance ceases. The bloodhound is the stupidest of dogs. Allan Gray had a very noble intellect.

I have described that wild, fierce boy (for he was little else), James Mordaunt, as carrying his head well; Allan Gray carried his as high as ever did James Mordaunt. They both carried them like men ready to strike; and when you consider that, from the utter dissimilarity of their education, their utter divergence in every possible line of thought, these two youths *might* have had to strike one another, one would have prayed that they should be kept asunder. They were strangely brought together.

In stature, he was singularly tall and well made, though very slight. Even at his present age of thirty, be looked like forty—like a made man. In manner he was extremely precise; silent and courteous; in dress excessively neat.

Seeking about, scarcely guided at all, for a rule of life, he had found a certain very eminent clergyman among the Dissenters who had given him one which suited him so well, that he never departed from it. An entire faith in the verbal inspiration of the Bible; a resolute habit of self−examination and prayer; and an intense desire to do his whole duty towards every one in this world: these were his rules of life, and he followed them well, while Aunt Eleanor disliked him, and called him prig. Though, while she laughed, she said that the world would get on no worse for a few more of the same stamp.

His temper was naturally very quick indeed, but he soon discovered this and tamed it—you will never see it exhibited. The good and noble man who had done so much for him had an intense dislike of art in all forms, and his teaching in this respect had fallen on congenial soil in the case of Allan Gray. What with being naturally short−sighted, and what with having a very intense and practical mind, he was absolutely unable to understand the very word. Religiously, objects of art were strictly forbidden by the second commandment; practically, they were a dead and totally unprofitable loss of money, which might be given to all kinds of good works. He admired his little home in Camden Town as being neat and respectable, and as representing a great deal of sheer hard work and of trust from his employers. In the jewellery which passed under his hands he had taste—but not of his own. As we know, some boys, too stupid to learn their Euclid, actually learn it *by heart*, and pass examination in *that* singular way; so Allan Gray had actually learnt by rote what was in good taste and in bad, and was more looked up to as an authority in that matter than any one in the shop.

Such a man brought to such a home his wild old fury of a grandmother; and in his honest, kindly loyalty, laid the whole of his hardly earned home at her feet.

For the first week they got on very well together indeed. He returned promptly from his business, and gave up his whole time to settling her and making her comfortable. It was at the end of the very first week, however, that the first jar occurred.

“As you are now comfortably settled, grandmother,” be said at breakfast, “I need not come home so early. Indeed, I shall not be home before eleven.”

She merely shrugged her shoulders; but he saw that she did not like it. “I shall go to bed early,” she said. “I don't care for looking out on the gas−lamps.”

“Can you not read, grandmother?”

“I have not got anything to read. I have read the newspaper, and I have nothing to read besides.”

“Have you read the book I gave you?”

“No. It is a religious book, which ought to be read by a religious woman, which I most decidedly am not, and don't mean to be. I'll go to bed and think of the fine old times.”

I think all women can be kind when they have given deep pain, even to a man they dislike. She saw such a look of hopeless pain in Allan Gray's face as he left the room to go to his business that she called him back.

“There, you silly lad,” she said, “don't mind what I say. You meant kindly by bringing me here, and we shall

do very well. I came because I thought it would be a change, and I love change; and, heaven help me, I have got it; it is duller than the other place. Let us bear with one another, boy. I have money, and in a few years it will be yours."

"You do not think I want your money, grandmother? I had not the wildest idea you had any."

"Go to your work," she said, imperiously; and he went.

When he was gone, she said, "I knew that he did not know that I had any. He is quite honest. I wish I had not come. Brick walls for Caradoc; a Methodist, or a pretended one, for my garden of beauties. Allan's Puritan crop and mutton−chop whiskers for Roland's curly bead and Eddy's pretty eyes. Well, I am freer here."

Such was the life to which Allan Gray was condemned. Was it an unbeautiful or an unhappy one? I think that you will say that it was not. That it was a singular contrast to the very beautiful life of the Mordaunts, the Evanses and the Maynards, is most true. Camden Town is not Caradoc, nor Saffron Hill Longmynd; any more than Allan Gray, the toiler, was Roland Evans, handsome and strong, the favourite among favourites of fortune. Yet they were both happy men in their way. Both lived in the future; the one in a future of anticipated triumph; but Allan Gray's future went further than Roland's as yet. Allan's future went deep and far into the next world; his quiet fanaticism was as potent a means of taking him out of himself, as were Roland's dreams of triumphs in the Schools or the Senate. Roland's surroundings were as graceful and as beautiful as those of a Greek. Allan Gray could dispense with them, nay, was even glad to do so, for he called them in his quaint language, "a snare." A man who is perfectly assured that in thirty years he will be walking in the City of the New Jerusalem, as described in the 21st of the Revelation, is not likely to care much about the inartistic squalor of Camden Town, even if he could appreciate it, which Allan Gray could not. The costermonger, against whose barrow this solemn young gentleman walked sometimes, and to whom this solemn "young swell" apologised, did not know that the tall young gentleman was thinking with his whole soul over the beatific vision. The Romish priest for whom Allan sent when he found that a soul was craving, on the verge of death, for the old offices which had given comfort before, little thought that the young man with the face like a bloodhound, who had so courteously handed over the dying man to him, went home to pray that the Scarlet Abomination might cease out of the land.

A most perfect fanatic—a man who was unable to appreciate any form of artistic beauty—a man given up to a business which be hated and despised; and yet who had a flower−garden too; a garden also in which he could see his flowers grow. They were apt to wither and die, certainly; but he had heard that of all flower−gardens.

On this day, when he had first left his grandmother alone, he went first to his place of business, the jeweller's, and dashed at once into the books. The partners came to him once or twice on business, and he gave back their kindly smiles of courtesy and trust as frankly and as honestly as any man could. So he worked away at the dull figures, which were not dull to him, for he had his purpose, until nearly three o'clock in the day, and then uneasily began to hear the carriages pass. "I must go into Vanity Fair soon, I doubt," he said to himself.

He was quite right. A youth came in and said, "If you please, Mr. Gray, Mr. Henry wants you." And Allan, with a sigh, arose and followed.

Mr. Henry was the youngest partner, Allan's old friend: he managed to brush past him. "Allan, my dear," he said, "to the rescue! Father and uncle are both engaged, and here is the Duchess of Cheshire wanting loose opals and sapphires for setting."

"C. 16 and Q. 19," said Allan, in a whisper, and passed on, with his head in the air, for his interview with the Duchess, looking uncommonly like an ideal duke himself. What were principalities and powers to *him*!

"The stones will be here at once, your grace," he said, calmly. "One of the house has gone for them. May I take the liberty of inquiring whether it is your grace's intention to set the stones together?"

The Duchess said, "I had a design of doing so. I wanted to give my daughter, Lady Alice Barty, a necklace for her wedding. I thought they would look pure and innocent," said the natural woman. "I mean, I thought it would be in good taste," said the artificial one.

Allan bowed, and said, "They will be here directly, your grace." He was back for one instant among the sapphire, the sardonyx, the jasper, and the chalcedony of the New Jerusalem but he had two existences: he was quite ready for her when she said—

"Do you think it will do?"

Now the Duchess of Cheshire was, in her old age, a very religious woman of a certain sect; and a very open−handed woman also, as more than one prophetical expounder of the Revelations well knew. Allan Gray

knew it, but would have died sooner than trade on it: nevertheless, he gave this singularly odd answer, which, coming from a shop−manager to a Duchess, must have rather astounded her grace.

"It would scarcely do, your grace, as the taste of the world goes. And, as a general rule, you present to a young lady, on her real entrance into the world, something symbolical."

"Yes," said time old lady; "but sapphire represents the blue of heaven, and the cloud of onyx the troubles on earth." For she had got rambling, too, and was thinking of the time when her son Charley was killed in the duel, and of other disasters since, and forgot that the solemn, imperial gentleman before her was only a shop "manager."

"In the New Jerusalem, your grace," said the shopman, quietly, "which we will pray that the Lady Alice may enter, the gates were twelve pearls: why should not her ladyship have a twelvefold *collier* of large pearls, with the jewels interspersed? *That* would be really symbolical, I should fancy, under your grace's approbation, and at least Christian."

The astonished old lady could only say, "*Faut de mieu*—would the colours be in good taste?"

"They would be in St. John's taste," said Allan, with that curious confidence and audacity which few other sects possess now, and remained silent.

"It is a beautiful idea," said the old lady. "Your house is famous for its good taste. I think I will say yes; I like your idea very much; you are evidently a good young man. Plan out the necklace for me." And she retired to her carriage, and talked all the evening, and for many evenings, of the wonderful young man at Morton's. And Lady Alice Barty wore that necklace on her wedding−day.

Meanwhile, Henry had been waiting with the sapphires and the opals, and seeing the Duchess depart, thought that they had missed an order. "Why, the old lady is gone," he said.

"Have you any exceptionally large pearls?" asked Allan. "What a pity it is that we should have let the Googerat necklace go! I would give anything for those pearls now."

"Hang it! you can have them if you want them. There was no cash produced. She is burst up, and they are in the safe now."

"That is well. Keep the twelve best. I suppose you never heard of Chrysopras?"

"Never," said the partner.

"We must try Giallo Antico," said Allan. "Get me these other stones, and don't disturb me, if you can help it. I will go and design this necklace; it is a large order for our house. Send the artist to me. 'And the street of the city was of pure gold, as it were transparent glass,'—that is, white enamel over gold. Send me the artist."

So the ultra−Protestant actually set to work to symbolise in his trade, in a gold necklace, the very thing which puzzles and awes the most advanced Christians. He was disturbed, if aught could disturb him.

Just before the shop's closing, he was called out again. This time he had to attend to a different kind of people. An evil man was buying jewels for a young girl, and the girl had had jewels bought for her before, and knew their value, and was so particular that Gray had to be called in again. He stood before these two quite quietly, and served them well, and gave them his advice, knowing that he was serving his employers. There were plenty of precedents in the Old Testament, which he read most, but fewer in the New, which he read least. Those two were as nothing to him. A hog comes to your gate, and you throw it an apple; the hog is nothing to you, and they were less than nothing to him.

"Now," he said to the three partners, as soon as the shop was shut, "I am going to walk in my garden."

"Does your garden take much to keep up, Gray?" said the senior partner.

"Well, it would cost more than I could afford, sir, if it were properly kept up."

"Now how much, for instance," said the senior partner—"to keep it going properly, you know—do you think it would cost to keep your garden in order?"

"The whole garden?" asked Allan; "I have only a share of it."

"Say the whole garden, then," said the senior partner.

"Well," said Allan, "I could do something with 400,000*l*. a year, if I had the management of it. As it is, I do what I can."

"We were going to increase your salary," said the senior partner, laughing, "by 100*l*. a year, but I suppose that would not be much for your garden?"

"Very little," said Allan; and then, remembering himself, added, "you are very kind to me. I thank you deeply.

I will make good use of the money which you entrust to me from God.”

Chapter 13.

“Allan Gray was walking swiftly away, with his face towards his flower−garden, when he heard himself hailed, and pausing, was overtaken by the junior partner.

“Here is a young gentleman wants you,” he said; “he has been waiting at the shop−door ever so long, and having given you up, came into the shop. I ran after you.”

“A young gentleman?”

“A regular young swell. He says that he knows you would speak to him if you saw him.”

Allan Gray, coming into the shop, saw a slight, deer−eyed youth before him, who held out his hand and said, “Allan, you have not forgotten me.”

It was Eddy Evans. The few demonstrations of kindly feeling which Englishmen allow themselves were over in a moment. Their eyes did the rest, and then Eddy and Allan were alone in the street together.

“You had not forgotten me?” said Eddy.

“Was it likely that I could forget you? Did I not think you had forgotten me?” said Allan Gray.

“See then,” said Eddy, with both his hands clasped over Allan's arm, and his face turned up into the solemn face of the other, “how unfair you can be. Have I not deserted all pleasure, as they call it, to come here for the higher and more real pleasure of seeing you?”

Allan said nothing, but he somehow noticed Eddy's hands, which were clasped over his left arm. Eddy's hands were very small, and he had on the most beautifully made lemon−coloured kid gloves.

These attracted Allan's attention so much, that he took one of Eddy's hands in his, and held it there, and passed his brown fingers up and down the seams, and said, “What pretty gloves!” For he loved the lad as much as he could love any one, and he permitted his love to demonstrate itself so far.

“I doubt you are an old brute,” said Edward. “You are not a bit glad to see me.”

“I am very happy,” said Allan.

“Yes, but you don't show it,” said Eddy. “*I* am happy to see you again, but I don't look like a—Memnon. I want to spend the evening with you. Where are you going?”

“I will go anywhere with you,” said Allan. “Where are *you* going?”

“I *was* going to dine at the Bedford with the others, and then we were going to the play, and then we were going to Cremorne. But I gave it all up to come to you, and you don't care for me.”

“I care for you more than for any living being, Edward,” said Allan.

“Hush, man, I know you do,” said Edward. “Have I not come to you? have I not proved that I, also, care for you—after Roland?”

“Friendships will settle in a few years,” said Allan. “We will see how this sentimental fondness for one another will settle itself. Which is a great problem.”

“Not such a great problem as this,” said Edward. “Where are you going to take me?”

“I was going to my flower−garden. Will you come? Dare you come?”

“I dare anything. I am an Evans, and I would sooner go to Newgate with you than to Vauxhall with another. I will come.”

“Then we will go. How did you come to London?”

“Our fathers gave us money to come and see the town, and we have come to see it; Roland, and Johnny, and Jimmy Mordaunt, and I. And we have been to St. Paul's, which is 404 feet in height; and to the Monument, which is 202; and to the Tower, which was built by Augustus the Stark, King of Saxony; and I found it very slow, for tastes vary. Indeed, Jim Mordaunt quarrelled violently with his brother on the same subject on the very summit and top of the dome of St. Paul's, Jimmy declaring that any one could have built it if he had had the money, and Johnny accusing his brother of trying to be fine. I got sick of all this giddy dissipation, and asked Roland for liberty. So he took away my money, and let me come to you.”

“Why did he take away your money?” asked Allan.

“He always does. I give it away when people ask me for it, and so does Jim Mordaunt. John Mordaunt used to take his brother's money away until he got too big. Jim won't stand it now, and fights.”

“You don't fight Roland, then?”

“No, Roland does as he likes. Nobody ever could resist Roland, you know. Besides, he leaves me some. I have five shillings or more now.”

“How old are you, Edward Evans?”

“Seventeen.”

“You are very childish and simple. I doubt if we had better go where we are going—yet, we will go. Are you too great a child to share my pleasure? Why should I ask you? Let us come?”

The bright evening summer's daylight fell full and strong upon the squalor of the streets through which they passed; streets which became more squalid, mean, and ugly as they passed along. In the darkness of the winter's evening their wretchedness is hidden; under the summer sun it is patent. Eddy chattered at first, but less and less as the streets got narrower and more dirty, and at the top of Saffron Hill he was quite silent.

For the people were so wild, so strange, and so very fierce. They scolded one another so much, and when they were civil to one another, their language was hard and wild; and to Eddy, listening with his keen little ears, it seemed that their conversation turned on two things only, money and drink.

“I don't like this place,” said Eddy, very emphatically; “it is a bad place. I like pretty places and pretty things. What are those bells?

“The big one?”

“Yes; the one like Tom.”

“That is the bell of the Roman Catholics; they have established themselves here.”

“Do they do good?”

“Every one who works for Christ does good,” said Allan Gray, the extreme Protestant. “Of course, they do good. They work among these Irish, whom they have, for their own purposes, kept sitting in outer darkness, and they do well. And they'd need.”

“What is the little sharp bell?” said Eddy, getting interested.

“That is the Puseyite church,” said Allan, with a smile.

“We tried that together, you know, at Shrewsbury.”

“I liked it,” said Eddy; “you did not. Do they do good?”

“No end,” answered Allan. “I get into trouble for saying so, though.”

“Do you Low Church and Dissenters do good, Allan?”

“We think so; you must come and see. Stay here a moment; there is a row. Keep quiet.”

The narrow steep lane before them was crowded with people of the very lowest order, all talking in that dreadful, hoarse, London voice, which, I confess, I have never heard elsewhere. As Allan and Eddy had been looking down that lane, they had seen it swarming with “roughs,” male and female, intermingling, growling, and swearing; but now there was an incident. Ask the next policeman, or read your newspaper, before you say that I exaggerate here.

From the door of one of the houses came stumbling, impelled by some blow from behind, a woman, bareheaded and mad, who recovered her balance in the middle of the street, and confronted the door from which she had come. Her fierce, bruised face, her demoniac fury, and her horrible wild words, made Eddy tremble and cling close to Allan. In another moment a man had dashed out of the door and confronted the woman, who was at bay, and the cowardly crowd parted. It was an Irish row, and they were man and wife. No one had a right to interfere.

Then began once more the fierce, wild objurgation, rising to a scream on the part of the woman and a roar on the part of the man, until there was an instant's silence, as he went at her. Then inarticulate curses, worse than the worst roar of any wild beast, as he seized her by the hair, cast her heavily down, and began kicking her on the head.

Not a soul of all the soulless cowards around interfered. They were Irish; the man was a dangerous character; and, moreover, they were man and wife. Not one soul interfered. Allan Gray uttered an oath which was strange to his vocabulary, and made a dash forward against the crowd; but there was one more nimble than he.

While he was stopped disputing by three or four heavy costermongers—vho had the strongest objection to any interference, on any grounds, between a man and his “missis,” Eddy, with that rapid dexterity which is gained at football and cricket, had parted the crowd—nay, had done more. He had delivered his two little fists straight into

the eyes of the Irish gentleman, and was apparently prepared to do so once more.

It is impossible to say how the matter would have ended, for the woman had risen, and dazed and stunned as she was by her husband's kicks on the head, had her wits enough about her to see that this youth before her husband was the youth who had saved her life by giving her husband two black eyes. She therefore found it necessary, according to the creed of her class, to entirely eradicate and destroy that youth. Having thrown a few flowers of speech at our poor Eddy, she made a resolute advance towards him, and in another moment it would have fared badly with him—when Allan Gray, having been recognised by some among the crowd, there was a cry raised of “Teacher! Teacher!” and he was allowed to pass. With singular misfortune, he arrived just in time to get between Eddy and the infuriated Irishwoman. Eddy, who was expecting another attack from the husband, watched Allan Gray, and knew more about him than he had ever known before. Deep down in the man there was a strain of humour, utterly unsuspected by himself, but detected at once by headlong Eddy, who knew the article when he saw it, if ever a lad did.

The woman raged at him, with her ten nails spread out, blind in her wrath. Gray with great dexterity caught her two wrists in his hands, and said, quietly, “Now, my dear, good soul, do just think how very much at random you are acting.”

“Where's the young man as hit him?” she said, slightly struggling. “Give me that young man!” And then she proceeded to describe what she intended to do to that ornamental young undergraduate who had saved her from the brutality of her husband, with a degree of detail which cannot be reproduced here. Her object, it seems, was Eddy's lungs—she called them his “lights ”—and garnished her speech with adjectives and participles. Her argument took the form of what a sporting paper might call “reiterated asseveration.” She struggled a very little, for the poor thing was faint, and Allan Gray soon dropped her hands.

“Ah!” she said, “you're a teacher, I doubt; I didn't see you. But,” with sudden vivacity, “I'll have out the liver of any chap that lays hands on my man! If they was a teacher's I would; if they was yours I would. He has been a good husband to me out of liquor, and I'll stand by him against——−.” Aposeipesis is the best thing here.

“What a very foolish woman you will find yourself, if you once have sufficient resolution to bring your mind to bear upon it, you know,” said Gray, with the most perfect temper. “You should bring your mind to bear on questions of this kind, and should not take action in this rapid and illogical manner. You should think the question out.”

“Where is the young man as interfered between me and my man? I'll have that young man's life, I will!” she went on, with that hoarse, thick, London voice, which most of us, alas! know.

“Now just think how foolishly you are talking,” said Allan Gray. “You would have been killed if he had not interfered, you know;” and the whole business was suddenly finished by a maudlin and tearful reconciliation between the man and his wife, not much less disgusting than the quarrel; after which, Eddy and Allan Gray walked on together.

“I don't think much of your flower−garden as yet,” said Eddy; “these people are worse and more brutal than the country people.”

“They have a hundred times more individuality of character,” said Gray, shortly; and Eddy, puzzled with the length of his words, passed into a whitewashed passage, at the end of which were stone stairs.

Eddy thought first of gaols, then of workhouses, then of hospitals, as they passed up flight after flight of stairs; but at last Gray opened a door, and there was a warm whiff of hot humanity, and an universal buzz of teaching and learning voices, and he thought at once of the old class−room at Gloucester.

“Where shall I go?” said he, to Allan Gray.

“Where God directs you,” said Gray. “I must attend to my class; God will see after you. *This* is my flower−garden.”

A strange one. About three hundred present in a whitewashed room, of all ages, and nearly all degrees, divided into classes. Gray having deserted him, Eddy the ornamental did what most shy English lads do when they find themselves in a social difficulty, took off his hat, and sat down in the first place he could find.

And what a queer place it was, and yet such a very familiar one. A young gentleman, in spectacles, was instructing a class of boys in Scripture history, and Eddy slipped in, on to the end of the form, as a kind of ornamental head−boy, used to the situation, and dropped from the skies. The instant he sat down on that bench the old school−fear was upon him, and the spectacled young gentleman of his own age was his dreaded master. That

young gentleman looked at him through his spectacles, and Eddy trembled. But he had sat down at the head of the class, and was committed to anything. The young gentleman looked very much as if he would like to go through a Biblical pedigree or so with him, and Eddy devoutly hoped that he wouldn't.

Looking at his fellow−pupils, Eddy saw that there were eight of them, and that these sons of the conquerors of India had developed their genius in the direction of dirt. Yet there was a striking similarity to the old Shrewsbury classes in the way they behaved. The furious, irrepressible boisterousness, of which the Dean of St. Paul's complained, was rampant enough here.

As Eddy sat and looked, he saw this. Two boys, utterly tired out, had gone to sleep one against the other. A very brisk boy, who was very creditably answering the Biblical questions of the spectacled young gentleman, perceived these two boys. After looking steadily at the young gentleman and at Eddy, to take them into his confidence, this boy, instead of answering his question, advanced across the floor, and taking the nose of the smaller of the sleeping boys between his finger and thumb, half wrung it off his face; after which, he went back to his place with the air of a boy who had done a dexterous thing, and continued to answer Biblical questions in a way.

The young gentleman in the spectacles took no notice; and as for Eddy, it seemed to him that he was back again at a school, mastered by monitors. He was wondering whether or not he could “take down” the present teacher, or whether he could be taken down himself and everlastingly disgraced by the dirty boy who had pulled the sleeping boy's nose, when a trifling miscarriage on the part of this very lively boy got him relieved from his hideous thrall. The young gentleman in the spectacles, doing good work, if ever a man did it, sacrificing time, pleasure, age, and not a little health also, in his self−imposed task of civilising these boys, had found nothing better to teach them than obscure and very doubtful questions of theology. He saw Eddy, with his dark−blue necktie, an Oxford man; a congenital Puseyite, as he had been taught to believe, though Eddy was nothing of the kind. He therefore thought that he would air his boys' theology before Eddy, and send him back discomfited. The end was disaster.

“With regard to the true fold,” he said; “who are the true fold?”

“All faithful people,” said the lively boy who had pulled the other boy's nose.

“And for whom do we pray in this collect, that they may be brought into the fold?”

The boy meant to say, for he was a sharp boy, and remembered, “All Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics.” What he *did* say was, “All Jews, turkeys, fiddlers, and architects.” After which Eddy fled.

There was at the end of the room, next the door, a class which had no teacher at all; Eddy, in sauntering past it, and looking very curiously at it, as he did at the others, was descried by them, and, so to speak, hailed.

“Will you come here, sir? We have not got any one,” said a bright−looking lad about his own age, who rose from the teacher's chair with a Bible in his hand, and confronted Eddy who could but come, very frightened, with all his rings, and pins, and gewgaws; *he* sat down, took the Bible, and stared round him stupidly.

“I don't know anything about teaching,” he began, finding it was necessary to say something, “But I know the Acts in Greek, and I have been used to class and lecture. Where are we?”

The bright−looking lad's eyes somewhat attracted his, and he addressed him.

“We are on the voyage of St. Paul, sir,” said the bright youth. And a voice at Eddy's other elbow said, “And we've been arguing. I maintain that St. Paul would have to tramp it from Gaeta to Rome after they got ashore there. And most burning and bustin' hot it is, as I well knows, having tramped it myself; and nothing to see when you get there. Not to be compared to the Broadway, or, for that matter, Sydney, or, if you strains a p'int, Rio, or, if you strains another p'int, Ratcliffe Highway. *I* never see nothing at Rome equally to what you may see at Calcutta. *That's* the place. Why, old Jummagy Bummagy (Jamnsetjee Jejeebhoy) hangs out a hundred times better than the old Pope. Blow *him*.”

Eddy looked in his wonder to the bright lad, who understood him at once, and said—

“Sailor, sir.”

Eddy looked suddenly at the sailor—a man with close−cropped grey hair, and a red−brown face, with a rather obstinate expression; and as he did so he shut up his Bible, and the others shut up their Bibles. For, as the sailor said that night when he got into bed, they had been making uncommon bad weather of it.

“I want to ask you people a few questions,” said Eddy. “I think you are better able to instruct me than I you. Will you tell me this—I hardly know where to begin, but this, if it is not impertinent—what have you got to live

on?”

The heads went at once together to the centre of the class, listening. Some one—of course, it is nobody's business—had better look at those heads now and then, at a leisure moment. They are generally dirty, suggesting blue precipitate; yet there are eyes in them out of which the devil can look. The heads all drew together to hear what their spokesman, the bright young man, was to say to this pretty lad, with the 200*l*. worth of jewellery on him. I doubt more than one in that class could appraise Eddy pretty accurately—at Fagin prices.

“Well, sir,” said the bright young man, “we ain't any of us got none on it at all. We are all in here off the tramp.”

“Have you been tramping?” asked Eddy, interested.

“Tramping round for work; yes, sir.”

“How very pleasant!” said Eddy. “Why on earth did you come here? Do you mean to say that you went on from one place to another, without caring where you slept, in this beautiful summer weather? I should like that immensely.”

“You see, sir, that we had nothing.”

“I always thought,” said Eddy, “that you had barrows of cherries, or grindstones, or vans with brass knockers, when you went on the tramp. I always thought it looked so pleasant.”

“We hadn't got no money,” said the sailor.

“I have not got any, either,” said Eddy, wishing to awaken a fellow−feeling somehow, but feeling very much at sea. “My eldest brother has taken away my money, because he was afraid I should make a fool of myself; and my brother is a very talented young man, with a singularly good judgment.”

The sailor, who was getting sleepy again, assented to this proposition more emphatically than good manners would warrant in other circles. He was decidedly of a mind with Roland.

One of the other Eutychians here suddenly became animated as though by a miracle, and said, in that hoarse Cockney voice which no one whom I have ever heard, except Mr. Maccabe, can imitate, “If the young governor's brother were a near hand with the dibs, as his were, Lord knows, yet the young governor might probably have such a thing as the price of a pint of beer about him, which he'd never miss,” and was continuing his argument when the sailor awakened himself thoroughly, and said in a voice which, though hoarse like the Cockney's, was not slovenly as his was, but emphatic enough to be heard ten feet off in the wildest gale which ever blew round the Horn—

“Shut up!”

Eddy, a little frightened, looked at the bright young man, who raised his eyebrows and put up his finger. For the old sailor was going to speak; and it was evident to Eddy that this young man, for whom he was getting a stronger and stronger interest, put value on the old fellow's opinions.

“Your brother was right in a−taking your money away from you. I can see as you've heaps on it, mor'n what most folks 'ud git through with. But you'll never have enough. You'll give it all away, as I give mine; or you'll lend it, or you'll drop it in the lee−scuppers in a gale of wind. Why, if you was paid a hundred and forty pound down, as I've known done, on the capstan−head in Hudson's Bay, for the run home, and that ship was drove into Rio through one of these racing skippers racking every stick out of her, you'd knock every penny of it down in a week. Your brother must be an uncommon sensible young man for taking your money away from you the minute you come ashore. I should like to see him. I wish I had a brother as would have took *mine*.”

“But, sir,” said Eddy, puzzled and startled, turning over the leaves of the Bible, “if you haven't got any money, we might give you some of ours.”

“What 'ud be the good, with two such as you and me? I've had heaps on it at times, well earned mostly: though I picked up a digger once in Francisco, which digger is on my conscience now I'm down in my luck: fourteen hundred dollars at Eucre in three sittings, and I shipping down right or left bower on the ground, as the hand served. Lord forgive me! He won't try to pick up a Briitish sailor again in a hurry,” went on the old man, with a flash of the old Adam. “But the money done me no good, no more than yours will. I give the main of it away, and I knocked down the rest; and then I loafed round, because I wouldn't ship for fear of another rush, and I were very bad off, young sir, until Bill Taylor come.”

The bright young man whispered, “Let him go on, sir; he knows heaps of things.”

Eddy, with his Bible now wide open, and his eyes more open than his Bible, asked—

“What did Mr. Taylor do for you, if you please?”

“He convinced me of sin,” said the old sailor. “And I have never lost the conviction. I can't help going on a−doing on it at times; but then, don't you see, I'm convinced of it; and that's nigh half−way; for Bill Taylor said so, and there was nobody ever like he.”

At this point a loud voice from the platform said, with somewhat of a whine, Eddy thought, “My brethren, I will now address you on the fourth chapter of the Ephesians;” and at the same moment he felt a touch upon his shoulder. It was Allan Gray.”

“Arise, and let us go hence,” he said. And Eddy arose.

But the class arose also, and came round him, and pressed on him. And the bright young man, who was spokesman, said, “Come to us again;” and all their eyes brightened when they said after him, “Come to us again.”

And Eddy said, hurriedly, “I will try; I think that we might do one another good.” And to the young man he said, “Tell me your name, and come to me at Ashley's Hotel to−morrow morning.” And the young man gave him his name; and his name was Joseph Holmes.

Chapter 14.

Allan Gray, taking Eddy, departed somewhat swiftly by a side−door, just as the expounder of the evening had laid down his argument, which was that the whole human race was naturally doomed to a fate utterly too horrible for description, or even contemplation; that the Deity had in all time and eternity known the fate of each individual; and that there were certain symptoms by which you might know whether or not the Deity had beforehand, apparently for no reason, condemned you to eternal fire or everlasting bliss. Allan Gray and Eddy had heard this much before Allan got Eddy away from his new friends.

When they were in the street, Allan Gray said, “Well, it is cooler here. That fellow would have it hot enough for us, if he had *his* way.”

“But I thought you were the same way of thinking yourself,” said Eddy.

“Don't begin that sort of thing, pray don't,” said Allan, with extreme irritation. “What earthly business can it be to you what my religious opinions really are?”

“I am very sorry,” said Eddy; “I did not mean to make you angry; please don't be angry; no one is ever angry with *me*, you know.”

Allan's touch on Eddy's shoulder quite reassured him. That little gentleman knew the look of an eye, and the touch of a hand, as well as most.

“My dear soul,” said Allan, “who could be angry *with* you? I am only angry *to* you. You are one of the very people expressly made to be angry *to*.”

“Well, be angry *to* me then,” said Eddy. “What is the matter? Are you cross with the fellow who was preaching, for instance?”

“Yes. God is not a vindictive fiend.”

“F— was chassèed for saying the same things in the very same words,” said Eddy.

“Let them try it with me,” said Gray, in a low snarling voice. “Is Samson to sit for ever in the Temple of the Philistines? Let them provoke me to get my two arms round the pillars, and the house shall come down upon their heads, and on mine too. I tell you, young Evans, that God is not as they paint Him.”

And Eddy said, “You went about searching for formulas, you know; and you have taken up these. If they don't suit you, change them.”

“Have you no faith left then?” said Allan.

“Yes; I think so. But ask me when I lie dying, and I'll tell you better about it.”

“Sixty years hence,” said Gray. “How is your Aunt Eleanor?”

“Very bad,” said Eddy, a boy again.

“What is the matter with her?” said Gray.

“The same that was the matter with the young lady in 'Pickwick'—want of taste. She don't like you.”

“Does she dislike me very much?” asked Gray.

“Most specially and particularly,” said Eddy. “Whatever your doubts on religious subjects may be, you may make your mind easy about *that*.”

“Don't be flippant,” said Gray.

“I am not,” said Eddy. “I am speaking to facts. My aunt hates you like poison.”

“What does she say against me?”

“She says you are such an abominable prig. And so you are, you know.”

Many do not understand English badinage. When it seems coarsest and most offensive, it frequently only proves that the men who are using it are the best friends in the world. This last remark of Eddy's made Allan Gray laugh, and put him in good humour.

This good humour was so obviously shown on the face of Allan Gray that Eddy shot his bolt, and then with his keen, kindly, steady little eye, watched to see whether or no it had hit.

“Come home with me to the hotel and see Roland.”

“Oh dear, no!” was the reply.

“Well then, don't,” was Eddy's not undexterous answer.

After walking a little time, Allan Gray said, “I hate meeting gentlemen.”

“Which is the reason why you were sorry to see me. Go on.”

“But I am not sure, whether or no, it would not be better for me to meet your brother.”

“Why?” said Eddy.

“Well, I can't exactly say.”

“Well then, come on, and don't be an ass.”

“Mind,” said Allan Gray, “he is to be civil.”

“Was he ever anything else?” said Eddy.

“He will not have returned from the playhouse,” said Allan Gray.

“He is thundering away at his logic by now,” said Eddy, “so come.”

And so the rivals met. Eddy, in writing to his Aunt Eleanor, pointed out to her that both on the father's and on the mother's side he had come of families famous—not to say notorious—for good manners. But he frankly confessed to his aunt that he had never seen any such politeness exhibited as was exhibited in the interview between Roland and Allan. “Allan's manners,” he said, “were perfect (for there is nothing in the least degree Brummagem about Allan), but Roland beat him.”

Roland, the scholar and the athlete, had his square−sided, snake−like head bent over his books when the two came in. He was sitting in his shirt−sleeves, and he caught sight of his brother first, and Allan saw him drop his pen, and noticed that the two brown hands turned themselves with their palms uppermost, and spread themselves out to meet those of the brother. Allan, standing in the shade, saw this; but saw more. He saw a bright light in Roland's face for one instant, which he knew, but which I have a difficulty in describing. The eyebrows were elevated and the mouth was slightly parted, and from between the parted lips the soul said: “My darling! My darling! where have you been?”

Allan looked into the soul of Roland for one instant. It was enough for him. Not now for one instant dreaming of the great question which was to arise between them, he remembered those words, and envied Roland nothing but his pretty little brother.

“And which, indeed,” said Eddy, “I am not going to tell you where I have been. Here is Allan Gray come to see you.”

The bright expression on Roland's face was changed at once. Allan Gray only saw before him a very tall, handsome young man, with a short, curling head of hair, who rose and greeted him with the smile of courtesy—a very different smile from that with which he had greeted his brother Eddy.

“I am sincerely pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Gray,” said Roland. “At one time I confess I was extremely jealous of the influence you had over my brother Edward. I am jealous no longer. I hear nothing but good of you. I think that you have done what I have not—conceived a line of life for yourself, and that you are following it out. I understand that you are given to good works.”

This was so frankly said, and evidently so frankly meant, that even that king of prigs, Robespierre, could not have resisted it. Allan Gray had no such intention.

“You receive me frankly, and like a true gentleman,” he said. “With regard to your jealousy of me, it is nothing; with regard to my having made a scheme of life, it is the I did so—you, so young, can wait; with regard to my good works, some of us must turn to, or the house will be afire.”

“You will sit down and be comfortable, now that you have come, won't you?” said Roland. “What are these good works of yours, and how can I assist at them?”

“The work at which I am *assisting*,” said Allan, “is the old work of civilisation. We are trying, through one form of Christianity, to civilise the people upon Saffron Hill. The way you can assist at it is by giving me money.”

“That is easily done, and shall be done,” said Roland.

“Thank you,” said Allan; “send the money to me. What we, who are working, want is *money*. The Puseyites at the top of the Hill want it; the Papists are beating us by having more than we have. 'Money! money!' is our cry. I have not got any; send me some. What are you going to do with yourself? Soldier?”

There is an implied compliment, to most young men, in being accused of going into the army. We are a nation which is never at peace. The gates of Janus are never open with our people. We are always spreading the English language somewhere. The great American army, recruited from 20,000,000, beat down an army recruited by 8,000,000. The English army, after a death−throe with Russia, crushed out a rebellious army backed by a

population of 150,000,000. Therefore Alphonse, Arminius, and Silas, don't you get villipending the British army. Is such a lad as Roland Evans to be thought a fool because he blushed scarlet when Allan Gray called him soldier? And, indeed, he looked like it. It was a compliment. We may have had our Walcheren, or indeed our Chillianwallah. But, my good Alphonse, brother of my heart! we have never had our Passage of the Beresina (we will give Eylan as a French victory). Arminius, my dear fellow, there was a battle of Jena once. Silas, my dear, did you ever hear of Bull Run? No! all young fellows of spirit have a pride in being thought British soldiers *in esse* or *in posse*, and Roland liked Allan Gray for his suggestion; for Roland had fought most of the battles of modern Europe, and indeed some which have not been fought yet; for example, the battle of Nieder Lahnstein, where you, being (do you see) a Frenchman, turned your Prussian left, dash at the heights behind Ehrenbreitstein, take them, and have the whole of the Rhine Provinces at your feet, don't you see, with the command of the Rhine. Roland would have undertaken to do that little business for you to−morrow, just as willingly as he would have undertaken to bring about a coalition between the older Whigs and the Radicals, both doctrinaire and uneducated, for he was a boy of schemes. And this young man, Gray, was a young man of perception. Roland warmed to him, which was well for him.

"I should *like* to be a soldier," he said; "for I am strong, courageous, and clear−headed in danger; but I fear I am condemned to Parliament."

"I wish I was," said Allan, "I would get some things done, I know, if I was."

"That's just it," said Roland; "you wouldn't do anything of the kind. You can do *nothing* of the things you want to do. Where would Free Trade have been now, if it had not been for a combination of perfectly incalculable accidents? Peel for one accident; the Irish famine for another."

"You go too fast," said Gray. "Who told you that Free Trade was a good thing, except in particular cases? I allow that free trade in corn is good, as it feeds the people; but Free Trade in other matters is murder to us in this over−populated country. When we get a nearly pure democracy, we shall have protection to native industry back again—hot and heavy. A pure democracy will never stand Free Trade. When did they ever do so?"

"I don't remember," said Roland.

"I fancy not," said Gray. "Your American and your Canadian laugh it to scorn. There is such a queer *petitio principii* about it in the first term (correct me if I am wrong, for I have not been to Oxford and learnt boat−racing), which seems to me to condemn it. We practically find that we can compete (having a very rich and compact country) with every nation on earth on advantageous terms. Therefore, Free Trade is as good for other nations as it is for us. And so we send our dear Cobden to tell other nations what he entirely believes—that a franc is as good as a shilling. Some nations believe him; some don't. The Americans don't, and they are a trading people too."

"But you are attacking the very principle of Free Trade," said Roland; "why, the very Tories have given it up."

"There spoke a Whig," said Allan Gray, laughing the while. "Won't think for himself; will only think for his party. What are you going to do when you get into Parliament?"

"Precious little, I suspect," said Roland, laughing also. "It takes half a dozen first−rate men, and accidents to back them, to get anything done. And I am not a first−rate man, and my accidents are inseparable, and become qualities. For instance, I have too much money."

"Give some of it to us then," said Allan Gray.

"I will. Depend on me; you and I shall be good friends in time. Now what would you do, if *you* were in Parliament? How would you get matters done?"

"I should go on making myself a nuisance, like the importunate widow, until they *were* done; look at—. Look at him, and a fool too, all said and done."

These two rather splendid young men were drawing nearer and nearer to one another. They were not very unlike in character, though cycles apart in thought. Roland moved closer to Allan, and said, "What things would you have done, for instance?"

"Why," said Allan, "I would have the poor cared for better; and with regard to the public schools—"

He had, in reality, spoken some tolerably reasonable sentences about the public schools, but for dramatic purposes we will not repeat them. There was a violent objurgation outside the door, and then a violent crash against it. The Public Schools were upon him, to the utter puzzlement of poor Allan Gray. "Why were such fools brought into the world?" he asked himself at first. And then, when the rough prettiness of their horse−play had made him laugh, he said, "What are they good for?" Let the boy Arbuthnot answer him that question, with the

flag shaping itself on to his dead limbs! India is a great fact, my dear Allan Gray, even in these times of big things; and these boys helped to get it for you. And although the 180,000,000 can't accept Christianity, yet we have made them accept railways. Our boys are working your work, Allan Gray, and pretty near half of them have died in the service. Don't abuse the boys; they are not bad fellows when you know them.

For here they come in their fury—their quaint, petulant fury, which accounts for all kinds of battles; let us say from Agincourt to Magdala (popular, but incorrect). In comes Jimmy Mordaunt, blind with wrath, hotly full of his grievance; in comes Johnny Mordaunt, making as much noise as his brother. The old story—the elder brother has dexterously, in pretending to get change, grabbed all the younger one's money, and considers it as prize of war, refusing to give it up. The brothers Evans take violent sides in the dispute, and a row royal ensues.

It seemed so strange to Gray to see Roland taking part in such boys' play. It lasted some time; doubtless, like Tom Pinch's organ, to the great delight of the gentleman downstairs and the gentleman overhead; and when it was over, Allan Gray was gone.

Chapter 15.

I think that Roland was secretly angry with the elder Mordaunt as to his good−humouredly bringing him to beck about Mary Maynard. Miss Mordaunt was much too fine a young lady to have any mistakes made about her of any sort or kind. He would have been profoundly delighted that Roland should marry his sister, and would be very glad to see his friend happy with Mary Maynard. Only John Mordaunt, by far the *shrewdest* of the five boys, was determined that he should make up his mind.

Roland and Ethel had been brought up together, and had always called one another by their Christian names, and as Roland would have said, were as brother and sister. So would not Ethel have said. Ethel's secret was known to two people, and guessed by a third.

Miss Evans had seen it, and had tried rough excision, as we saw; that awful Mrs. Gray had guessed it, and had bullied Phillis Myrtle to give her a philter, which would have only a temporary effect, and would go off, as she hoped, after they were married, causing neglect en Roland's part, and cause the red−handed, wild, rude Mordaunt clan to become her daughter's avengers on the Evans family for what she had suffered at their hands. Such was the amiable old lady's scheme at one time, before she retired to London. *She* was gene.

One more, as you may remember, knew Ethel's secret,—her brother Jim. Jim used, when a youngster—indeed, right up to the time of the bathing accident—to bully every one he could get to stand it, and, among others, of course, his sister. Both of them high−spirited, rough, and strong, they used to have terrible battles, for she would resist in defence of her property, and resist fiercely too, though he was too strong for her. His father had thrashed him for it, his brother thrashed him with a cricket−stump for it; but the boy only lay quite quiet and silent on the grass while the blows descended, until Johnny, with a loud oath, threw the stump far and wide; and then the boy got up and let out his sister's fancy fowls into the farmyard—a horrid kind of revenge, which he could enjoy silently in her bitter disappointment at the shows. On the whole I think that when she was about twelve years old she fairly and honestly hated her brother James.

That there is a natural brotherly love I know; that it may, under certain rare circumstances, be changed into a far other feeling, I have seen.

An actual cessation of hostilities took place, as a matter of course, when they were about fourteen, which was succeeded by indifference.

After Roland had saved Jim's life, there was, as the Doctor saw, a marked change in the latter. At home they were surprised at him. Though by no means less boisterous, his boisterousness had lost all its cruelty; and though he was far too close−mouthed to say anything to his sister, yet she noticed an alteration in him beginning—nay, it had scarcely begun when it was over. Before he had been home a week, John was profoundly astonished at Jim bursting into the room where Ethel and he were, and saying, “I took your whip over to Shrewsbury, and waited while it was done; and I asked for the cheesecakes, and he had not get any of them,” and bouncing out again. Still more, a week after, did his father and mother notice Jim and Ethel, with their heads together, walking rapidly and talking eagerly, going over the hill rabbit−shooting.

Of course, Jim talked a great deal now about Roland; and why should not she talk of what pleased him? This talk went on and on until it grew to badinage on the part of James, which she sometimes resented. There was no secret between them at all, only they never, either of them, spoke of Roland when others were present, save very slightly. And one day, James, in a mad mood, cut off a lock of Roland's hair, and sent it to his sister in a letter. She scolded him, but she kept it.

So the cloudless vacation went on—not one appearance of change. Nothing happened, save one, of the slightest importance, and that was only known to three people.

The Shrewsbury people must have a regatta, and Squire Evans and Squire Mordaunt being asked rather early for subscriptions, and being acted on by their boys, sent very large ones, arousing the wrath of their political opponents and the emulation of their neighbours. Sir Jeremy Hicks and Sir Topham Shiner topped them at once, and the committee found themselves with half as much money again as they wanted. There was only one thing to be done: make a greater thing of it—a four−oared race for £5 cups, and a pair−oared race for similar cups, open to all England.

Our young men had never thought of rowing, thinking there was nothing worthy of their skill, until the news of this came. It came first to the Evanses at breakfast, and Roland and Eddy were across the valley to the Mordaunts in ten minutes. *They* would row, of course, now it was no longer provincial: but old Maynard? Roland volunteered at once, before anything could be done, to ride across Longmynd to the Barton and see; and, in spite of Jim's prophecy, returned with Maynard to lunch, rather fat, but looking like rowing too.

Squire Charles Evans took the most intense interest in it. Devoted to every kind of sport, he had never seen any of this, now promising to be the most popular of all. He'd bear all the expense; he'd give them a handsome present all round if they won; he'd give a dinner to the tenantry: there was nothing he would not do. That evening Eddy was despatched to Oxford for a boat, with orders to see it home, and they discussed their plans.

These fellows had been carefully taught to row together for five years, and now had developed into four heavy men, perfectly accustomed to one another. They had rowed together often at the University also, but had only tried their strength in some college fours, which, of course, they won easily. They rowed thus: James, bow; John, second; Ox Maynard, third; and Roland, stroke. Eddy, coxswain (9st. 4lbs.); James Mordaunt, the lightest rower, 11st. 2lbs.

They found they went as well together as ever. After the first burst, they turned and looked at one another, and said, “That will do.” The only question was, “Who was coming?”

They never went near Shrewsbury. They found a piece of the Severn, lower down and nearer Stretton, which was even better than the course. To this place every day went the drag, the Squire driving, with the crew and divers occasional gatherings; once Sir Jasper Meredith, who sneered at the whole thing, generally Mildred, or a servant or two. Aunt Eleanor and Ethel used to ride over, and trot along the tow−path, and the young men rowed none the slower for that. Several times, while rowing about—for they spent most of the day there—Roland made Mildred get in and steer, and once, to her awe and delight, with her hair broken down and streaming like a flag, they took her raging all over the course at full speed. This was on a particular occasion when Eddy had to be elsewhere.

It was reported that two crews had come to Shrewsbury, and it was necessary that Eddy should go and look after them, and returned with a face blank with dismay. “This won't do, fellows,” he said; “there's the London Rowing Club there.”

“One of their scratch crews come pot−hunting,” said Jim.

Eddy mentioned four names which made Roland whistle loud and long—some of the best names in the club. It was even so. Four club−oars were going to retire into real life this season, and being four old friends, thought they would see the last of it handsomely; and so, going on from regatta to regatta, from Barnes upwards, now found themselves at Shrewsbury in an amused state of mind.

“I think we can manage the Manchester crew,” said the London coxswain, laughing.

“There's a local crew of bumpkins training down the river,” said number two. “Do you know what they are like?”

“No! but I know their stroke's name, 'Evans'—did you ever hear of him?”

“A youth to Henley and to fame unknown! Can't say I do.”

“I'll tell you, then,” said stroke. “Evans is the man who won his university sculls by beating Hexam easily, and Hexam is the man who won the diamond sculls by beating *you*.”

It was number two's turn to whistle new. “I wonder what sort of stuff he is sitting behind,” he pondered.

“Pretty good, you may depend upon it,” said stroke. “I wish we were fitter. Fancy getting picked up in a place like this! I shall emigrate if we are.”

The Londoners easily beat the Manchester men; and soon after came down to join issue with their “dark” opponents, whose captain was the great sculler Evans, the young man who had beaten the last winner of the diamond sculls. They saw the Shropshire boat swinging up towards them, and they did not like it. Stroke said, between his teeth, to coxswain, “Picked up, by Jove!”

Our lads had not the least idea of winning against these well−known London names; and looked on them all, particularly stroke, as a countryman looks at Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Disraeli; for, not having been to Henley, they had never seen these mighty Londoners. And, indeed, they were worth looking at; set men, of about three or four−and−twenty, bearded, brown, with brown ribbed arms—it looked, size excepted, like David against the Philistine.

Roland guessed pretty well what the London tactics would be, and he was right. When the word was given, the Londoner went away like a whirlwind, with the hope of getting far enough before them to *wash* them—that is to say, to keep the other boat riding uneasily in their wash, taking off one−third of their pace, and so win by sheer desperate rowing. Roland, on his part, was determined that this should not happen, and, with his experience, was away so quick after the Londoner that he never really cleared the Shropshire boat. For three quarters of a mile the struggle went on in this way, and then condition began to tell: Roland began to gain. Eddy did not see it at first; and when he did, he whispered the fact to Roland, who never changed his stroke. Aunt Eleanor, who was riding on the tow−path with her brother, gave a somewhat unfeminine shout when she saw her beloved Eddy's boat steadily pass that of the London coxswain. The Squire who rode with her, was in the wildest state of excitement.

A quarter of a mile from the post, the Shropshire boat had drawn fairly clear, and a little further the Londoners made one of those splendid efforts for which they are so famous; coming on with a rush, they completely headed the Shropshire boat, and the Squire's heart was in his mouth—he thought it was all over. But not so, Roland: crying out “Gloucester,” he, for the first time, quickened his stroke, which was well responded to, and after a furious struggle (the Londoners rowing magnificently to the last), pushed the boat in half a length ahead.

Shrewsbury reared aloud in the fulness of its joy. Here was a boatful of their own lads, Evanses, Mordaunts, and Maynards, which had beaten in fair fight five of the pick of London's rowing chivalry. They might well roar, and indeed they did; and in the middle of their roaring, the Squire laid his hand upon his sister's arm, and said, “Follow me, Eleanor, quick.”

There was a narrow lane up to the hotel, and they pushed their horses up it. The yard was deserted, save by an ostler or two. Sliding off his horse, and followed quickly by Aunt Eleanor, who thought he looked strange, he went into a little parlour, and having shut the door, fainted away on a sofa.

She rang the bell, and did what she could for him. When the man came, she said “Doctor! quick! Don't make a fool of yourself and tell any one. Doctor, I tell you.”

Before the Doctor came he had got sensible again, but was a little stupid and wandering. Eleanor took occasion to ask the Doctor what it was, and was it the sun?

He said, “No, my dear Miss Evans. I had better trust you with the secret, but I would keep it from him: it is his *heart*.”

So ended the Shrewsbury regatta, with these consequences, at least. The coachman drove the drag home, and the Squire thought he would sit inside, being tired; it was nothing. They rioted and shouted all the way home; and Mildred, sitting between Jim and her lover, was inexpressibly happy, and Eddy outshone himself. Ethel Mordaunt rode with Aunt Eleanor, and cast many a look up at the party on the drag, as though she would be glad to be there herself. But the Squire sat alone inside, dull in the reaction after the morning's terrible excitement, and thinking of many things past; and Aunt Eleanor rode along, very dull too, and wondering whether she had done right in promising to keep his illness from his wife.

He got perfectly well the next day, and no one was the wiser. But on the 12th he made excuses: the day was hot, the birds were well−grown and wild, he would find them at luncheon at the Cairn and chance a shot there, but Roland must take his gun in the morning.

This refusal of his to shoot seemed very much to impress Squire Mordaunt. They had shot together on the 12th for so many years now, that he knew there was a reason. Very often during the day he looked very pensively and curiously at Roland, and seemed a little guilty when discovered. He talked often to Roland, but in a constrained manner, as though leading up to a purpose, which Roland, who was as quick as lightning, saw in an instant.

What a singular delusion that is, talking *up* to an object, of *leading* the conversation towards your question! The feeblest intellect can detect the manoeuvre, and the feebler the intellect the more cautious and reticent does it become, from the mere instinct of self−preservation. Again, used towards a tolerably good intellect, this need of gaining an answer produces irritation of the highest kind; it is an insult to the understanding. But perhaps what the Americans call the “highest old sport,” in the way of conversation, is to hear an inferior intellect using this dodge towards a higher one.

It was soon evident to Roland that Squire Mordaunt was trying to lead up to something, but he could not find out *what*.

“Well shot, boy,” old Mordaunt would say. “Ah, you should shoot well; you come of shooting stock. I suppose in your time, when it comes, you will keep up the old head of grouse, hey?”

“I don't like to anticipate that time, sir.”

“Quite right! quite right!”

Then again, “We will take the south side of this glen, Roland. Knee−deep in fern, lad. Every acre would grow corn. Shall you, now, break any up?”

“I am very well as I am, sir. I have never thought of such things.”

“You should. Suppose you had a lawsuit over your father's will, now, with Eddy. And there's Mildred's fortune—very large, I can tell you; and then there's your mother's jointure, very large. You won't be so very rich, I can tell you.”

“I shall have enough for my wants,” said Roland; “and to tell you the truth, Mr. Mordaunt, my father has been such a kind and gentle friend and companion to me, that I shan't care much about taking possession.”

“Very meritorious. You are a good fellow, Roland; I hope my boys are of the same opinion.”

Roland could not make out his object at all, and had to be yet more puzzled.

“Bless me!” said Squire Mordaunt once again during the afternoon; “what tearaway young fellows you are now−a−days. Why, there's young Redman: his mother has lost all her jointure in railway shares, and he has given her up the estate for life, and gone to Canada to make a fortune there.”

“Happy fellow,” said Roland. “I envy him. I'd a hundred times sooner have the making of a fortune than the spending of one.”

Mr. Mordaunt pressed him no more, and meeting Squire Evans at lunch, they all talked and shot together, and Squire Mordaunt having dined with them, walked pensively home under the harvest moon, and went straight to his study, and sat down in front of his escritoire with a candle.

“The boy,” he mused, “will do well anywhere, if all goes against him. If all goes with him, however, he will be a poorish man. The defence of the Langley estate against the Bourden Langley claim took six years' rents. Whew! let us look at it again.”

He took out a letter. Let us look at it—

“Sir,—As a friend of the Evans family myself, I wish to inform you, as another friend of the family, of this very singular fact:—At the death of the present Mr. Charles Evans, the succession to the estates will be disputed.

“I know nothing, and can advise nothing. I only know that they are not going to move during the life of the present Squire and, moreover, that they have a great deal of confidence.

“Yours,

“Nemo.”

“I don't like the look of it,” said old Mordaunt. “These people have money behind them and a good case, to judge from our friend Nemo's letter. I shall ride over to old Eleanor.”

Chapter 16.

See broad and big Squire Mordaunt pensively riding, on a great brown horse, into the gate at Pulverbatch, under the dark elms, past the fish−ponds, up to Aunt Eleanor's front door. See his own daughter running out in her riding−habit to greet him, and making him bend down from his saddle for a “regular good hug.” A pleasant sight!

“Why, puss,” said her father, “I missed you at breakfast.”

“I rode over here. She is necessary to me at times. She does me good.”

“Stick to her, my girl. There are few like her. Where is she?”

“Out in the yard;” and having given up his horse, he followed his daughter until they came to the gate of a splendid, deep−littered straw−yard, of great extent, hemmed in on all sides by various buildings, and on one side by a vast barn, as big as some cathedrals, from the open doors of which came a pleasant sound of thrashing.

Advancing slowly across the centre of the litter, in a short gown, with her back well in, and her head well up, a basket on her arm, came Miss Evans, heading a wedge−shaped procession. In front of her skimmed and hopped innumerable pigeons, about her feet and immediately behind her were the fowls—the hens “pawking” and gandering, the little ones losing their mothers in the crowd, and peeting shrilly when trodden on by the bigger ones; the cocks solemn and gallant. Then about forty little black Fisher Hobbes' pigs, shrieking wildly, and changing places until they looked like four hundred; then a dozen porkers, two calves, and four hrumphing old sows bringing up the rear. With this following, she approached the gate, and saluted Mordaunt—“Well, George, and so you have found your way here once more?”

“I should come here more, if you did not scold me so.”

“That's nonsense. I only scold you when you provoke me. How are you, old friend?”

And so, pleasantly chatting, these three went the tour of the farmyard, looking at all its wonderful order, thrift, and abundance. In the “woman's kingdom,” which some say is coming, I, projecting my soul into the future, prophecy that a very great number of “disenthralled" women will become *farmers*, and, moreover, the very best of farmers. Even as they are now, with such education as they are allowed to scrape together, a vast number of women have every qualification which goes to make up a good farmer. Thrift, diligence, and attention to details are three qualifications which few, even now, will deny to the majority of women, and those three qualifications are one half the battle. Let them be instructed in the science of the matter, and that is not such a very difficult thing, and the instinct of order and management, so much higher in ordinary women than in ordinary men, will do the rest. Why are we always wanting (by advertisement) a “Lady Superintendent” for some institution or another? Why cannot a “limited hotel” get on without a “Lady Manager”? Look at the duties of a great nobleman's housekeeper; and then tell me that a well−trained, clear−headed woman could not make a better farmer than one half of the ill−educated, narrow−minded men who have got the land. Why, one of the best−managed farms, some 14,000 acres—mind you, in Victoria—was kept by two old maiden ladies: and for that matter, Eleanor Evans is no ideal personage.

“I wish I could make my farm pay like this,” said Squire Mordaunt, pensively. “I lost a thousand pounds the last two years. If it was not for my wife keeping things so well in hand in the housekeeping, I should be pinched to keep the boys at the University.”

“Why don't you give the farm up to her, then?” asked Eleanor; “then you might go on with your fox−hunting, and your game−preserving, and your politics, and your magistrate's work, with an easy mind. A farm takes a man's or woman's whole time and energy, and here you put ten irons in the fire, leaving the poor farm till the last, and then come crying to me because you lose money over it. Come in.”

They went into Eleanor's long, dark room, and she put down her hat and her egg−basket, and taking a particular pencil from a particular place on her desk, began writing a date on each of the eggs, as she handed them to her aide−de−camp, Ethel, who meanwhile had opened a long drawer—one of a dozen in an old oak press; the drawers were half filled with oats, and in these oats Ethel carefully placed every egg, in the succession in which it was handed to her.

“There,” Eleanor said, when it was done; “I suppose you are too fine a gentleman to do *that*?”

Mordaunt confessed it.

“I thought as much,” said Eleanor, triumphantly, “and you talk of farming! Why, by this simple detail, and by never trusting the eggs into my servants' hands, I average ten chicks out of every sitting of thirteen; and, in spite of your bothering foxes, which I, not having had my warnings attended to, mean most persistently to trap, I made 97 *l*. last year out of my fowls alone, clear profit. What does your pork which you eat cost you?”

“I never made any exact calculation,” said Squire Mordaunt, drily. “I got up to 8s. a pound once, and then I dropped it. I want to speak to you.”

“Then, Ethel, my love, go and get the garden report together for me, as your father is going to waste my time. (Ethel went out.) I am sick and tired of you men. I don't know what you were brought into the world for. And then, if things go wrong, it is always *us*. Now, what is the matter?”

“You did not always think so of men, dear Eleanor,” said Squire Mordaunt.

“And don't now, my dear George. Ah, it is a long while since *that*. Where is your brother?”

“In India still.”

“Ah, well! George, remember that no one but you and I know that only tender passage in my life. Keep my secret.”

“It is not much of a one, Eleanor. He made you think that he loved when he did not. And you talk of it being the only tender passage in your life! Why, your life is a piece of music made up of tender passages. But here, I am uneasy, and I have come to you as having the clearest head in your family. Read this,” and he put before her the anonymous letter.

She read it twice very carefully, and then she folded it up, and said: “This is very serious and very annoying, indeed.”

“Have you any idea what it means?”

“Oh, yes! I know well enough what it means. It means twenty thousand pounds worth of law, and very likely a sequestration of the estate *pendente lite*. You were called to the bar once—that is good law language, is it not?”

“I have forgotten my law,” said Mordaunt, “but that don't seem to ring true somehow. However, I understand what you mean, which I probably should not if you stated it correctly. What is it all about?”

“Oh, it is the old Cecil Evans's claim on the estate, dormant now for forty years. It was last made when our father came into the estate. His father died without a will, and our father inherited; and then up gets one Cecil Evans and claims to inherit as eldest legitimate son. He abandoned his suit after a short time, publishing everywhere that it was only from want of funds. Indeed, I remember to have heard it said that many thought him ill−used. He went to Australia, where they have made mints of money, and are now far richer than we are; and now they are going to spend some of it in trying to turn us out.”

“Have they a good claim?”

“Good enough to cost a deal of money. But it was always said that we had papers which would checkmate them. Old Somes, our solicitor, is alive still. Let us communicate with him; he knows all about it.”

“Shall we tell Charles?”

“*Certainly not*, unless they move before his death. I have my reasons for not telling Charles.”

“They should be good ones.”

“They are good ones. I tell you it would kill him in a week,” said Eleanor.

“Has he been ill?”

“Yes! Between ourselves, he had a very dangerous attack the day of that silly regatta. Let us go to old Somes.”

“Well, we will agree to it,” said Mordaunt. “What was the name of the man who—you know what I mean—before my brother?”

“Georgy Rolston,” said Aunt Eleanor, frankly. “I wonder what has become of *him*, for instance.”

“He is Dean of St. Paul's,” said Mordaunt; “the very man who is looking after our boys.”

Chapter 17.

All things must end, even a long vacation; and the yellowing leaves began to tell of separation. But what are changes under such circumstances as we find here, with youth, health and wealth? only changes from one form of pleasure to another. The mothers and the sisters, saddened at the parting, listened to the young men's talk; it consisted only in anticipations of pleasures even greater than those of home. They were glad enough to get away, as they had been glad enough to come.

With regard to young James Mordaunt, however, it was very difficult to see whether he was glad or sorry at the change. He spoke with intense pleasure of his return to the University, and of the various things they would do, yet he was distraught, melancholy, and by no means himself: and no explanation could be offered of the change in him, except that he had fallen in Love with somebody.

Since Roland had been spoken to on these matters by the downright Mordaunt, his conduct had been most discreet; he had never flirted with Mary Maynard—when any one was by; and as for Ethel Mordaunt, he had treated her like his sister, only with more profound consideration.

They had all left their college in early summer, full of anticipations of home; and now they returned to the college, full of anticipations of an agreeable change from the perpetual sunshine weather of home; and the change after all was a failure to them. The great, first attraction of one of the old English Universities, is the entire and perfect freedom from restraint during the time when the youth is as much a schoolboy as ever. On the return after the first long vacation, this is almost always gone, and the individuality of the man begins to show. The man is not merely a cricketing, or boating, or tart−eating schoolboy; not merely the gregarious creature of whom you can scarcely find five separate types in a school of five hundred; he begins to show what individuality there is in him; begins, when thrown on himself, to show what he is likely to be in the future.

The most empty and frivolous of lads; the lad who has spent his first year in doing all that he has been forbidden to do, drinking and smoking more than is good for him, ordering things which he does not want, but which must be paid for, finds out this; for no human soul was ever satisfied with new waistcoats and fresh jewellery for long. He gathers these choice flowers still, but the bloom and scent are gone, and he merely goes on doing it because he has begun; and becomes, in his third year, if he lasts as long, a miserable and unhappy spectacle, entering on the ministry of a church which requires a clear head and a held heart for her service, a blasé, heedless man, often deeply in debt, sighing regretfully, up to the latest moment before that Trinity Sunday which is to alter his life for ever, for the fleshpots of Egypt. With him we have little to do; these lads of ours had little in common with him, yet they felt that the University was not as it had been.

There was certainly some little pleasure at meeting such few friends as they had; but this did not last long. The river, which they all loved, was not the same, with its broken reeds and muddy banks, as it was in bright June. They took their four down, and rowed as splendidly as ever; but it was in a perfunctory way, and Roland was a little cross at the observation which they attracted, and demanded of Eddy the innocent, whether they could not go down the river like others without being watched. The four−oared races were rowed that term, which made Roland the more petulant; and the first day, seeing certain men prepared to run up with them, he rowed like fury over three−quarters of the course, and then eased, turned, and rowed down again, giving these gentleman their run for their trouble. The University was a failure as far as boating went. “What rot it is!” he said in the barge. “I could find four watermen here on the shore, who could give us a hundred yards, and row round us.”

“You are beginning to find *that* out,” said Sir Jasper Meredith, laughing at him. “Didn't I always tell you so? You are a fine fellow, Roland; but you have neither the pluck nor the dexterity to sweep a chimney.”

“I'll bet your life I'll sweep any chimney in the University I can get into,” replied Roland, in a loud voice.

“Leave him alone, Meredith,” said old Mordaunt, “or he'll do it. He has got out of bed the wrong side, and will make a fool of himself in any way you will name, if you will only defy him.”

“True, 0 king,” said Roland, laughing, in good humour. “Well, what shall we do till bell?

Jimmy Mordaunt, in a stolid sententious manner, looking nowhere, with his head in the air, suggested that they should go up street together, have ices, and look at trouser−patterns for Sunday morning. “We used to like it well enough four months ago,” he said; “of course we should like it now.”

Sir Jasper Meredith laughed, winked, and said, “He has read you the lesson, that young bull. Take hold of me, will you, and carry me somewhere out of this. Are you going to take me over the plank, old Mordaunt? Well, old Mordaunt, and what do you say to it all?”

Old Mordaunt was far too wise to say anything. He grinned, however, as he deposited Meredith with his servant. Nothing more.

There was a ghost of a revival of the old days among them that night. They were quietly together in the Evans' rooms, when it occurred to James Mordaunt to take strong objections to Eddy Evans' recent conduct, on many grounds. There was no new specific charge at once, but a number; and James put it that he was getting objectionable in many ways. That he was steering badly, talked loudly in the street, ate too much and too fast, slopped his drink about at dinner, talked while he was chewing, and scraped his plate with his knife. This, of course, as was usual, ended in denials and recriminations, in which Eddy used language towards James which of course ended in a fight, or to speak more truly, in a blind, aimless, innocent romp between the two lads. Unluckily, however, even the old fun fell worse than dead, for Eddy, having laughed all the wind out of him, as he afterwards explained, fell rather heavily under James Mordaunt, and made his head bleed. They did not fall so light as in the old times. Poor Edward would have cried if he had been still a boy; but it was their last romp together.

Old Mordaunt had started a pipe, the first of the set who did so, and puffing it, he said, “You two must give up skylarking. You are getting too old and too strong. All that has passed away. Eh, Roland?”

They put down their names for the Greek prose lecture, because the Dean still had it, but only for his sake. The Dean's eyes brightened when they came in, and they brightened up also when they saw their good friend.

But it was all as dead as ditch−water. Maynard, the ox−like, who never said anything, but went his ways through the world without exciting himself (saving when he quickened his perfectly rowed oar to the motion of Roland's back) now was the brightest of them all. Their old world had become dead to them. Before him a new, bright, and most beautiful world was about to open. The Dean knew why, and was not surprised; but he was surprised that this good, handsome, not over clever lad should shine so brightly beside the four others, so much brighter and cleverer than he. “The mere fact of a lad's going to be married next Christmas,” said the Dean to himself, “need not make all that difference. There is something wrong in these Gloucester boys.”

Maynard had never been a great favourite of the Dean's. He had thought him lumpish and rather stupid, though his scholarship was high for that college. The Dean had very little society in his college, being by far the best man there, and the tattle of the common−room was distasteful to him. Consequently he spent far too much of his time in his own rooms among his books.

But books will not last a man always. The eye gets physically wearied of print in time, and when that happens, a man should have society among his own equals. In his own college the Dean had none. His old friends were dropping one by one from the University, and the few who were left were changed in many ways, and the Dean was a lonely man. So it came about that in the dull, long nights, when the college was asleep, he had got into an unfortunate habit of summing up his own case against destiny. A most unhealthy habit indeed.

Here was his case against destiny. He was the son of a poor clergyman, but a splendid scholar. His father had carried everything before him in the way of University honours, and had then thrown everything—his fellowship, his chances of promotion—in every way to the dogs, by marrying a young lady to whom he was promised, and by declining on a small curacy, where his scholarship was a mere incumbrance. He had then got a small living, and had just lived long enough to get his boy (the Dean) nominated to a good public foundation. After which he died, leaving his wife with 100*l*. a year of her own, and 1500*l*. on a life insurance policy.

This 1500*l*. was devoted to the Dean's education: money seldom went further. At school the boy carried everything before him, spending as little as possible, and spending nothing without consultation with his mother. “I must be a great man,” he said to her. “I have abilities for it; and I must show among boys and men as a gentleman, and not as a *scrub*. If you will trust me, mother, I will invest this money at cent. per cent.” And she trusted him; and was he not now enjoying an income of 700*l*. a year from a capital of 1500*l*.? He did all he had ever said he would do, and his mother lived in wealth, happiness, and pride; talking of her son, the Dean, among the gossips, as though he were Dean of Durham, and waiting calmly for the time, now soon to come, when he would be head of his house, and Vice Chancellor, walking, in scarlet cloth and velvet, among princes, warriors, scholars of all nations, with six silver maces before him, conferring honours upon them all. Good lady! her heart

swelled with an unutterable pride, as she in her imagination rehearsed her behaviour as mother of the Vice−Chancellor, when all the sages from the east and from the west, from Berlin to Harvard, should be taking their honours from the hands of her son.

Could he destroy it all by telling her that he was a miserable and disappointed man; that he had missed his aim in life; that the world she thought so great was so unutterably small to him; that his deanery of the college was merely in his eyes the situation of an over−paid bear−leader; that the position of proctor, in which she had rejoiced so much, was an office utterly loathsome and degrading to him, which he had fulfilled so ill and so unwillingly, that he was cheered to the echo by all the worst of the undergraduates at the end of his term; and that his name was even now remembered as that of the “good proctor”? Could he tell her that there were times now when he recalled what he had meant to be, which made him say to himself in his bitterness that he would as soon be carried through the streets as Guy Fawkes, as walk through them as Vice−Chancellor? No; he could not tell all this to her, or to any one; though as the evening which followed the first day of the term closed in, these thoughts came crowding on him as thick as ever—nay, thicker. He would not face the long night alone. He rang his bell, and sent his servant to request Mr. Maynard to sup with him at nine o'clock.

Then he set all his doors open, and walked up and down through all his rooms, from one end to the other, still putting his case against the world. How came it that he was tied here by the leg, an inevitable head of a house, an equally inevitable Vice−Chancellor in his turn, while the great world, in which he could have shone, went spinning on and leaving him and his ideas behind? Could he have escaped, the very name of his college would have been a drag and a shame to him in those days. And his holy orders, forced on him by the rules of his house—there was a bar. His head grew hot as he thought of that, as it always did; for the Dean had opinions which he kept to himself, but which even the breadth of the National Church could scarcely hold. And he was an honest man. If he had ten thousand a year to−morrow, *Parliament* was closed to him. He put that thought under his feet and stamped on it.

“Get,” said a very pleasant voice, “a bishopric. With your political power, not so very difficult.” And he said to himself, “That was very neatly put, my dear friend in black. Fancy if it was to come to *that*!” And as he said it, he grew pale and trembled. And then he went into his innermost chamber and knelt before a chair; but he had scarcely knelt a minute before he cast the chair from him, and began his walk again, singing what he was apt to sing a little too often when his scepticism was strongest, and his consequent cynicism greatest—

“There was turning of keys and creaking of locks.
And he took forth a bait from the iron box.
Many the cunning sportsman tried,
Many he flung with a frown aside,
Jewels of lustre, robes of price,
Tomes of heresy, loaded dice.
At length was a perfume of sulphur and nitre,
As he came, at last, to a Bishop's Mitre.”

“Well, it has not come to that yet. Let me forget! If I had only had ten thousand pounds, and if she had not been a fool,—God bless her!—it might have been different. Let us prepare for this young bridegroom.”

A bitter, cynical tongue had the good Dean, well known in lecture, in common−room, and in senate−house: a man who had made many enemies by his stinging, quiet sarcasm. Some of those enemies would have given money to have seen him now, forty−five years of age, and in a wig, gathering flowers out of his little terrace−garden by candle−light, and bringing them in, and laying them on the table, sorting them out and putting them in a vase. Poor old Dean!

His next act was much more Don−like, and less sentimental. He took his bunch of keys from his pocket, and unlocked his escritoire, and from a second place in it took another key. And even while holding that key in his hand, he did another strange thing, not to be believed by senate−house or hebdomadal board. Pulling aside a pile of neatly docketed papers,—which were, indeed, so many lamentable efforts of Greek prose, all to be waded wearily through in the course of the week,—he took out an old bundle of letters tied together, in the tie of which was stuck an old rose. Going to the table, he took the best fresh geranium he could find, and put it in beside the rose, and laying down the letters beside the Greek exercises, scratched his head in deep thought, and in doing so scratched his wig off.

It fell impartially, like the rain, on the Greek exercises, the letters, the rose and geranium, and looked up at him, as only a wig *can* look. With an air of vivacious effrontery, as though it would say, “You and I are fine fellows; but must pull together; we are nothing apart.” The Dean scratched his bare head, and said, with a sigh, “Ah! it is too late for all that now.”

The sudden entry of his servant caused him to lock up his escritoire very rapidly, and to lock his wig inside, with his love−letters and the other witnesses of his folly. Turning to scold his servant, he caught sight of himself in the glass, and scolded not. He undid the escritoire, and taking out his wig, put it on in the presence of his servant, and going with his key to his most sacred wine−bin, took out a very particular bottle of wine, saying to himself, “This will unloose his tongue, at all events.”

In came supper—a most delicate, light little supper, for the good Dean had learnt in his seclusion to know the pleasures of good eating, and had, indeed, sent two of the young men in the kitchen, at various times and at his own expense, to his London club for instruction. In came Maynard, beautifully dressed, looking splendid, with a geranium in his button−hole. The servant was sent away, the oak sported, and Maynard, the simple, was left undefended, to be pumped by this wily old Dean.

“You won't find any beer here, Maynard,” said the Dean. “These vivers are too good to be washed down by that infernal compound of malt, hops, and raw beef, which is good for nothing but to irritate the temper, and the consumption of which accounts for so much of our national history. You will find a bottle of White Hermitage beside you: don't be afraid of it. I have my half−pint of Beaune, as you see. A young stomach like yours should be able to stand hashed vension (not Magdalen, my dear youth, but Arundel) and Hermitage.”

Maynard made some respectful reply, and they supped like gods; and when thoroughly refreshed, moved to the fire, with their wine between them.

“And so,” said the Dean, “you are to marry Miss Evans at Christmas.”

Maynard's sober tongue was thoroughly loosened by drinking White Hermitage as though it were beer, and he thought the Dean an uncommonly friendly, gentlemanly fellow, and very handsome too.

He replied, without the least sheepishness, that such was the case, and received the Dean's congratulations with respectful dignity.

“If you will allow me, we will drink to the bride−elect,” said the Dean. And down the throat of the innocent Maynard went another quarter of a pint of the White Hermitage.

“A handsome family,” said the Dean. “At least judging from Roland, I should say so. Eddy is ugly, certainly; but one might almost predicate of him that his inseparable accident would be pretty sisters.”

“You think Eddy ugly, sir?”

“Decidedly, I should say. A weak, silly, frivolous little being, but very amiable.”

“I assure you, sir,” said Maynard of the loosened tongue “that you are quite mistaken. Eddy has quite as much go in him as Roland.”

The Dean laughed, and put the question by. “The Evanses are very rich, are they not? You get wealth as well as beauty and wit by this match, I hear.”

“No,” said Maynard. “I have a large property. She only has five thousand at present.”

“Indeed! By−the−bye, did I dream it, or is there not some of the Evans' property alienated?”

“Not that I am aware of,” said Maynard. “I settle two farms on her for pin−money. In case of my death, she has everything, barring my mother's jointure and my sister Mary's little fortune. There never has been any question of money. Why should there?”

“Of course not,” said the Dean. “I am clumsy in my inquiries. I wanted to know whether there was not some of the Stretton property alienated—on Miss Evans, I mean.”

“Aunt Eleanor!” said Maynard.

“Exactly,” said the Dean, settling himself. “The very person. Fill your glass, and tell me all about her. I knew something about these Evanses in old, old times, and I remember this Miss Evans. She has taken to woman's rights, farms her own land, goes shooting, and goes to market, does she not? She was pretty at one time—−what is she like new?”

“Aunt Eleanor,” said Maynard, solemnly “is one of the most beautiful women you ever saw in your life, sir; and if there is an angel on earth, it is she.”

“Pity she did not marry,” said the Dean, whistling.

“There never walked a man in shoes good enough for her, sir; and that is why she did not marry. As for her estates, which she certainly farms, they would be defined by Mr. Hallam as an appanage to her mother's right, in no way influencing the succession, or in any way at the mercy of the main hereditary branch. They are at her own disposal.”

“Hang Mr. Hallam!” said the Dean, fearing that Maynard had drunk so much Hermitage that he would get sententious instead of communicative. “Why did she not marry?”

“You may ask my mother that story, sir,” said Maynard.

“Come, you know it,” said the Dean; “and you may as well tell it. Do you ever smoke a cigar?”

There was no hesitation in Maynard's confidence after this.

“Miss Evans,” he said, “had once a proposal from a man whom she greatly esteemed, and to whom my mother says she had shown the most marked partiality. To the great astonishment of her most intimate friends, she refused him so emphatically that he retired, and was seen in that part of the country no more.”

“Ay, indeed!” said the Dean, “a poor−spirited fellow. Well, and did she ever give any reasons for her unreasonable conduct?”

“They became apparent to a few; although she esteemed the first man, there was one she esteemed more; in fact, she refused the first man in favour of another.”

“And is yet unmarried”

“Yes; the man was a soldier, and had shown her great attention; but the one word was never spoken by him, and he went away and married another. It was disappointment and a feeling of humiliation in having given away her heart and not having it accepted, which prevented her from ever marrying.”

“Still handsome,” said the Dean, thoughtfully.

“Still beautiful,” said Maynard; and took his leave.

The Dean, sitting before the fire, said, “She had better have had me before I had to wear a wig; but it is too late now.” And there was no one to care what the Dean said, so he took off his wig and went to bed.

Nothing is easier than to go to bed; but few things, at times, are more difficult than going to sleep. The Dean found that out. As soon as he was in the dark he began thinking. If I were to write down all what he thought about, you would certainly not read it. I can only give you the results.

“Eleanor still handsome, and I a bald old man in a wig: though I am only her age, when all is said and done. I have a good mind to go down and see her; but, perhaps, I had better send my wig, to let her see how things stand. She has taken to all kind of things, why the dickens hasn't she taken to socialism? Then she might turn her estates into a Phalanstery, and I would join her with my money, get her to marry me, and burst it all up triumphantly. After such nonsense as that, I know I must be going to sleep.”

But he was not. After a full hour he was broad awake enough to say, “What did I ever do to K— that he should have sent these outrageous young Bedlamites to *me*, and so arouse my interest in her again? There will be mischief among these boys. K—licked them into shape; he would lick any *boy* into shape I ever saw. But boys have any ugly trick of growing into men; as they are. And one single pretty woman would play the deuce among the lot of them.”

Finding that this consideration did not make him more sleepy, the good Dean arose, and putting on his wig and some clothes, buckled to at the Greek prose exercises: which had the desired effect. For he fell asleep over them, and nearly burnt down the college, but only in reality burnt his wig.

As he had not got a lock of hair on his head to send as a specimen of the colour, the leading barber of that town sent him the closest match he could: a bright red wig, made for a gentleman commoner of scrofulous tendency, of St. Vitus' College, who had had his head shaved for *delirium tremens*; the only wig without grey let into it which the barber had in stock. The Dean took it and wore it, to the delight of the undergraduates; for a red wig was better than a grey one.

“If my confounded hair had stayed on my head,” he thought, “things would have been different. I am only her age.” And so be made himself ridiculous by wearing the red wig. If any one else had done it, he would have murdered them with sarcasm. But no man knows what an ass he is when he is in love.

Chapter 18.

A very long foreseen confusion now occurs in this story. If the kind reader has been patient enough to notice the fact, he will perceive that not one of the people whom I have tried to present to him in an amiable light had been doing anything at all. The energetic Gray, the most active among our characters, hitherto had been only vegetating. There had come no question between him and the world. Aunt Eleanor's chief glory was in her plan of sowing white rock stubble turnips, and arguing with Mr. Martin Sutton, of Reading. As for the boys, they had been doing rather less than nothing. Sir Jasper Meredith having now attained his majority, had built some cottages, but finding a return of scarcely one per cent., had gone off into doctrinaire radicalism, and had screeched his commonplaces of supply and demand into the ear of a sympathising vestry, who said that they always knew that no Meredith was the man to raise the rates on them. But none of them had done anything.

The whole lot of them would have slept through life, and awakened wondering in eternity, had it not been for a *bouleversement* in affairs, which brought out the character of all.

We must follow our boys first. In spite of the cynical croaking of Sir Jasper Meredith, these boys held together, with Roland as their captain. In those old times men could row and read at the same time. Witness an Oxford eight at Putney, in 1852, with two first−class men in her. Now we have changed all that; it matters not, I am only speaking of the past. In the four−oared races of the October term, Brasenose, with the splendid fury which seems to be a *specialité* of that college, rowed down every crew in succession, until they were thrown, in the last terrible heat, against St. Paul's, maimed by our five boys. Brasenose, with the Berkshire shore, raged away ahead, in the style which few men can approach. But when the Gut was passed, the steady steam−engine style of the Gloucester boys began to tell. Eddy Evans, sitting like a little Memnon in the stern, merely nodded to his brother to quicken the stroke. Roland did so, and was answered by the crew as one man. The magnificent rage of Brasenose was as nothing. Opposite the Cherwell, Eddy tickled his boat over in front of them, and washed them, and there was an end of the old *régime*; no more University boating for them. One or two of them in after times, and in subdued voices, disputed whether they had got more harm than good out of it. At all events, there was an end and finish of it.

Three days afterwards the Moderation lot were out, and Roland and the elder Mordaunt figured in the first class.

The very next Thursday, at the Union, Lord Eustace Vanderbilt made his great Radical speech, in which he demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the majority, that Christianity and democracy were identical; that the only true formulas of Christianity were to be found in the traditions of the Church; and that, therefore, the only true democracy would be found in the formulas of the High Church party. Lord Eustace was clever, and had a vast deal to say for his theory; as well as any one else has who takes it up. But the instant he sat down, Roland was up and at his throat. Old Mordaunt, who was sitting beside him, growled out to him, from time to time, “to draw it mild,” but Roland scorned him.

“Priestcraft and democracy!” he cried. “Who is he that publishes the banns of that adulterous marriage? Who is this man who sits there with brazen forehead, and talks this blasphemy? The great grandson of the favourite of William the Third, who would have struck his degraded successor to the earth if he had heard his atrocious sentiments. (Order, order.) It was well to cry order; it was a most excellent and admirable thing to cry order, when an honest English country gentleman denounced a renegade Dutchman, pampered as his family had been, and rewarded as his family had been, for turning to and talking mere Sacheverellism, or worse.” Roland also was at a loss to conceive what this young nobleman expected to gain by it, and took about half an hour in trying to find out: during which he tore the Constitution to tatters; gave his opinion of the Church pretty strongly; and called the house to witness the state of things we had been brought to: which, with a rapidly civilising population of nearly two hundred millions, the possession of the principal naval keys of all seas, and a surplus of three millions, was scarcely an easy matter.

Then finding, like most young speakers, that he was wide of his subject, he harked back to it as well as he could. “What did the noble lord want? what did the noble lord mean? If the noble lord meant that the only form of pure democracy was Christianity directed by priests, he would fight that noble lord to the last drop of his blood.

If, on the other hand, the noble lord meant merely that pure primitive Christianity meant pure democracy, he would take the noble lord to his bosom." Then he rambled on, missing his central point oftener than he hit it, and ended by doing what all inexperienced speakers do, twaddling off into a thin end of nothing at all. One of the greatest and most important accomplishments required for public speaking, is to know when to leave off. To speak for an hour on a proposition, to keep your audience interested all the time, and then to round up your speech with your original proposition, claiming to have proved it, is not an easy thing. The only recipe for doing so which I know of, is to believe in your proposition, and speak the truth.

Old Mordaunt then rose, and deprecated personalities; denounced the habit of reducing on argument from the general to the particular; and committed himself to the statement that there were few men in the world whose hearts were more entirely in accord, on the whole, than those of his friend Roland Evans, and the noble lord opposite. "He did not happen himself," he said, "to agree with either of the honourable members, because he happened to be a Tory. He was very sorry for it; but Tory he was. Lord Eustace Vanderbilt would observe that his family had been Tories centuries before any Dutchman had heard the word Whig. He supposed it was bred in the bone, and would come out in the flesh. Still he had the highest honour for his friend Roland Evans, and for his family. Had it not been for the Evans' family, he (Mordaunt), could never have appeared there. At the time when the noble lord's (Vanderbilt's) family were cowering like whipped hounds under the lash of the Spaniard, his (Mordaunt's) family had been busy at every kind of Popish sedition; in which be gloried. The Evans' family, having persistently taken the winning side, that of Protestantism, had always brought the Mordaunt family through, and he would stick to them now. He stuck to his friend Roland, by saying that his language was indecent and indiscreet, even towards a mere mushroom Dutch interloper, and that he could not have meant what he said." After which he sat down suddenly, and preserved an ox−like silence.

Such an astounding breach of all possible good manners paralysed the assembly. As for old Mordaunt, he had done what he wanted—roused Roland, and he sat quite still. "I want to see how he will get out of a scrape," he said to the little wizened form of a man who nestled beside him. "He insulted the man, and I have driven the insult home."

Lord Eustace Vanderbilt and Roland were on their legs at the same time; both white with wrath. The President hammered for order, and they obeyed him; before either had spoken a thin, cracked little voice, piercing shrill, was heard, and the Union, turning towards it, saw that it proceeded from Sir Jasper Meredith.

"Sir," he cried, "I rise—if such an unhappy and miserably formed eidolon as I can be said to rise—to order. Sir, it would be foolish in you to deny the fact, that two of our best men have quarrelled personally, and have interchanged insults. I beg you to give me time for speech, sir—I beg you and the assembly to forgive any want of consecutiveness in my argument; for if you, Mr. Fitzgerald, were the shattered wreck which I am, your sentences would not run so smooth, and your logic would not be so perfect. I cry for your pardon, sir, and I cry for theirs. Please listen to me, you two: though I shake and tremble with fear at speaking in public. You two mean the same thing; why quarrel over details and personalities? I beg you to make friends. The hot words which you have said to one another will fester to all eternity, if you do not recall them. Forget and forgive, you two. Forget and forgive everything, and go on hand in hand towards the amelioration of our country. You two, in your youth, strength, and beauty, look at me, staggering meanly here before you. I have forgiven the wicked old past, which has brought me to this. Forgive you, in like manner, and cast no words abroad about Cavalier and Roundhead, about Defoe and Sacheverell. Agree!"

Said old Mordaunt, "He is a worse speaker than I am; and I am bad enough." Yet, no. That strange little cripple, bad and illogical as his speech was, touched the heart of the assembled boys. His splendid head, superimposed on the shambling heap of bones, was striking enough; his rugged, almost inconsecutive, speech did the rest. When he cowered back, and lay once more on old Mordaunt's shoulder, the house was clamorous for a reconciliation between Roland and Lord Eustace Vanderbilt.

It was solemnly made. Roland and Lord Eustace shook hands, and Sir Jasper Meredith shrunk close to the shoulder of old Mordaunt, saying, "You did right to rouse him. But we shall never know the best of him; he has too much money."

Chapter 19.

So began the end of the old *règime*. That was the very last glimpse that our boys had of a British university. They had been educated as rich boys are educated at a public school and at a university. The time comes now when, by a series of accidents, they were cast into the world. Will you bear with me while I sum up their qualifications for fighting that same world?

Roland. With regard to Roland's rowing, there has never been, I believe, but one opinion. It was unapproachable. Roland rowed before the new art of “catching” the water at the beginning of your stroke, and rowing so many strokes a minute, came in fashion. Roland rowed like Coombes, his master; diligently observing the rule to “catch” nothing, but to imitate, as far as possible, the motion of a steam−engine. Roland, with his Maynard and his Mordaunt between him, and Eddy steering, won everything. I only mention his rowing powers first, as a tribute to the genius of the age. I have now to descend to the unimportant fact of his scholarship.

I suppose I ought to apologise for doing anything so vulgar, or so commonplace. Yet we are a practical people, and the French say a money−loving people. Roland's education had cost the change out of 1500 *l*. already. He had been the favourite boy of one of the most successful masters of modern times. He so far differed from the ordinary public schoolboy of these times, that he could have got into Balliol, or taken his degree when he left school. It was not necessary for his father to spend 200*l*. on a coach, before he could pass his matriculation, and another hundred before he could pass his “little go.” He was a very favourable specimen. He could have competed with the head boys from Cheltenham or Marlborough, just then coming into existence, in classics. The question is—what did he know?

He could do a better piece of Greek prose than, probably, any man in the House of Commons, in the Chamber of Deputies, or in Congress. His Greek prose was so good that there were scarcely two dozen men in England who could correct it. He could translate any Greek book, let it be what it would, elegantly and correctly. Erasmus and his friends, or Milton, were scarcely better classics at his age. He was a young lion. In the *vivá voce* part of his examination, a middle−aged Moderator, fresh from the country, got frightened at him, and sought safety in flight. Roland, standing on the other side of that dreadful table in these divinity schools, there and then, under the most beautifully decorated roof in England, corrected and shut up that Moderator.

Then his “science.” He could reel you off the limits of human knowledge. He could pick you out the few queer places in his Aldrich, and pour out the vials of his contempt over the “logic” of the late Archbishop of Dublin. At the Union he had got on his legs, and utterly demolished the “science” of Emerson, showing that he had not mastered the mere grammar of his art.

Then in divinity. He would as lief read you his Bible in Greek as in English, and had made numerous emendations in Pickering's notes. His essay on the miraculous draught of fishes, in which he clearly proved that they were Thymalli and not Cyprinidae (in which he was quite wrong), was printed. And he could say half the articles by heart, including the somewhat difficult one on Predestination, which James Mordaunt called the article on Pedestrianism.

I have now come to the end of my hero's accomplishments. He was destined for Parliament, and would have educated himself there, and done well there. I acknowledge that he had learnt how to learn, and that when the world had shown him what it was necessary to know, that he would have learned it. But let me tell you what he did not know.

He knew nothing of the history of his own country. He could tell you of commonplaces about a Spartan Hegemony, but the Fox and North coalition was news to him. Before the catastrophe came, he had scarcely, from the most ordinary sources, put himself in possession of the most ordinary facts in English history.

About physical science he was absolutely and perfectly ignorant. For this we can scarcely blame him. Mr. Lewes, and another, whom family reasons prevent my naming, had not then brought science to our doors. Darwin and Huxley were watching the wonders of God in the deep sea, and had not got epitomised. Mrs. Sabine had not translated the Cosmos, which brings us to the fact that Roland was entirely unable to read the Cosmos in the original German. Not to mince matters, that he was practically ignorant of every modern language. He might have gone on the grand tour, and have come back not much wiser than he went. The bright, agreeable Frenchman, with

his bright half false ideas (always, however, containing a half truth), and the slow, wise German, were alike dumb dogs to him. Outside this small over−populated island of ours, the world was a dead black blank to him: those very admirable fellows, Fritz and Alphonse, having no language to speak to him but that of the eyes. If you turn on me and say that Fritz and Alphonse might have taken the trouble to learn the language of Shakespeare, I can only retort that they did not and will not. I also ask you whether, after the above summing−up of Roland's accomplishments, Squire Evans got his money's worth (1500*l*.) for his money? I say that he did not.

Suppose Roland stripped of his wealth, what was he fit for? For my own part, I shall soon get near to believing that the Cornell “University” in the United States, or the Oxford, or still more, the Cambridge of Chaucer, is the host in the world. And now, when we have broken through tradition in every way, just conceive what we might make of our young men on the “Cornell” principle, with the Oxford and Cambridge revenues. But our purpose is to write a story, and this is past it. Let me come back to my proposition. Roland, after 1500*l*. of expenditure, was little fit to cope with the world, as far as education had helped him.

In one moment, see what the Oxford and Cambridge of Chaucer were, not as bearing in any trifling opinions of mine, but in showing for the mere sake of five minutes' amusement, how each university has kept its character through so many centuries, at all events, in the public mind. What are the popular opinions about Cambridge now? The ideal Cambridge man is plodding, thrifty, quiet, diligent, solemn, wise. The ideal Oxford man is fantastic, noisy, extravagant, and given to practical jokes. Most of the “Joe Millers” for many years are laid at the door of “Oxford students.” Just compare the ideal Oxford man of the day with the ideal Oxford man of Chaucer, as compared with his Cambridge man, and see how true it comes after so many centuries. Compare Allan and John, the Cambridge lads, who carried the wheat to Trumpington, with Hendy Nicholas and Soloman, the Oxford lads; and Allan also was a Scotchman (we have had a senior wrangler or so from that kingdom of late years, I believe); and was there ever such an Oxford man as Soloman? His love for gaudry, his love for private theatricals, with an easy part and a fine dress. That inimitable Chaucer makes him act Herod. “Nothing to say and a fine dress—Tory Oxford all ever,” says a cynical Cambridge friend.

And of the others, what can be said? they were but little more prepared for the world than he. Had they been put to the test of competitive examination, they would have been found fit for nothing but ushers in schools or curates. Clive or Hastings were not more ignorant, or more helpless before they underwent that great competitive sink−or−swim examination, which is called The World.

Chapter 20.

As the time for the great wedding, which once again was to unite the rather often united houses of Evans and Maynard, drew near, some of those connected with the preparations noticed that there would be two rather conspicuous absentees. Young James Mordaunt had suddenly discovered that his whole heart was set on trying for the Engineers, and, failing that, getting into the Artillery; and in a letter to his father, urged the necessity of going to Bonn to study at once.

The request was so very sudden and odd, that Squire Mordaunt wrote to his eldest son to consult him about the matter, and to beg to him to see if Jim was in earnest. The result was, that the two brothers were closeted together, and the elder Mordaunt looked very grave and vexed when they parted. John Mordaunt wrote to his father very curtly, to say that he thought it would be much better if James was allowed to go to Bonn at Christmas instead of coming home. He could give no reasons, he said, but he had got his brother's leave to put the case before Roland Evans, and Roland Evans had agreed with him. Squire Mordaunt gave his consent wonderingly; and Eddy Evans noticed that from this time his brother Roland and John Mordaunt treated James Mordaunt with a rather solemn kindness and respect, which they had never exhibited before.

There was no skylarking and folly now. Jim was the most solemn and miserable of the group. He got up a fiction that his health was bad, and that there was something the matter with his heart; poor boy! there *was*. Something past mending.

Eddy fell in popularity this autumn. Seeing every one (except Maynard) very low in their minds, he would play the fool to cheer them up; but no one wanted the fool played, and all the old babyish balderdash fell dead. For fun is a good enough thing in its way, and in its time, and is very like the flower called "*Gazanea*," or " *Dame d'onze heures*," a flower which under the morning's cold, is no flower at all, but an ugly bud; but which, under the eleven o'clock sun, spreads out into a golden corona studded with pearls. Who knows it better than a storyteller? There has been fun of a sort in this story. How different it must look to a man without a care, and to a critic, reading the story in a perfunctory manner. I know a man who was highly complimented once, by probably the best judge of humour in England, on a passage in his novel. That identical passage was ticketed the very next week in one of the leading reviews, by the best critic we have, as pointless and degrading balderdash. What had pleased the one had utterly disgusted the other, yet they were both fine judges. Thackeray, master of humour, says distinctly that what some think a mass of rather ugly stupidity, is the most amusing book ever written; and, under any circumstances, jokes fall dead sometimes. No wonder that Eddy's babyish folly fell dead on the ears of men so deeply anxious as Roland Evans and the elder Mordaunt.

For a very ugly thing had happened. I have, I hope, not concealed from you the character of the younger Mordaunt. You remember the frightful bullying of poor little Eddy Evans by him, and have known that there was a wild beast vein in him somewhere. Say, if you like, that the Evanses and the Mordaunts had been crossed too often, and were beginning to show the true symptoms of the decadence of a family by a stupid, blind petulance in the males. Draw a parallel with racehorses, if you like. Blue Mantle or D'Estournel for instance. Account for it as you will, the fact remains the same. That splendid young man, James Mordaunt, tamed now for five years by fear of death and by gratitude to Roland, had broken out again. He had fallen in love, it seems, with Mildred Evans; and to Roland and to his brother John he talked of murder and suicide in the maddest manner.

To such steady−going stage−coaches as John Mordaunt and Roland Evans this was simply horrible. They, in their utter ignorance of physics, thought that this excitability of brain was permanent. It terrified them more than it need have done. How could they guess or know that the mad ferocity of the latest European cross of blood frequently went Berserk at the time of the most rapid physical development? Who was there to tell them that the Prussian duellist student, as soon as he moves his chair to his bureau, becomes the most quiet of men, a little haughty, perhaps, but a good fellow; or that that brown−faced gentleman who asks your opinion on a point in croquet, has been mad once, and elbow−deep in Indian blood? Had they ever seen a private of Pelissier's Algerian division boiling beans and giving a baby bonbons? No. These lads knew nothing of these things. But poor James was pronounced mad, and was sent to Bonn.

Sir Jasper Meredith might have come, but his conduct was as crooked as his limbs. Mr. Evans asked him, and

he wrote to Roland to refuse. He wrote, I am sorry to say, a very petulant and impertinent letter. “I shall not come,” he said. “New matters have come to a point, I am not sure that I am pleased. Your sister has had little or no choice in this matter. Who can be sure that she would have chosen Robert Maynard at all if she had had any one else to choose? I hate this kind of marriage beyond measure. Before either of them know their own minds, they bind themselves to live for at least fifty years together, barring accidents. It is not at all a wise arrangement, and I am going to stay with Jimmy at Bonn.”

Roland showed this letter, in a state of white fury, to John Mordaunt. “The ill−tempered little fellow,” he said, “to write me such a letter as that: I have it in my heart to beat him.”

“He is a cranky little chap,” said ox Mordaunt. “And it is no business of his, which makes his letter a piece of cool impertinence, which you ought certainly to resent. But I don't know. No man in this world ever speaks decidedly, unless there is some grain of truth in what he says. I ain't positive of many things, but I'm positive of that. Why, the very telegrams themselves begin, 'It is asserted,' or something of that sort, to let you down easy. Meredith is positive in this matter as far as he dare be. I doubt he knows something.”

“Do you mean to say that you agree with Meredith?” asked Roland.

“No,” said Mordaunt, “not exactly. But I wish the engagement had been a longer one: that is all. When little Meredith says that they don't know their own minds, I agree with him. It is a boy−and−girl match, and may turn out well or ill. It is all a toss up.”

“The women of our family always make good wives,” said Roland.

“Your *family*?” said old Mordaunt. “You are like ourselves, crossed with half the blood in Shropshire, and, like ourselves, you have produced no great sire who could leave his mark in the family, like the horse Tadmor, for generations. You Evanses, certainly, don't breed true. Look at Eddy. He is no more your brother than I am. And the bride, she is not your sister, she is Eddy's. Don't talk to me about your family. Is your family capable of fierce rabid vindictiveness?”

“Certainly not,” said Roland. “Look at our history.”

“You haven't got any history,” said old Mordaunt. “You have never produced a distinguished man before yourself. So your family is incapable of vindictive ferocity? Why, man, that vagabond poor brother of mine, Jim, used to leather and pound Eddy, and I have thrashed him for it; and whilst I have been thrashing my brother, I have been glad that your little kitten of a brother had not had a knife in his hand when my brother was bullying him. And Mildred is his sister, not yours.”

“You put matters rather coarsely, old fellow,” said Roland.

“I am a brute, I doubt. Where you got your refinement from, in the atmosphere of this valley, I can't think. It is suffocating me. To wind up all in a downright manner, I hope everything will go right. Bob Maynard is a good fellow, not without brains; but upon my soul I wish they both had more time to look about them. In the name of heaven, what is there to prevent him, when he gets into the world, finding a woman he likes better than your sister? That would be death to her.”

“Then love will last unto death,” said Roland.

“How do you know that? Who told you that? You have had a fancy for more than one woman, have you not?”

“Certainly not,” said Roland, promptly; “I never had a fancy for any woman in my life. By−the−bye, do you mean little Mary Maynard? Well, I like her about as well as I do your brother Jim.”

There was something contemptuous in old Mordaunt's voice, when he growled out, “Then you are more lucky than most men. For my own part, I am not made of the same stuff that you are. I can sum up three girls that I would have gone to the devil for in the last three years. But I have changed, and hurt no one. Suppose Bob Maynard was to change?”

“He can't change after he is married,” said Roland.

“No, you are right there,” said old Mordaunt; “that is just the very thing he can't do.”

“Well, don't go on,” said Roland; and so old Mordaunt left off.

It was strange to Roland that this very wedding, a splendid affair altogether—a marriage which united two considerable estates, and which brought youth, beauty, and wealth together in such a singular manner—was objected to by the very people he thought would approve of it most. The vague, bucolic old Mordaunt had scarcely finished his illogical lowings over it, and had not yet reached his father's house across the valley in the dark, nay, even had walked into the trout−stream, and was still swearing, when Aunt Eleanor came into the room

where Roland was sitting, and told him, as a piece of good news, that Mildred was quite quiet now.

"What the devil has the girl got to be unquiet about?"

"I don't know," said Aunt Eleanor, who, in spite of her farming and shooting, was as thorough a woman as ever walked. That is to say, when anything happened she would accuse the nearest man of it on the spot, and leave him to get out of the scrape the best way he could. "I don't know what she has to be unquiet about, but she is perfectly quiet now, and seems inclined to sleep."

"Have you been worrying her in any way?"

"I haven't said a word to her. What do you mean?"

"I'd *sleep* her," said the exasperated Roland. "Why, she is going to marry the man of her own choice to−morrow. She must be an idiot."

"We are all idiots, we women," said Aunt Eleanor. "We know it, my dear. That is the worst of it. Mildred is an idiot. But she has been in a state of strong nervous excitement all day, and is comparatively quiet now."

"But you did not make such a fool of yourself when you were married, Aunt."

"My dear, I never was married," said Aunt Eleanor, quietly; "your memory is going with study, my dear."

This so took the wind out of Roland's sails that he had to start on a fresh tack.

"Aunt Eleanor, I beg your pardon. But I want to ask you something; would you postpone this marriage if you could? Old Mordaunt has been gandering here, and has just gone home in the dark, swearing. Now, would you postpone this marriage if you could?"

"Yes," said Aunt Eleanor. "Good−night."

So she went to bed. And Roland, who, in his unapproachable purism, is about as good a hero as a bean−stalk or a punt−pole, sat before the fire and wondered why the deuce people couldn't marry one another without all this botheration.

Chapter 21.

The elder Mordaunt, having fallen into the trout−stream and done his share of swearing in getting out of it, blundered on to his father's house, and, getting over the hedge, saw that the party which his father had had to dinner, and which party he had avoided, had not yet dispersed. He therefore went in through the servants' hall.

It was full of all kinds of people, coachmen, footmen, and grooms; and he was wet through. He had thought that he might have got warm there, and possibly supper, served by his own servants; but the strange faces made him pass on, and he went up to bed sulky and silent.

It would have done him no harm to have heard the comments which were made on him by the domestic servants (as far as I know them, a kind, gentle, and affectionate set of people) when he was gone. They had nothing to say of him but what was good. For the elder Mordaunt was universally respected and liked. He went upstairs, however, and hurried into bed in the dark.

He had not slept long before he was awakened; there was a light in the room, and looking up he saw his sister standing beside his bed.

It is very rare indeed to see great and very youthful beauty dressed in such textures as are usually reserved for married women. Ethel Mordaunt dressed so; it was part of her imitation of Miss Evans. She was dressed in very dark maroon−coloured velvet, with bare neck and arms, and not one single jewel, save one dull amethyst, on her bosom. The effect of the splendidly moulded arms and bust, with the freshness and brilliant colour of extreme youth upon them—a freshness and colour which soon goes, like the bloom upon a grape—was startling and dazzling beyond measure, in contrast to the dark velvet. The sight of a blooming girl, beautiful beyond most, but dressed in velvet, is so rare, that my readers would find it hard to realise, and it would certainly be a very expensive whim to do so; it would cost twenty pounds; yet you may do it, as far as colour is concerned, for nothing. Get a bud (mind, a bud) of that inimitable rose called “Jaune D'Espray,” and wrap it, say, in a leaf of the variegated arrowroot, and you will gain an idea of the effect of young flesh against velvet; but see that there is no dewdrop upon it, for that would represent a jewel, and with its coarse, mathematical humdrum prismatics, would catch your eye and spoil the picture.

Old Mordaunt, in any other case, would have seen all this, perhaps; but then, it was only his sister; he asked her what the deuce she wanted, and whether a fellow was to be bullyragged out of his very bed?

“Don't be cross, dear,” said Ethel, sitting down on the bed.

Old Mordaunt said, “If you will hook it, and leave me to sleep, I won't be cross; if you sit there, I will. Go to bed, will you? Why the deuce can't you go to bed? You wouldn't like it if I were to hunt you up in the middle of the night, and break your rest. I should hear of that at breakfast, I daresay. Just you hook it, my lady. Come.”

“I want to talk to you, John.”

“I know you do. And I know what you want to talk about. And I know how you will wrap it up, and bring it out piece by piece. And I know your obstinacy (you call it determination—I don't). And I know that you'll sit there till the morning until it's done, as girls all do it, by piecemeal insinuations. There I'll do it all for you, like Dickens's brickmaker did for the district visitor. How is Mildred? Mildred is making a fool of herself, in every possible way. This match is of her choosing, and she now is making a silly fuss as if she was averse to it. How does Bob Maynard take it? He knows nothing of it. If he did, the assembled women would steadily and stoutly lie the whole thing away from him, and she would lie the loudest. What is Roland doing? he is doing nothing; yet everything but the one thing I wish he would do. What is Eddy doing? he is giggling. What is Aunt Eleanor doing? jawing and scuffling, and trying to make noise enough to make people believe there is nothing wrong. What are you doing? keeping me awake, and so just you hook it, or I'll make you.”

“Don't be cross, Johnny.”

“You said that before, and if anything exasperates a man more than another, it is being told not to lose his temper. That is a thorough example of female tact, or woman's wisdom; go to bed.”

“I will go,” said the good Ethel; “but I'll say something before I go which will prevent you from sleeping this night, my dear old man.”

John Mordaunt sat up in his bed at once. He saw that she was in earnest. “If you have really anything to tell

me, my old, good sister, I will lie awake all night. You are not angry with me?”

“Do you remember any one who was ever angry with you, Johnny?” she said, drawing nearer to him.

“No one except the Doctor at school,” said John Mordaunt. “Speak up, old girl.”

“I will. Johnny, do you know this, that women are bad hands at keeping secrets?”

“Mary Hewitt's story of the Snail and the Sawyer taught me that, when I was eight years old,” said John.

“Very like,” said Ethel. “But I can tell you that a woman can keep her own secret through fire and water, to the rack, to the stake. But a woman cannot always undertake the miserable burden of another's secret.”

“Have you a secret of your own then, sister?”

“Ay, and mean to keep it too, my brother. But I have another secret; the secret about Mildred and Jim. And you must know, brother, I trust you beyond all men. Brother, there is nobody like you.”

“And I was cross to you because you woke me!” said John, taking her hand. “Sister, let me tell you at once; this secret is known to us; I mean to Roland and myself. Jim has gone to Bonn, and will get over it. It was all madness. She knows nothing of it. All madness.”

“You are the madman, dear brother, if you think so. What do you know of this most miserable business? Trust me, and tell me categorically.”

“I'll tell you all that Roland and I know,” he said, very quietly. “Jim was always very difficult, you knew, and hard to deal with. You know of his brutality to Eddy at school, and of his being picked out of the water, nearly dead, by Roland and Eddy. After that his life seemed to change, for he is a queer boy, Ethel; you cannot always calculate on him; and he devoted himself to these Evanses in his wild way. They could do anything they liked with him. And in the end of the last long vacation, Bob Maynard took things rather too comfortably with Mildred Evans, and left her too much with James. And Jim fell in love with her. He was in love with her brothers before. And Jim—our poor, good Jim——−who *is* a trump, old girl, is sent to Bonn. And it is all over, and she never will know anything about it. That is all.”

“*Is* it?” said Ethel, by this time as pale as a ghost. “Then, brother, you don't know anything about his having spoken to her. You don't—”

It was John Mordaunt's turn to turn pale now. “Leave the room for a minute, Ethel,” he said. “I must get up over this.”

She was scarcely outside the door, when he called her in; he was sitting half dressed in a chair. “Finish this, old girl,” he said. “Let's have it out. So Jim, poor old Jim, he spoke to her, did he? And she cut him up with scorn, and sent him right−about to the deuce?

“Why, no, she didn't,” said Ethel.

“Think what you are saying, old girl; just think what you are saying.”

“Good heaven! Johnny, do you think that I haven't thought? I tell you that she has changed her mind—I tell you that she would go to the world's end for Jim.”

“How do you know?”

“From both of them. Jim told me first, before you all went to that weary, silly Oxford. And she told me the day before yesterday. And if it matures, I am to be her bridesmaid tomorrow.”

John Mordaunt began walking quickly up and down the room.

The first thing he said was, “Why, Ethel, there never was but one soul between us five, since we grew up, till now. Why, from Eddy with the rudder lines, to Jimmy in the bow, there was but one soul among us. And to see the old four−oar burst up like this! I am not a sentimental man, but I don't feel as if I could stand it. I'd cry, if I knew how, but I never did.”

“The question is,” said Ethel, “what can we do?

“In what way?” said John, stopping in his walk.

“Generally,” said Ethel.

“There she goes,” said John; “that is her woman's wisdom all over. What do you mean?”

“I mean,” said Ethel, “what can we do?”

“Pish!” said John Mordaunt; “do you want to stop the marriage, or don't you? Speak out and give your opinion. What is it?”

“That is just exactly what I don't know myself,” said Ethel. “I trusted to your well−known sound common sense to tell me what to do.”

“And I'll be hanged if I know,” said John Mordaunt.

“Could we prevent it if we tried?” said Ethel.

“I don't think we could,” said John.

“Then suppose Jimmy was to stay at Bonn, and we were to keep our own counsel?”

“It might be better,” said John.

“It could hardly be mended,” said Ethel. “On my honour, she is very fond of Robert Maynard, and if you will stay away, and Robert will be kind to her—and when was he not kind?—she will forget Jim, as I might in long ages forget Roland, if he was kept away from me. Keep them apart, and they may forget one another.”

“It is impossible,” said John Mordaunt: “the thing has gone too far. They are to be married to−morrow, and if we try to stop it, we have not a leg to stand on. Let it be. Trust to God, and let us keep our own secrets. Now go to bed.”

She left him. She little dreamed, in the heat of her speech, that she had betrayed her own secret to her elder brother. She did not remember her words, but he did. He knew now, as Miss Evans had known before, that her whole heart was given to Roland.

If John Mordaunt was one thing more than another, he was a gentleman. I have seen gentlemen with various degrees of education, and in various dresses. Sometimes in a blue coat and brass buttons, as a county magistrate. (Did *you*, my dear reader, ever see a country gentleman in a blue coat and brass buttons? I never saw but one, and he has been dead these ten years—it is only the literary way of putting it.) I have seen gentlemen in all kinds of disguises. Among the first rank of the gentlemen whom I know, I should be inclined to rank a duke's son who is a sailor; a dissenting farmer; a High Church curate; and a nondescript sort of ballaster on the Thames. If I ever betted, I would give long odds that none of these four would do a dishonest action, or would say one word, unless speaking to a principle, which would wound any one else. I suppose that such a person is a gentleman.

One *specialité* of a gentleman is not to betray secrets. John Mordaunt kept his sister's secret with regard to Roland tight between his teeth. She had forgotten that she had betrayed it, and he never reminded her. It was a dead secret.

A dead secret between those two, sacredly kept. It was no secret between poor wild James and her; but she would have been horrified if she had thought that her elder brother knew of it. He was a man, and might—might—what? Form an opinion on it, and make some sort of movement. Aunt Eleanor had found it out, and she was as the idols of Abou Simbel. She had told it to the bird, her dog, and her brother Jim, and one was as likely to betray her as the other; for poor Jim had a dumb, brutish fidelity about him, which the fear of death could not make him violate; and Jim had once, in one of his childish skirmishes, cut a curl from Roland's head. And where was that curl now, I wonder?

That objectionable woman, Myrtle, used to do the dressmaking in old times, but she was in London, staying with Mrs. Gray, and she was succeeded by a tipsy old trot, called Booth, who had been kept hard at work in the housekeeper's room under Myrtle, in the old times, but who now was allowed to take her work home, in consequence of having had an apoplectic seizure or two on the premises, and the doctor having warned Squire Mordaunt of the extreme inconvenience of an inquest on the premises, which he, as coroner, was capable to speak of. This old lady had got some of Ethel's fal−lals still in hand, things necessary for the wedding to−morrow; and Ethel knew she would come, sooner or later, being a resolute and trustworthy woman when in liquor, though not much good at other times (which were few); and so she sat waiting for her, until all but a few servants were gone to bed. Trying to think that it would all be for the best, and not making very good weather of it.

The dogs which are necessary to a country gentleman's existence heralded Mrs. Booth's approach. She was one of those women that dogs could not bear, and so all those which were loose skirmished about her heels, and those which were chained up howled in anguish, because they could not get at her. Not a dog touched her; they might howl, and yell, and bark, but not a dog came very close to that woman. Well, one, but he was like the Urquhart−Rabelais breed, junior and inexperienced. A black−and−tan terrier puppy, not much bigger than your fist, aroused from his slumbers by the noise, hurled himself at her, as if it was Balaclava, and he was the Six Hundred. She sent him by a dexterous kick in among the others, who fell upon him and hunted him back to his mother. After which, she was shown up, very flushed, to Ethel's presence.

“You are very late, Mrs. Booth.”

“Yes, miss. I stayed to supper with Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Myrtle.”

“Why, Mrs. Myrtle is in London.”

“Saving your presence, miss, *was*. Mrs. Myrtle has come down for the wedding, and Mrs. Gray has come with her.”

Chapter 22.

The wedding−day rose frosty and bright. There had been a little sheet of snow in the night, which had laid a shawl of lace over the dark, purple velvet of Longmynd, made the clear summit of Caradoc shine like a silver crystal, and, apparently, had affected Aunt Eleanor's temper.

I would not invade the sanctity of a maiden lady's bedroom further than by saying that if Aunt Eleanor's bed did not stand against the wall, she certainly had got out of it the wrong side; for the first thing she said to her own face in the looking−glass was, “A parcel of fools!”

Then she set to work ringing her bell, which at first produced no result whatever. This pleased her immensely; for when you are in an ill−temper, nothing is so delightful as to find an excuse for it. While she was ringing, her maids were engaging in a lively and acrimonious debate as to whose duty it was to get up at this exceptionally early hour of the morning. Aunt Eleanor's personal attendant declined on the grounds of precedent—−her lady had never rung her up so early before; the ringing, she argued, was for the housemaids to get up and make the house tidy in decent time, instead of lying routing there. The housemaid declined to take this view of the matter, but made a coalition with the body−servant on the subject of cook, who was at once bawled awake and told that Missis wanted her at once. Cook, looking out from among the sheets, listened to the case of the allied powers, told them briefly that that sort of thing wouldn't do with *her*, and at once went fast asleep again with a rapidity amid dexterity acquired by long practice—acquired in many hot kitchens; leaving the allied powers paralysed, and for the time silent.

But there was a little scrubbing−maid from the workhouse (consequently petted by Aunt Eleanor before all people in the house) who lay in a bed in the corner, sleeping harder than even cook, who appeared to the allied powers available. Here another hitch occurred: there was a general debate as to who should get out of bed and wake her. The powers all round having declined *seriatum* to move in this matter without an alliance, offensive and defensive, being signed all round, the weakest power, the lady's maid, whose case was not so good as the others, proposed that she should be “pelted up.” Which, with some modifications, was done. Prussia and Austria threw shoes and other things at her until she woke, and then England and France told her there was nothing to be afraid of, so, at the last, poor little Denmark put on her petticoat, and went to face the terrible Aunt Eleanor single−handed.

Aunt Eleanor ordered little Denmark to bed again, in the most emphatic manner, daring her to get up for the next two hours, after which, in her camisole, she went up to the maids' bedroom.

Here I draw the veil. They say that cook slept through it all, and snored the while; but we know what rumour is. Any one can snore. It is pretty certain, however, that more housewifery went on in Pulverbatch Grange in the next hour than had gone on in any previous hour. Squire Mordaunt used to say that Eleanor's maids would knock out the walls of the Grange with the points of their scrubbing−brushes. It escaped this ordeal, however, and so will probably continue to shelter the head of the grey−haired old woman who sits there now, until she is carried to Stretton churchyard with the others.

With breakfast came three most unexpected visitors. Eddy, with John and Ethel Mordaunt. She was astonished, and she said, “Why, what do you three want here?”

Old John Mordaunt answered; for Eddy, who was to have spoken, hung fire.

“Why, we like you better than anybody else, Miss Evans, and we thought that you would like to see us this morning. So we walked across to breakfast.”

Aunt Eleanor was perfectly silent for an instant. Her face was perfectly quiet, but Ethel, who saw everything, saw her fine bust heave once or twice. All she said was, “This is very kind of you, my dears—come in.”

They went in; and Aunt Eleanor began bustling about among her lazy maids to get them something for breakfast. They said, all three, that they did not want anything particular for them. Ethel put in as a *riding* remark, that there would be plenty of breakfast presently, and that it would be a pity to spoil their appetites. On this theme Eddy enlarged, as it seemed to have struck him as a new idea, and he looked at Ethel with great admiration.

He, an authority in matters of eating and drinking, gave it as his opinion that it would be a pity to have much now.

“Lord bless me!” said Aunt Eleanor. “Do let me pass some of the trouble off in my own way. It is not every day that one gets into such a stupid botheration as this. Be quiet, Eddy.”

“You consider this matter as a botheration, then, Miss Evans?” said old Mordaunt.

“Of course I do. What do *you* think of it, then?” said Aunt Eleanor.

“A most happy match, surely. There is wealth, beauty, and affection.”

“That means that they are both good−looking, have enough to live on, and like one another, John Mordaunt,” said Aunt Eleanor. “You and I are both good−looking, we are richer than they are, and, unless I am deceived, are very fond of one another; and a pretty pair *we* should make. Fiddle−de−dee!”

There was nothing to do but to laugh. “I don't say that they won't be as happy as any other two fools who marry when they can't help it. What aggravates me is that they could help it. How any woman who *could* exist without being married could ever go and get married, I can't think. Look at me.”

They did so—−and an uncommonly handsome lady she was. But it was rather confusing that she did not go on with her argument, but conceived that a mere contemplation of her person finished it. Eddy had to take up the conversation, and a nice mess he made of it—as usual.

“But you could have been married if you liked, aunt.” Which was just putting the argument upside down. “I am sure you could.”

“Fifty times,” said Aunt Eleanor. Which, by the way, was not true. “Then, why didn't you?” said Eddy, to the confusion of counsel. “It would have been much better for you. Your husband might have drunk, or made away with your money; and then you would have had some of those trials in life which you are always recommending to me. It might have purified and elevated your character, you know. I am only quoting your own words.”

Aunt Eleanor took no notice of Eddy's nonsense; she never did. Towards the world Miss Evans was shrewd and caustic; towards that pretty, kindly youth, she was, as folks said, a fool.

Whatever he did was right. She had given her heart to him, and he repaid her with its blood. She passed him over now, and went on with her argument, looking straight at Ethel.

“That sister of yours, John Mordaunt, she will be wanting to get married some of these days.”

“There is nobody good enough for Ethel,” said John Mordaunt.

“*Ex−actly*,” said Aunt Eleanor; “but you mark my words, she will want to go marrying somebody. And nobody is good enough for her.”

“I think that 'nobody' is,” said old Mordaunt.

“Yes, but 'nobody' don't see it. And nobody is a foolish prig, and he won't do half as well in the world as he thinks. And so pretty, old Ethel, come and get ready, for it is quite time. If nobody is a donkey, somebody is a goose, as somebody else was before her. Eddy, go and see after the carriage;” and Eddy went.

“There goes the best of you all,” said Aunt Eleanor. “There is no one like him. Don't tell me.”

“I am not going to tell you, Miss Evans,” said old Mordaunt. “I quite agree with you. There is no one like Eddy. He is the only perfectly unselfish person I ever saw.”

“I'll not have him go to India,” said Aunt Eleanor. “I'll make him exchange if his regiment is ordered there.” Whereby Ethel and John gathered that Miss Evans destined Eddy for the military service.

“Well, my dears,” said Aunt Eleanor; “perhaps we had better start to see these two married, if we mean to go at all. Where is Roland?”

He had gone over to Maynard's Barton, it seemed, to fetch the bridegroom, whereat Aunt Eleanor said, “Humph.”

They drove gaily away, in Aunt Eleanor's carriage, along the frosty roads; and it was really impossible to resist the weather, and they got cheerful. Eddy said that he wished they had a flag; that it was a great mistake not having a flag; Aunt Eleanor looked so fine that she wanted a flag to set her off. And, certainly, that lady was remarkably fine indeed, and showed the more splendid because the others had not got on their wedding−dresses; priceless grey silk, and priceless white lace composed her dress. She looked uncommonly like the landscape. Her beauty was perfectly unimpaired; and looking at her, that strange stolid young man, John Mordaunt, said, with perfect respect and perfect coolness, that the bride would not be the handsomest woman there that day.

“Do you mean Ethel or me?” said Aunt Eleanor.

“You,” said John Mordaunt.

Aunt Eleanor was immensely gratified. “I believe I *am* very handsome,” she said. “*I* think so, and I am a

tolerable judge, I believe. You may say that again young man, if you choose. You are a young man of discretion and discernment, and say what you mean. It is a pity that I am old enough to be your mother, or you and I might have made a match of it, and I would have licked you into shape, and made a gentleman of you; as it is you must stay as you are. I suppose you will want to marry some day, and I will give you your wedding present. If the young lady to whom you give your attentions ever tells you that she don't like having her beauty admired, break off the match instantly, for she is a humbug."

Johnny Mordaunt laughed, silently, between his big shoulders, and said that Ethel was the girl for him—a sentiment of which Aunt Eleanor approved most highly.

The four very quaint people were very late. The bride and bridegroom were there, Mrs. Evans and Mrs. Maynard were there, Roland was there, in puce−coloured pantaloons, looking noble, and talking to Mary Maynard, the bridesmaid, in a way which looked very like an immediate repetition of this insane folly, said Aunt Eleanor to herself; every one was there, except Squire Charles Evans. The younger party had to tear upstairs to dress themselves, and while they were doing so, Aunt Eleanor sailed about and made herself agreeable, more particularly to Mrs. Maynard, a woman she utterly detested.

"You must be a happy woman, Mrs. Maynard," she said, "to see your son so well married." Mrs. Maynard wept: it is the *rôle* on such occasions.

"What is the woman crying about?" *thought* Aunt Eleanor; "she ought to be in a state of frantic hilarity, and no doubt is." And then went on aloud, "I wouldn't cry if I was in your place, Mrs. Maynard. It is all stuff and nonsense and fiddle−de−dee, crying, you know. I certainly should cry if my boy, Eddy, was going to be married, because I should lose the sweetest companion I ever had in my life. But you and your son have never been on the best of terms, in spite of his very sweet and gentle nature, and so I should have thought that you would be glad, at all events, that all matters of dispute were ended between you by his marriage."

Mrs. Maynard said that Aunt Eleanor did not know what a mother's feelings were: a remark which would have silenced most maiden ladies, in whom the Jewish superstition is ingrained with their first education. It had no effect on Aunt Eleanor.

"Not know a mother's feelings! I should rather think I did, if anybody did. Why, you never cared half as much for that boy of yours as I do for Eddy. *He* never was the delight of your eyes and your heart, as Eddy is to me. Bah! you and your mother's feelings, indeed!"

I solemnly aver that Aunt Eleanor, against her will, began this conversation with the sole and entire view of being agreeable to Mrs. Maynard; and she finished in this way. I don't defend her in the least. I never knew any one who could be more agreeable than she could, or a mere finished lady, when she chose to be. But the greatest fault in her character was that when she despised anybody heartily, she could not help showing it. She tried, but she could not. Some may say that this did her honour. I think not; but will not argue further than saying, that if all people were like Aunt Eleanor, society would become impossible. You can't *live* on quinine.

Moving from her, with a view of getting civil again, she encountered Squire Mordaunt, who said, "Hallo, Eleanor! what have you been doing to the Crocodile?"

"More than I meant."

"You always do," said Squire Mordaunt, testily. "Hang it all, Eleanor, why *can't* you be civil?"

"Well, don't begin, George. Where is Charles?"

"Charles is ill. I don't think he will show," said Squire Mordaunt.

"Not very ill?" said Aunt Eleanor.

"Oh, no. Now, come, old girl—get back to that woman, Maynard, and be civil to her." And Aunt Eleanor went at once. Perhaps you may have remarked that there are some men, by no means strong or clever, to whom the most independent women will listen at once. Squire Mordaunt was one of them.

But we must hold their conversation over till after the pageant, for there was no time for it before. Ethel, dressed for second bridesmaid, sailed into the room; dressed in full panoply, bouquet in hand, with her head in the air, looking so imperially beautiful that Mrs. Maynard went into raptures about her to Aunt Eleanor, and sailing straight up to little Mary Maynard, who was undergoing a strong flirtation from Roland, touched her on the shoulder, and said—

"Now, Mary, if we are to be married to−day, we must take away our bride. Roland, if you are going to make another match with Mary, say so, because if you are not, you had better see after your man." For, you see, the

school of Aunt Eleanor had had some effect on Miss Ethel; and I am far from saying that as things are, Aunt Eleanor's school is a good one for a young lady. We must take things as we find them.

However, they went to church and got married, and the bride seemed very happy and proud, and the bride and bridegroom came back in the same carriage; and all was rejoicing at Stretton, save the little fact that master was too ill to join in the festivities, but lay in bed. It did not much matter to any of them. “Pa is ill,” said Eddy. Roland, who went and sat with his father, did not look grave. The doctor came down to breakfast, and was very merry: telling the company that Squire Charles' ailment was nothing. But the concentrated eyes of Aunt Eleanor and Ethel caught those of John Mordaunt, across the piled table. And when his eyes answered theirs, he shook his head. And Ethel and Eleanor knew that Asrael was coming from the bridal chamber. But although these two could talk too much at times, they could hold their tongues like another.

Who are here, in the name of goodness, under the leafless poplars, watching the crashing, hissing ice?

A mass of wasted bones, calling itself a man—calling itself Sir Jasper Meredith. A splendid, rather cruel−looking young man, with a fiercely−erected head, like that of an adder, who called himself James Mordaunt. They sat together, this winter afternoon, looking out of the convent window, at Nonnenworth, of all places in Europe.

“We can't go back to−night, Jimmy,” said Sir Jasper Meredith.

“No, the boatman would not take us,” said poor, wild Jim; “it is all over by now, I suppose.”

“Yes, it has been over this two hours,” said Sir Jasper. “She is married by now. Why don't you groan, why don't you fling yourself into the river among that ice—eh?”

“I don't come of a groaning family,” said the younger Mordaunt. “Besides, she is Roley's sister, and Bob Maynard is a good fellow, and she is better with him than with me, Jasper. I am only a brute.”

“You are a very gentle one then—*I* never had a more gentle friend, even in Roland.”

“Yes. I have been tamed by Roland and Eddy, and by you, my old brick. But the brute is in me still. By —, old man, when I think of what is happening to−day” (I can go no further—the young man was mad)−"and she not loving him—I could commit crime. I could, by the Lord Harry. But he is a good fellow, never a better. All I say is, I see my way to crime.”

“I have committed it, Jimmy,” said Sir Jasper Meredith, coolly. “Move me, will you?—my hip seems going right through the sofa on to the floor. I have committed crime.”

“As how, then. What crime?”

“Swindling or conspiracy, I think. Do you ever think of any body else besides yourself, by any chance? Do you ever think of Roland?”

“I only love his sister through him.”

“Would you like to see him married to Mary Maynard?”

“That miserable little fool! How dare she! Jasper, my whole heart was set on his marrying my sister, and on my marrying his. There are mysteries which you, in your refined nature, do not see, but which I, more brutal possibly than you, can see. For Roland, I want my sister Ethel. For myself, I wanted Mildred. Then the accord of our two lives would have been perfect. People think, Dr. K— thinks, Aunt Eleanor thinks, that my love is for Eddy. It is not so; it is for Roland. I would have married his sister, but that is over; over this very day. At least he may marry mine.”

“Perhaps he will,” said Sir Jasper.

“No chance,” said poor Jim. “He is taken with Mary Maynard, *his* brother, you know. Ethel is the only woman fit for him. Shall I tell you a secret, Jasper?”

“Yes,” said Sir Jasper, “provided it is not that your sister Ethel is in love with him, and that he don't care twopence for her.”

“But that *was* the secret.”

“Sweet innocent, as if we did not know it! How about Mary Maynard? Roland was inclined to make a fool of himself in that quarter, but I have violated the laws of my country and bowled him out. Ethel shall have a fair chance.”

“What have you done?”

“A most rascally thing. Mrs. Maynard wanted me sadly, as I told your brother and Ethel, at lunch, at Maynard's

Barton. The old woman of Maynard's Barton has been trying to get me for a son−in−law. Now I have not responded. The girl is a fool, and her mother another. I have tried to save Roland from many things—for instance, from that wretched boat−racing; but never worked so hard as I have now to save him from this miserable match with this fool of a girl. I have tried mother and daughter, and have found them both willing, either for me or for him. And now I have sent a letter to the mother, most incautiously worded, which will make her tell Roland that his chance is over there."

"Have you proposed for the girl?" said Jimmy.

"No. Only bowled Roland out. I could not stand by and see him marry such a fool as that. I want your sister to have a chance. If the old woman is down upon me—well, the old woman will be down upon me. But unless Roland makes a very great fool of himself, he has little chance at Maynard's Barton. Will you carry me to bed? and if you will take the advice of a heap of bones—go yourself."

James carried Sir Jasper to bed; but he did not follow the advice of that funny little baronet, to go to bed himself. On the contrary, he stood in the door−way of Nonnenworth till a hate hour, listening to the cold, cruel ice, as it hissed and crashed down the Rhine, looking up from time to time at the empty, bare arch of Rolandseck, above and beyond it. At Rolandseck, of all places in Europe.

Now we must return to the marriage−feast. Every privileged man, according to the old country custom, saluted the bride; and then, by a still older custom, the groomsmen saluted the bridesmaids. Roland, holding out his gloved hand, took Ethel's gloved hand, and calmly and coldly saluted her on her cheek. She was as calm and as cold as he was until he, still holding her hand, said, "God bless you, dearest Ethel; you will do the same for my bride as you have done for my sister." And Ethel, gallant girl as she was, bravely patted his hand and said, "Indeed, dear Roland, I will. May I congratulate you?" And he said, "I think so." Then he kissed Mary Maynard, who made a fuss and the kissing being all done, they went home, and fell to eating and drinking.

Ethel told Aunt Eleanor what Roland had said, and Aunt Eleanor at once, as Ethel expressed it, retired on her temper. "My temper," she used to tell Ethel, "is by far the most valuable of all my possessions. I make 50 per cent. by my farm; but then I make 200 per cent. by the credit of having a temper, which, as you know, my dear, is not a very bad one." And, indeed, the good lady was right. She always got her own way in everything; not because she had the credit of having a *bad* temper, but an *uncertain* one. You never knew exactly what form her temper would take. There were three moods to it. Firstly, she would occasionally break out and scold, in which mood her caustic, well−trained tongue would carry all before it; secondly, if it suited her, she would remain stony dumb—a phase which generally exasperated every one, except Squire Mordaunt and Ethel, into fury and subsequent submission; thirdly and lastly, she had a phase of temper which beat every one but John Mordaunt (nothing ever beat him). "I don't mind Miss Evans's temper one *bit*," said Ethel once, to her father and mother, "*till she gets polite*. Then I can't stand it." Miss Evans was not polite on this occasion. She had fallen back on the mood of stony dumbness, and she watched Mrs. Maynard, Mary, and Roland.

Being allowed, however, by those accustomed to know her, to be out of temper, she got her own way, and disarranged the whole table until she had got Ethel on one side of her, and John Mordaunt on the other; with a view, as she explained to them vaguely, of keeping her eye on the crocodile. Ethel and John supplied her with vivers, which she took like a calm woman of the world, but still maintaining a stony silence, until John, having given her something she liked, she said, "You are very good to me, my dear."

John said, "Pray don't, Miss Evans."

"Don't what?" she said, sharply.

"Don't be polite to us. We haven't done anything."

"My dears, I was not thinking of being polite to you two. I'd be polite to that woman if the table did not divide us," she continued, rubbing her nose with a spoon, thoughtfully. "I can't make that woman out a bit."

"Send Eddy round to ask her what she is up to," said John Mordaunt.

"Just exactly the very thing I was thinking of myself. I have a good mind to send Eddy round to her with my message, and stop his allowance till he comes back with her answer."

"What would the message be, Miss Evans—how would it run?" asked John Mordaunt, laughing, frankly, in her face.

"Something like this," she said, beginning on her jelly. "You old trot; you most scheming Cleopatra, inundation old crocodile, listen to me. What do you mean by puzzling *me*? I can't make you out. What are you at?

What do you mean? You have been angling and fishing for him, and you have caught him. Therefore, my fine madam, what makes you look as black as thunder, and what is the reason that your idiotic little daughter will scarcely speak to him, and evidently wants to go to her room, and cry her eyes out? Explain this, crocodile, and send back the explanation by Eddy, or I'll come round for it myself."

"I don't think she would like *that*," said John Mordaunt.

"I don't think she *would*," said Aunt Eleanor.

"Let us watch them," said John Mordaunt. "*I* can't make her out."

Ethel had not heard one word of the latter part of the conversation. She was talking to a young squire, on the other side of her, whom she liked, but whom she had to bully out of the folly of making love to her. Aunt Eleanor and John Mordaunt ate and watched for a little time, but saw only what Aunt Eleanor had rather vividly described—Roland undoubtedly making love, and both mother and daughter repelling it.

John Mordaunt, after a time, became aware that one of the faces on his right was so far thrust forward as to engage his attention; looking that way, he saw that it was his father's. He at once drew back, and pulled Aunt Eleanor's sleeve. "The governor is looking at us," he said, and by watching Aunt Eleanor, he learned a lesson in *carriage*.

With her cold, calm eyelids sunk upon her eyes, she bent a little forward, and by a slight turn of her head, which no one could notice unless he had been watching her intensely, let Squire Mordaunt know that she understood him. Nothing more was necessary. The ladies, shortly afterwards, left the table, and some one made a speech. Eddy came and sat by John Mordaunt, and wondered why he was so thoughtful. John Mordaunt was revolving these things. Had his governor ever been in love with Aunt Eleanor? If not, how did they understand one another so well? If he had ever been in love with her, why the dickens didn't he marry her? And if he had, what effect would it have had on his, John Mordaunt's, prospects? Which last thing was a matter too big for him?

Roland was gone, and he thought he would go after him; why, he scarcely knew. Eddy was busy taking the best flowers from the vases, poor little man, and tying them up into tiny bouquets, "One for each of the girls," he said; "they would be withered by to−morrow if they were left; and each of them is a drop of blood out of Macdingaway's heart." John Mordaunt, a ruminative animal, left the assembled squires and parsons over their wine and their arguments, and went out towards the conservatory. He will tell you to this day that the last thing he ever heard of the old time was his dear father's hoarse, loud voice, saying, "I deny it, sir. Those who speak of the agricultural labourers in those terms are mere Cockneys."

He went into the conservatory, and there he met a group which showed him that the day was not to be all holiday.

Roland. Seen by him for the first time in furious anger, with his hands behind his back; tall, splendid, imperious; just at this moment, terrible to stolid, good John Mordaunt; Mrs. Maynard, as white as a sheet, but with her pretty face set in feline determination; and Mary Maynard in tears, with her face in her pocket−handkerchief.

It was Roland's turn to speak. "I ask you once more, madam, if this young lady's answer is dictated by you or not?"

"You asked her when I was not by, and she gave you her answer," said Mrs. Maynard, full of pluck, though gasping for breath. "You must take it, sir."

"Have I never been encouraged to speak to her as I spoke just now?" said Roland.

"Never for one instant," said Mrs. Maynard, most promptly, growing paler and paler, but, to do the woman justice, exhibiting enormous courage. "Perhaps you will deny that I nearly turned you out of my house at the beginning of last summer. You would wish to deny that?"

"But since?" said Roland.

"Let us have a finish and end of it, sir. My son has married a beggar to−day, my daughter shall not marry another tomorrow."

"Madam," said Roland, "I cannot conceive what you mean."

"You should not have made me lose my temper," said Mrs. Maynard; "but it is gone, and much with it. You cannot understand. By this sweet marriage of to−day, I am turned out of Maynard's Barton. I have but little provision, and I want provision, for I am getting old. I want provision in my daughter's house, now that my son has cast me out."

“Madam, you have five hundred a year,” blundered John Mordaunt.

“Oh, you are there, are you?” said Mrs. Maynard; “there are not any more of you, are there? Yes, John Mordaunt, I have five hundred a year, which would make the whole of Master Roland's income, under certain circumstances. By the way, you being there, and having some sort of ox−like memory in you somewhere, will please to remember this—that this young lady's refusal *was* dictated by me: and that we wish you a very good afternoon.”

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Maynard,” said Roland; “you have only confirmed me in a half−formed plan. Mary, darling, good−by. She won't have it, you see. Mary, my little darling, come here. I could appeal to your brother on any day but this; but I won't. Mary, your mother is too much for you. Come here, pretty little love, and let me kiss you.”

And Mary came, and lay in his arms for one short minute, for she was as fond of him as it was in her nature to be fond of anything. And her mother let her, possibly because John Mordaunt faced her suddenly to the right−about, so that the parting should be secret. He said, afterwards, that he would have pitched her into the flower−pots if she had offered to look on. Mrs. Maynard had a shrewd idea that this fate would befall herself, and so she kept quite quiet; but when her little fool of a daughter was released, and came back to her, she let her spite fly out. Coarsely, but quite to the purpose.

“Now,” she said to Roland, “you fool, you can go and hang after Ethel; you blind idiot.”

“This is exactly what I mean to do, madam,” said Roland. “Good−by, my little Mary; good−by, my little darling.”

So the two young men went to the drawing−room, and John Mordaunt said, “I can't make you out. I never thought you were a tender, sentimental fellow until now.”

“I can't make myself out,” said Roland; “in what follows, remember me at my best: it is not much to ask.”

They were in time to see off the bride and bridegroom, and when they were gone, Roland got together Aunt Eleanor, Ethel, and John Mordaunt, and told them the whole story of his having proposed to Mary Maynard, and of his refusal.

Fiddlers came, and they danced. Roland danced with Ethel, and told her about his misfortune, and talked strange and odd talk to her, principally on this theme, “that classes could not understand one another till they thoroughly intermixed,” which suited Ethel's Radicalism wonderfully. And Roland danced as he rowed, in a masterly way. Aunt Eleanor came down, after sitting a time with her brother, and sniffed at them. She reported her brother as much better, and had herself dissuaded him from coming down stairs. Mrs. Evans came down after a time, and sat smiling at the dancers.

But at midnight a cry arose, “The bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him.” It began by a feeble wail of a frightened nurse in the topmost corridor of the house, and it ended in the silence of the ball−room, suddenly hushed. Squire Charles was dead, and Roland was lord!

Chapter 23.

His death was very sudden. The nurse had heard the very slightest movement in his bed, and coming to him had found him quite dead. When the house was still as death itself, Roland went all alone and looked on death for the first time. It had the effect it usually has; it saddened and ennobled him.

In older, wilder times, the sight of death was nothing; it is but little now in war. But in our carefully guarded domestic life, the sight of death, still more the first sight of death, has its full value. To appreciate, for the first time, the great fact of all, that some day or another the body most familiar to us will be stiff and cold, and never move again, but perish into the earth, is an era in a man's life. To recognise for the first time the inevitable; to feel that the face can never smile more which laughed at our jest but yesterday; to realise the wonderful change of all changes, makes most men think for a time. The feeling goes off after a few times, but the first time generally has its full effect. On Roland, full of strange schemes in that little−uttering head of his, it had actually more than its proper effect,

He had asked John Mordaunt to stay by him, and that leal soul had stayed. He knew where Roland was going when he took a candle from the table, and he knew where he had been when Roland came silently back, and set down the candle once more; but there was something in Roland's appearance which displeased John Mordaunt.

Roland certainly looked as handsome as ever; his personal gifts in this matter have been dwelt on before, possibly too often. But it seemed to honest John Mordaunt that the face was thinner, more pinched, and more narrow than he had ever seen it before, as though it had caught some reflection from the narrow, pinched face of the dead man who had put all worldly things behind him. John Mordaunt was disquieted. He was not a silent man when he thought it his duty to speak, and when he spoke (as we have seen before) he spoke to the purpose.

“Roland, old boy,” he said, quietly, “though every one who has known you has liked you, yet I know, year after year, more entirely that no one has ever understood you; and I understand you less than ever at this moment.”

“As how, Horatio?” said Roland, very quietly.

“A good name, Hamlet,” said John Mordaunt; “that means confidence. Come, I will go about with you. You are sorry—you are desperate sorry, old man! Why don't you cry? You can cry, you know.”

“Yes; I cried when I lost the Greek prize. I can cry for selfish vexation and wounded vanity, but I can't cry now. You would hardly expect a fellow who has dropped into eight thousand a year to bellow over it, would you?”

“*That* won't do, Roland. Don't lie.”

“I suppose not,” said Roland. “I suppose, if you thought that I meant what I said, you would have seen the last of me.”

“As you did not mean it, I will say, yes.”

“Well, you will see the last of me soon; for I am off out of this.”

Not one word would John Mordaunt speak—not one assisting suggestion would he make. “He is going to tell me some folly, and he will do it better if he is left alone.” So that young man remained silent.

“I am sick of the whole business,” said Roland; “of the whole business from beginning to end, and I am going to put an end to it. You shan't sit there like an image, Johnny; you shall answer me. Am I a reticent young man?”

“Most eminently so,” said John Mordaunt, with a steady, ox−like face turned on him. “If you come to that, a deal too much so. *I* never could make you out: there is a cobweb in your brain somewhere, which *I* never could find. What foot do you halt on?”

“Am I a discreet young man?” asked Roland; “discreet among women, I mean; for I am a most bitter ass.”

The thought of what was upstairs prevented John Mordaunt from laughing; but he said—

“Your discretion is so notorious, that it has lost you friends.”

“Suppose, then,” said Roland, “that I were to tell you that I had made a most thundering and irretrievable fool of myself about a woman.”

“I should not believe it. Oh, you meant that little doll you proposed to to−day, and who refused you at her mother's orders. I only say you are well out of it. I am sorry to say so much of the sister of an old boat−mate

married this unhappy night; but I do my duty. Is that all?"

"No; I don't refer to her. I mean something about another woman."

"Then I am the last man to hear it, old fellow," said John Mordaunt. "I cannot tell you why, but I am the last man to listen to your confessions. I respect your grief profoundly, but I cannot help asking you how, with another affair on hand, you could have been drawn into a proposal, even to that feeble fool Mary Maynard?"

"I have not got one word to say for myself," said Roland, eagerly. "I have not got one single, solitary word to say for myself. Do you mark what I say, Johnny?"

"I mark it."

"What have I been in the happy little innocent party of boys from Gloucester, who have rowed together, swum together, learnt together, and squabbled together?"

"What have you been!" cried old Mordaunt: "the tie which has bound us together—our solemn, silent, glorious old Roland. Have we ever wavered in faith to you that you should distrust us? If you have erred, Roland, who are we to denounce you? Why, if that brother of mine, Jim, were to waver in his allegiance to you, I don't know what I would do with him—I don't, upon my word."

"So you think of me, John Mordaunt; but your friendship misleads you. I have been only a purist and a prig."

"Come," said John Mordaunt, "we are not at the Union, you know. Take a bit of advice from a fool. If you have done any girl wrong, do her what right you can; marry her. Coming from me, of all men, that is honest counsel, Roland. Two wrongs don't make a right, any more than two and two make five. Now, listen to me, old fellow. Consult your Aunt Eleanor, and see if she does not confirm me. I am fearfully sorry about it, because I had dreamt that some day we might have been more like brothers than we are; and I cannot believe this even now. Why, Jim or I, or Ethel, would have gone to the stake for your honour. If you say it is so, it is: but it is a bitter thing for me to hear. Don't let Ethel hear of it, Roland," he added, suddenly. "Don't let her guess that you are false and dishonoured."

Roland actually laughed. "You are all abroad, old man; you are scarcely wise in advising me to marry a woman who has proved herself unworthy of marriage. Do you believe that I would have kissed your sister to−day if I were dishonoured with another woman? With regard to your argument of two and two always making four, some Cambridge men declare that when numbers get into their higher powers, two and two do not make four, but five; which causes them to deduce an argument against the immortality of the soul."

"By what process, in the name of goodness?" said John, buckling on his armour of Oxford precisionism in a moment.

"I am sure I don't know," said Roland. "The benighted souls don't learn their logic, you know. They confine their attention to mathematics, of which we know nothing."

John Mordaunt was pleased at the turn the conversation had taken. He might amuse Roland; and Roland looked dangerous.

"They and their mathematics! Well and good. Give me my logic. Give me one immovable axiom; say like one of Euclid's, 'A straight line is the shortest way you can go from Jerusalem to Jericho;' or, 'A point is no bigger than a footless stocking without any leg.' Give me an axiom like that, and let me work it down logically. Why, theology all depends on the original soundness of the proposition."

"Of what proposition?" asked Roland.

John Mordaunt gave him one—one in which most believe. But when Roland said, "Is that an axiom, then, and does all theology rest on that?" Mordaunt saw, with the deepest concern, that it was an axiom no longer with Roland.

"His faith is gone," he thought; "and he will never get on without one. At least, I don't know. Some do, and some don't. I thought he was what the provost called 'sound.' I am all abroad about him now. Where is the row? Is it in his politics? Let me see."

"I say, Roland, you had better go to bed."

"I can't sleep. Let us talk. Do you mind?"

"I will talk till cockcrow to please you and myself. I wish we were at Balaclava now—at least, one of the four of us."

"I wish one of us was, meaning myself," said Roland.

"I wish we all four were, with Eddy steering. We would take the old four in past Fort Constantine, and they

should never hit us till we ran her ashore in the Careening harbour."

"Don't talk nonsense, old friend. All that is past. Still I should have liked to have had my hand in this business. I'll have it in the next, if it is only to carry a pair of colours. They should have swarmed into Sebastopol at once, man—the British alone, I mean—and have let the French cut off the Russian retreat at Perekop. But what can you hope from a miserable country like this, which last swept away its cobwebs in its last real revolution two hundred years age? the blessed and ever glorious French Revolution swept most cobwebs out of French eyes. They at least can produce generals—our old−world system cannot."

"India, old man!" said John Mordaunt. "Don't be foolish."

"India, I grant you," said Roland. "Would you kindly give me the list of our more famous generals in that province, now employed in the Crimea?"

This was certainly a "hit" for John Mordaunt; but he returned to the charge. "You don't speak up for the French Revolution, old fellow?"

Roland said, "I do. It is the finest thing that ever happened in Europe. Some of them went further than I should be inclined to go *now*. Marat erred in intense love of his species; Robespierre erred in his puritanism; Danton in wordy ferocity. Carrier should never have been sent to Nantes; he committed errors there, and was a drunkard. Camille Desmoulins was a perfect fool; but we exist by these men's deeds, and yet we spit when we mention them"

"But, Roland," said John Mordaunt, "all this infernal nonsense about St. Just—"

"I did not mention him at all," said Roland, "you mentioned him; it was you who brought the name of that Antinous of the Revolution into the discussion. I suppose you will charge his beauty against him next. His hand is red; but was David's pure? Marat slew; but what did Joshua?"

"What *is* the meaning of this fantastic balderdash, Roland?"

"*I* don't know. I am sick of my life, and for no reason—at least, for no reason which these wretched Philistines can give me. I have always had everything which could make life beautiful since I was a child, and I am sick of it. What is before me? The schools? Bah! A double−first and the compliments due to the honour of my college. And then to drop back on my position as a country gentleman? I tell you that I am utterly sick of, and that I utterly loathe, my whole future career. From this moment I give it up. For me to drop back on to Oxford honours and turnips—I'll have none of it. Vive la Revolution! I am for India."

"Ho!" said old Mordaunt. "You are going to neglect the estate which God has given into your hands, to go a swashbucklering among half−armed natives are you?"

"I suppose that is about it, put it your way," said Roland.

"And about Marat now?" said John Mordaunt. "I think you said that he proposed his thirty thousand assassinations on the ground of his intense love for his species?"

Roland said, "You are travelling out of the record, Johnny; you don't know everything. I will lie down here and go to sleep."

And he went to sleep, and honest John Mordaunt watched him, and said, from time to time, "Poor lad! and so he has broken out just like James. You never know what is in them. It is the Norse blood. I wonder when this unreasoning Berserk strain in it will be bred out, and we shall have peace! It only comes in now when the world gets between them and their women. But fancy *Roland* going Berserk! I would never have dreamt of that."

Chapter 24.

The funeral was over a week, and Roland was in possession *de jure*, not *de facto*, for Roland was in London, and had not left his address.

This was extremely tiresome; because all sorts of things had to be done which could not be done without him: the will had to be proved, among other things, for which Roland was necessary. Mrs. Evans being in a state of imbecile grief, was of no use whatever. The family solicitor took the will over to Aunt Eleanor, at Pulverbatch, and asked her advice as to what they were to do, no answer being procurable from Roland. Aunt Eleanor told them it was no business of hers, and wanted to know what they would take after their drive. Roland's actions were becoming very eccentric. The solicitors asked, “Could she give them Roland's address?” and she answered, “Lord bless you, no.” And the solicitors departed.

Aunt Eleanor had her trusty ally, Ethel Mordaunt, with her, and she told to her a deal more than she told to the solicitors.

These two, so singularly alike in character, but so far removed from one another in years, sat before the fire, in Eleanor Evans's room, at Pulverbatch, and Ethel knew that Aunt Eleanor was going to tell something, because she was so very cross.

No woman ever lived who could keep a secret better than Aunt Eleanor. She loved it; but the effect of her parting with it was to make her very cross. A lady who gives away a diamond is apt to be cross after she has done so, and even before. Ethel knew that she was going to hear something the moment that Aunt Eleanor said—

“Get some wine and water, child, and let us go to bed. Don't sit there looking so ridiculously handsome. What have you done with your beauty, child? It is a gift. Have you done anything with it? if so what?”

“Much the same as you have done with yours, Miss Evans,” answered Ethel. “Nothing.”

“That is pert; don't be pert. Eddy is pert; but I allow him liberties which I should never dream of allowing to you. Did you ever get it into your head that you were a great fool?”

“I have thought so for a long time; and have thought that, in spite of all you have said to me, you encouraged me more in my folly than any one else.”

“Are you going to give up your folly?”

“No, Miss Evans. There are some follies which we cannot give up. I suppose that you are the only one who knows anything of mine. You have never betrayed me?”

“Child, child! you have betrayed yourself a hundred times. Child, where is the curl of his, which poor Jim cut from his head, and sent to you in a letter? Where is that curl?”

“It is in my desk. Has Jim betrayed me?”

“No, my dear; only you told me the whole business yourself, you know. You really should remember. Do you love him still?”

“Yes, Miss Evans.”

“I don't believe he cares twopence for you, you know,” said Aunt Eleanor. “If I thought he did, I'd say so; but I don't think it, and so I won't say it; and you are well out of it. Lord help that man's wife, if she didn't do what he told her!”

“Roland is very gentle,” said Ethel.

“Yes, my dear; but he has a terrible quality, that of silence. He can hold his tongue for days and days together; and that quality will madden a high−spirited woman into either utter submission or furious rebellion; it is a toss−up which.”

“Is that so?” said Ethel, only half understanding her.

“Yes, it *is* so,” said Aunt Eleanor, sharply; “you can't understand, of course. No one ever believed you could; but Eddy can. *He* told me of it first; Eddy says that when they are in for one of those idiotic boat−races, he never knows Roland's tactics until they are off, and then he forbids Eddy to speak, unless under orders. And again, here is a letter from a leading Oxford Don about him: 'Dearest Eleanor,' *n'importe*, that is all *façon de parler*, you know. 'Your Eddy is—' much he knows Eddy! 'your Roland is more incomprehensible than when K— sent him up: there is some twist in his brain, with all his reticence and discretion.' So there is in Allan Gray's,” added Aunt

Eleanor, rubbing her nose with the letter.

“Do you correspond with the Dean of St. Paul's?” asked Ethel.

“Yes, miss, I do,” said Aunt Eleanor; “and he was in love with me once, and I am in love with him now. What do you think of that, for instance?”

Ethel had nothing to say on this subject; but for want of something to say, she said that she seemed, from Aunt Eleanor's description, to have had a happy escape from Roland.

“I don't know about *that*,” said Aunt Eleanor; “no man is worth a hang if he has not a cobweb in his brain which makes him do something. Roland has, and you have not. I doubt whether you are worthy of Roland, do you know?”

“Has the Dean of St. Paul's a cobweb in his brain, Miss Evans?” asked Ethel.

“He is an old man, and I am an old woman, and we are not going to marry,” said Aunt Eleanor. “Don't be pert, and exchange shots, and I will tell you something. Roland is mad. Roland is madder than all the hatters at Lincoln and Bennett's; he is in one of his moods—one of those moods in which he has won his boat−races. Ethel, the succession to the property will be disputed, and he won't even send his address to his solicitors.”

“His succession disputed!” said Ethel.

“Ay,” said Miss Evans, “and warmly too. Your father has been with me to−day, and has accused me of lying, which I never did. I told him, what I believed to be the truth at the time, that the claim was the old claim, and that there was no danger from it. He does not like the look of matters at all, and he says that, unless we can move Roland from his donkey mood, everything will go seriously wrong. And the solicitors have been here with the provisions of his father's will. Why, I have denounced them as idiotic for this ten years, and he promised to alter them, but he has not done so. Your father, Mordaunt, says the estate won't carry the lawyer's expenses, if Roland don't move. It will be the greatest succession case ever known.”

“But who claims Roland's estates?” asked Ethel.

“One Allan Gray,” said Aunt Eleanor, rubbing her nose.

“Allan Gray!” said Ethel, “I never heard of him. And who are the witnesses to his claim?”

“I am sorry to say that I am one,” said Miss Evans. “Old Mother Gray and Myrtle are others. The case is strong. Your father says it is a lie from beginning to end—but your father is your father.”

“Will Roland be left a beggar?” asked Ethel.

“I don't know about beggars,” said Miss Evans. “He won't have any money.”

“What a splendid thing that will be for him!” said Ethel. “Why, it will be the making of him.”

“Wants making, does he?” said Aunt Eleanor. “Well, perhaps he does; as for being a beggar, he don't come of a begging sort. He shan't want money though, even if I have to rob Eddy. But Eddy shall give it to him. I don't approve of Roland, myself, I allow. And not for all the Rolands on earth shall Eddy be one penny the poorer. I will work more into pigs, my dear, if things go wrong with Roland. I hate pigs, but they pay. I will work into the pig business to make it up to Eddy, if things go wrong with Roland. Eddy shan't suffer in any way.”

“How you love Eddy!” said Ethel in a wondering way.

“You must love something, and I love him,” said Aunt Eleanor, suddenly. “I have stores of suppressed love in my heart, and I have given all that I could spare from the Dean of St. Paul's, and from you, and from your brother, John Mordaunt, to Eddy. And I promise you that there is precious little left for you three to divide among you.”

And so there comes before one, dimly seen in the distance, the figure of a woman who cast herself groaning against a wall, and then fell in a heap in the corner.

Chapter 25.

That Roland behaved like a fool I do not deny. Had he made such a fool of himself at thirty, he would not have been worth writing about. But he was only twenty−one.

In looking for a precedent for his remarkable conduct, just look at your own conduct when you were twenty−one. Did you not do things then that you would not do now? Did you not do generous and carelessly foolish things which you would not do now? Why, I who speak, know well a man with an estate of eight thousand a−year—a shrewd, sensible fellow enough in most things, yet a man who is not given to spend money on himself, who has crippled himself for the best part of his life by an act of careless, fantastic generosity, wilder in one way than Roland's. In the Australian madness of 1852, how many men do I know who, sick of things here, gave up safe positions in England out of the pure old English spirit of adventure? How many? As many as were Mrs. Nickleby's lovers.

I am only contending for the fact that I could give the names of at least a dozen men who at an early age made as great fools of themselves as Roland. I am not excusing him; I am excusing myself from a charge of improbability. Roland was a very extraordinary young man. If he had not been, we would not have told this story, but another.

He was sick of it all. He had looked at it all, and it seemed that there was not one spark of truth in it, from beginning to end. His qualities were, a sharp, clear brain, a powerful, well−ordered body, and a never−ceasing longing for excitement and power over his fellows. As silent and as beautiful as a fox, but with all the large−heartedness of the dog—the animal who cannot be taught class distinctions. He had been often excited by his father's army stories; they had warmed an enthusiasm which needed no warming; and he had tried to reduce them to practice by boat−racing. When be won the University sculls he thought himself as fine a fellow as any who fought at Waterloo. But all this was insufficient for him, and his future was fairly before him now. He hated it. And the man who had made him hate it worse than any one, was little Sir Jasper Meredith.

It was not in one, or in two, or in three dozen conversations, that that shrewd little cripple contrived to disgust Roland with his future career. Nevertheless he was the man who had the principal hand in doing it. Don't dedicate your son to any particular career, if there is any go in him at all. I once saw a boy of twelve come into a room full of ladies, and I heard his mother say, “There comes another young clergyman.” Whereupon the ladies rejoiced and fal−lalled; but from that moment the boy's fate was sealed: he would die sooner than be a parson. I am only speaking of a fact which I think typical. English and American lads of *mettle* and use will not allow themselves to be disposed of without their own will. Lads without mettle will allow this liberty to be taken with them—which accounts for a particular kind of curate; and furthermore, to carry out the argument, for a particular kind of barrister, the caricatured Buzfuz.

Sir Jasper Meredith had a very strong love, an almost feminine love, for Roland. Roland was in a way his god. The little man could make no physical effort, and had a large brain, and so he used to lie and dream. And he used to lie and dream of all he would do if he were Roland; and, moreover, what he would not do if he were Roland. And he came to the conclusion that Roland was wasting his energies by this ridiculous boat−racing, and put the matter before him several dozens of times which was one matter; but he proposed Roland's career for him, which was quite another.

“My career!” said Roland to him. “A brave one for a man like me! Jasper, you are silly. Schools, you say. I could do well there—and then? Look at” (supply the name for yourself). “Landlord? Why, any one could be *that*. Magistrate? Man, my temper is not sufficiently good, and my prejudices are too strong. I should convict every poacher, and let off every thief. Chairman of quarter sessions? My dear man, I should say to the grand jury, 'Get your idiotic business over as you can, and let us get out of this.' And to the petty jury, 'You boxful of thundering idiots, if you sit there in a row after your last verdict, I'll shy something at you;' and that wouldn't do, you know. I don't rank the intelligence of my countrymen high. Then again, Jasper, as member of Parliament, I am a loose bird with my money; out four thousand pounds, you know. If the dear old dad would tell us what he spent, it would be nigh twelve thousand pounds. You did not know your father, did you?”

“No,” said Sir Jasper.

“Nor mother? Then you don't know what it is.”

“You mean their death?”

“No, I don't.”

“You come into eight thousand a year now,” said Sir Jasper.

“And I'd have given it up to keep him alive,” said Roland. “There was no company like my father's. He was a true−born Radical.”

By which it maybe seen that at this time Roland was as good a Radical as the rest of us. Mr. Disraeli was no better Radical than Roland. Mr. Bright was Conservative compared to him. He had asked himself the question which all young men of any go ask themselves. “What is it all about? What does it mean?” And he had answered to himself that it was all words, and did not mean anything.

And moreover, he had been disappointed in love, which made a great difference. Men who have met with disappointment in that line, tell us that it plays the mischief with a fellow. Or to put it in loose scientific language (which is always the best method), that it superinduces a phase of the Epithumia, always underlying, and to some extent influencing, the action of the Thumos, and in an extreme case that of the Logos. This being an extreme case, Roland's Logos was actually affected. His Thumos, or simply intellectual part, told him that Mary Maynard was a fool, and that he was another. His Epithumia, or sentimental part, told him that he was very fond of her, and that he would make a fool of himself for her; and so his Logos was affected, and he set to work to do so; and succeeded.

One is very sorry about poor Roland's Logos getting affected in this manner. It merely means that he lost his temper and made an ass of himself. The only thing I wish to call your attention to, is, that men like Roland, when they lose their temper, are a long while before they find it again. Perhaps reasonable beings will understand Roland's position better by my saying this. He had succeeded in everything, and now was thrown overboard by a girl whom he half despised, but sentimentally loved. And thus he made a fool of himself. I need not tell you that he made a very discreet, decorous, high−minded, self−sacrificing fool of himself; made himself as great a fool as Bayard, Sidney, or Willoughby. I only want you to believe that his folly is probable.

Chapter 26.

Eastward! The dear old man of Waterloo was dead, and his voice was to be heard no more for ever by the son who loved him so well.

Was he sorry? He was deeply sorry; but beneath his sorrow there was a depth of gladness immeasurable. Roland was his own master; no one had the right to advise and direct him now. A son of freedom was now free, and felt the blood moving in his veins. His step was taken, and he was going to dispense with all vain babble which might defeat the carrying out of his object. Is he the first fool that has cast all to the winds for a fancy? Did not one poor boy, Hastings, slink into a dishonoured grave only yesterday? But from the ruin of no such quest as Roland's.

Roland was in London, and had not yet been home. At ten o'clock one morning he was shown into a somewhat dingy anteroom, where there were many strange men waiting, almost all in uniform, few of whom seemed to know one another, but who were all lounging about, and looking out of window.

They seemed very restless and idle, and were mostly in complexion blonde. Roland sat modestly down at the door and looked at them. He said to himself, “They are a class; they want individuality.” As a general remark this was certainly true. Still there were exceptions. He selected one in an instant from among these men (every one drawn from life), so soon to be gathered in the harvest of death. Roland said the other day that he must be a born general to have selected that man as a good officer the first moment he saw him.

He was a small man, with rather a long nose, and very keen grey eyes—eyes out of which looked diligence and persistent duty. Roland looked on him first because he was unlike the usual style of British officers, and Roland thought that, had he not been in uniform, he would have looked mean. Two or three friends of his got him to strip to the waist a few years afterwards; he did not look mean then, with twenty−eight sword−cuts on him, and probably the best−won Victoria Cross ever given hanging on his coat when he put it on again. This man stood to be slashed almost to death because he would not leave a common soldier. The next man who took his eye was a gigantic cavalry officer, with 300*l*. worth of fripperies upon him, who stood in the middle of the room, and had found two men whom he knew. This officer gave intense delight to Roland. At last he had seen a Plunger. And this Plunger actually said “Haw!” before, as Roland put it, he went into the major term of his syllogism. He was the only officer whom Roland ever met who used that strange interjection. My experience, smaller than Roland's, confirms this. I have an heard an officer say, “Hum! Haw! Damme!” *on the stage*. But (save this one) not off it.

This tremendously great man stood talking in the middle of the room to two other officers. There must have been some argument before the time Roland came in, for the first he heard of it was the cavalry officer re−opening the previous case by saying—

“Haw!”

“Now I shall hear a real Plunger,” said Roland, and he listened intently.

“Haw! You put it so,” said the Plunger. “I on my part put it in this manner. I saw that man (married, you understand) walking with a common woman in the streets: and I did my best to get him kicked out. And I got him kicked out.”

“But, as father of the regiment, you should have given him more hearing,” said a meek little officer who was talking to him.

“Sir, as father of the regiment, I got him kicked out. I would have kicked my own son out of doors for such a thing, had one of my sons been capable of it. I am not merely father of my officers, I am father of my men. And my men would neither follow us nor respect us, if we saw such things done and made no sign.”

“It was a little irregular, was it not?”

“Yes, sir,” said the great Plunger. “I doubt it was. I doubt that the irregularity of that court−martial means (to me) a fine of ten thousand pounds. They will take the regiment from me, but my men will remember that I only tried to prevent their being commanded by a scoundrel.”

“But it was irregular,” said the little officer.

“It was,” said the dragoon, “and I must pay the piper. If he had not been married, I would never have said a word. But it is as it is. I won't demoralise the regiment by having married officers degrading their order in this

way. I am not clever, like you, sir, but I see that unless some moral tone is kept up among the married officers, our regiment, any regiment, will go to the devil. Let Mike O'Dowd take my boys into action next time. He is a better man than ever I was."

And Roland said—"I like this. This will do. These are men." Roland had brought his silly boat−racing to a strange school. If he had wanted to attend to his interests, he had better have been far away. If he had wanted to join himself to the heart of a great nation, in her deadliest, darkest hour, he was in the right place.

He sat near the door all alone, and watched. A slight, very handsome man came, and found the great cavalry officer. This man also was noticeable, very noticeable, indeed in a military way, for he had seen an objectionable Russian battery, which was playing mischief with our people, and some one said that it ought to be taken; and the young man said that he would take it if three would follow him. And three followed him, but he missed them, and thought they had gone back; and so leaped into the battery alone, shooting right and left with his revolver, believing that the bonny broad acres were gone to his brother for evermore. But no. His men were with him, and the good young gentleman wears his cross at his button−hole to this day.

"What a pretty fellow you are!" thought Roland, who was a prettier fellow than he. "I like this." Roland, looking more closely, came to the conclusion that the V.C. was as pretty a fellow as he had ever seen. Only there came in a prettier one.

A tall and solemn young man, with a black beard, a very deliberate young man, who knew his own mind. The young man, seeing before him a perfect flower garden of scarlet and gold, geranium and calceolaria, turned to Roland, sitting near the door, and bending down his well−turned head, said—

"Are you the clerk?"

"No," said Roland, behind his hand; "I am come here by appointment, after my commission."

"Ho!" said Lord S—. "You and I can sit together then. Is it a full dress levée?"

"I believe that it is," said Roland.

"You don't seem to know who I am," said Lord S—.

"I was waiting to see whether you would remember who I was, my lord," Roland answered, coolly.

Lord S— looked more closely, and said−"Why, you are Evans, of Paul's. You don't mean to say that you have left the University! 'What dost thou from Gottenberg, old friend?' I thought you were going to stick to the paternal acres, and go through the real course of training for Parliament."

"I am sick of it all," said Roland, "and I am going into the army."

"I am sick of it, also," said the young lord, very gravely "but I am going to stay at home and try to mend it. How very foolish the young lady must be."

"What young lady?" said Roland, blushing deeply.

"The young lady who has caused you to take such a singular resolution."

"Do you know then—" said Roland.

"Not a word," said Lord S—; "only when I see a young fellow of talent and chances entering the army, I guess there is a young lady at the bottom of it."

Roland was perfectly aghast at this wonderful instance of shrewdness. He did not know, country bumpkin as he was, that Lord S— had known more of the world when he was fourteen than Roland did when he was twenty. He had absolutely nothing to say. Lord S—said, "Who is the other man?"

Roland, fairly off his balance with wonder, said, without hesitation—"Sir Jasper Meredith."

"Why, he's not a marrying man! This is the doing of the young lady's mother, I fear. Why, before I left Oxford, I have seen you carrying that little, venomous−tongued heap of bones about in your arms. Yes; this is the mother's work."

Roland was more aghast than ever, and Lord S— intensely enjoyed his confusion.

"This sort of thing often happens with our people," said Lord S—; "but why Jessamy is to run away and 'list, because Jimmy's mother has manoeuvred for another thousand a year or so, I cannot see. Don't do it; don't 'list. We want fellows like you. Yon know how I hate your extreme democracy; I have no chance of showing you how I love you."

There was nothing in Roland which could make him resist this brave man, and he said, standing up and speaking in a whisper, "I have made a fool of myself elsewhere."

"I hope not," said Lord S—, coldly.

“I mean in this way,” said Roland, eagerly: “I begin to think that—that—things might have been different in another quarter. Do you see?”

Lord S— nodded, and the look in his eyes—he was a bridegroom of two months' standing—encouraged Roland to say more.

“If I can win honours,” said Roland, whispering to him. “I will bring them back and lay them at her feet. I will say to her, 'Ethel, I never understood you'−”

“And all that,” said Lord S—. “I think you really *had* better 'list for a time. But it is very strange; I asked Fitzgerald about you, and he told me that you were so self−contained and so silent. How is it that you have let out so much to me about your private affairs—to a man you have hardly seen?”

Roland was wondering to himself, and was trying to answer, when a clerk came out of the inner room, and coming up to Lord S—, said, “The minister waits Lord S—'s pleasure.”

Lord S— went off at once, and had nearly got to the inner door, when he turned and came quickly back to Roland.

“Do you want infantry or cavalry?” he whispered, hurriedly.

“I want service,” said Roland.

“There is no chance of service. The Crimea is only a breakdown; glorious! but still a break−down. You can't get service. We shall not meddle again in European affairs. You can't get service. Guards?”

“India,” said Roland.

“You might get a chance of seeing service there, certainly,” said Lord S—; and he paused, although the great man was waiting.

“If it fell about that the darkest midnight, of the darkest night which ever fell upon a nation, fell on this nation, would you? Yes, you would—would the 140th do? they are an old−fashioned regiment, and still wear cowry shells on their trappings.”

“Any regiment which will show me service, S—,” said Roland.

“And Ethel?” Lord S— whispered to him, and went his way to the inner room.

And Roland was left to his own thoughts; but not for long. For he was, for the first time, among a section of the men who help to govern our Empire of nearly 200,000,000 of souls. He was naturally interested; he was soon more interested.

“Now I'll swear it on the Stone of Blarney,” said a smallish, handsome man—Norse−Celt, if it mattered; “I swear it on the very Stone of Blarney itself that you're wrong. 'Tis West is to have the recrooten in Dhublin, and East is to have the Eightieth.”

The cavalry−colonel, to whom this was addressed, said, first of all, “Haw I” (I have mentioned before that he was the only officer I ever met who did.) And when he had said “Haw!” he said, “That is a mistake; East should have had the recruiting, and West the colonelcy.”

The short man said, “Bedad, it is all betux and betune—six of one, and half a dozen of the other. Kiss the Blarney Stone, colonel; it is yourself that has never kissed that same.”

“Why on earth are you talking Irish to−night, R—!” said a very solemn and quiet voice; and Roland, looking up, saw that a blonde, quiet−looking man, of about forty, was looking over the shoulder of the short, handsome man who was talking Irish.

“Only keeping my tongue in,” said the short man. “I am forced to talk all languages, as you know. West has got the recruiting at Dublin; and if they had given it to a man who could talk Irish, as I can, we should have a thousand more recruits every year.”

“True enough for you,” said the last comer, N—.

Said the cavalry−colonel: “Haw! My fellows would always have followed me, to the devil. I can't talk Irish to them, though. I'd learn it if I could. I like the men, and the men like me. There are half a dozen men in my regiment who won't get on decently without a flogging; and there's two officers in my regiment that I should dearly like to flog. But I can't, by the rules of the service. However, all said and done, I can take my regiment into action without any chance of a shot from behind.”

Roland had sat staring his eyes out during all this; but now he saw what he had always wished to see—a really great man.

He was a great man in more senses than one, for he was six foot two, over−topping the cavalry−colonel. And

he knew everybody intimately—at least, everybody except Roland, and he bowed even to him. “I'll know everybody some day,” said Roland. But meanwhile he admired. The clerk showed Roland's friend, Lord S—, out of the minister's private room, and the tall newcomer caught that young man, and said to him, “I want to see the minister *at once*,” and he waited among the others.

Roland's Oxford friend, Lord S—, came straight to him. He said, laying his hand on Roland's shoulder, “Have you changed your mind?”

“No, my lord. I do not come of a family who change their minds easily.”

“Ethel? Will she change her mind?”

“It wants no changing,” said Roland.

“Then you must go,” said Lord S—. “May God go with you! But, Evans, in the dark, dim night which is coming (O God, may morning come after it), think of this. Think of what we might make India if we kept her, and think of what she would be if we lost her. If you are to die, die for keeping India till we have civilised her. You will find it all straight in there. I have come to him on one petition, and I have given over my own and urged yours.” And so Lord S— departed, and was seen no more.

Roland stepped through a softly−shutting door, and was in the presence of the minister, a pale and very thoughtful−looking man, of about forty, deeply sunk in an easy−chair; he was reading a letter, which he held in his hand, and he turned his face from it to Roland, saying—“So you wish to leave your books for the army, do you? A strange resolution. Your friend, who has just left me, has given a most brilliant account of your prospects.”

“I am tired of England,” said Roland. “I fear I am a spoilt child.”

“Well, sir, we are not the party to grumble, at all events. You are late in applying, but in consideration of your father's services, we will do everything we possibly can for you. You may consider the matter as settled.”

And so he came out, looking brighter about the eyes, taller and grander than when he went in. And there met him the enormously tall man, with a very gentle, quiet, and clever face, who said to him, “Is the minister disengaged, sir?”

And Roland, knowing who he was, and feeling the pride that any honest lad feels for serving those who have proved themselves really true and great servants of the State, said, “I will ask the clerk, my lord.”

“I thought you *were* the clerk,” said his lordship, laughing. “Pray forgive me! But the clerks are getting to look so like soldiers since they have taken to the moustache, that one is puzzled. I see the Colonel Heavy has plunged into the Audience Chamber. Are you in the army?”

“I almost dare say so, my lord,” said Roland.

Lord X——sighed. “Are *you* going as food for powder? You are old for the army, are you not?”

“My father was a Waterloo man, and the minister has promised me a commission. He was Captain Evans, of the 140th.”

“Was he in the House?”

“For two Parliaments,” said Roland, “in old times.”

“Yes, yes; was he Evans of Tyn−y−Bald, or Evans of Llandavid, or Evans of Eglwystafid?”

“Neither, my lord; he was the Evans of Stretton.”

“Ay, ay; I see, I see. A Shropshire Evans. I thought you were a Welsh Evans. Yes, yes! Your father married a daughter of old Cecil Meredith, who rattled on Catholic Emancipation. The present man, I am told, is a cripple. Yes, your grandfather Meredith was a silent member; in fact, I never heard him open his mouth. Mum, Meredith, yes. And so your father is dead. Dear, dear! how men drop. You have come into the whole of Stretton, then?”

“Yes, my lord,” said Roland, aghast.

“Well, manage your property. It will take you all your time. You have actually more acres than I have; but I find it hard to do my duty as I would wish it done. Why are you going into the army? Why don't you attend to your property, and come into Parliament? You can't manage your property if you go into the army. I suppose,” added he, laughing, “that Miss Mordaunt wants to see you in a fine coat? Go into the yeomanry. You will look quite as fine in her eyes. Stay, I must go; here is the colonel coming out. Mind, lastly, always to keep to your father's principles; be an honest Whig, as he was, and you will come to no grief. Good−by.”

Roland left the room lost in wonder. Here was a man, whom he had seen once or twice, in holiday visits to the House of Commons, recently ennobled for great service; a man whom Roland conceived to be among the kings of

men. And this man knew more about himself than he did—Roland had never dreamt that this man had ever heard of him in his life; but he knew everything. Why, he was only wrong on one single thing; he had made a mistake about Ethel Mordaunt, using her name when he meant Mary Maynard. It was a miracle to Roland. What earthly interest could this great man have in him and his affairs?

The reason was not very far to seek, if Roland had known anything at all of the world. His father had "dropped," and he (Roland) was the head of a house with very considerable territorial influence. If Roland had only known the fact, his quiet, and, as he thought, foolish neighbour, the great Whig, Sir Spium Goggleston, had been looking out of his spectacles at Roland for a long time, and had been reporting on him. He had found out the secret of Squire Charles's heart at the boat−race at Shrewsbury. He got the happiest reports of Roland's furious Radicalism at Oxford. He had looked up Mrs. Maynard, who being strongly for Mary's union with Sir Jasper Meredith, had lied nobly, and told him that Roland would marry Ethel. He had looked up Aunt Eleanor, who hated him and had kept him waiting in a cold room for half an hour, and then violently scolded him on account of a sitting of Crevecoeur eggs, which she had bought from Lady Goggleston, for which Aunt Eleanor had paid five shillings, but which had been so shamefully jolted in transmission that none of them came out. (In fact, Aunt Eleanor expressed her determination to county court Lady Goggleston for the money; but don't mention this.) Sir Spium left that house, it might be said, naked and wounded. Still Aunt Eleanor, in her temper, had assisted him with regard to his report at head−quarters. She had said, in the argument about the eggs, several things which she might just as well have left alone. Goggleston had introduced Mary Maynard's name; and Aunt Eleanor, in repudiating her, had unhappily introduced Ethel's. For which she could have bitten her tongue out.

So Goggleston, by hook and by crook, had reported this about Roland. A splendid unencumbered property, tenants well treated, who would work like sheep for the Whigs. Carries with him the families of Maynard, the head of which house has just married his sister; and Mordaunt, to the eldest young lady of which house he is engaged to be married. Roland was a most important young man. He never dreamt it; but with a possible dissolution he *was*.

A Liberal Whip knows all about *you*, if you are of any importance. But a Tory Whip knows all about you and your friends too, if you have any.

That, one would suspect, is one of the secrets of the Conservative organisation which has beaten us, here and there, just lately. If Sir Spium Goggleston had sent his wife instead of going himself, she would probably have found out the relations between Roland and Ethel. One effect of which would have been that Roland, while he was walking towards Allan Gray's lodgings, would not have been wondering why the great old Whig had made such an abominable mistake as to connect his name with Ethel's.

But the streets were empty, and he whistled as he went.

Chapter 27.

When Roland knocked at the door of Allan Gray, he had forgotten all about the great men he had seen, and all the things they had said. For he had received a very curious letter from Allan Gray, and he was thinking over it. The door was opened by Mrs. Gray, whom Roland knew. He was very polite to her, and he passed into the parlour on the right, where Allan Gray was sitting in state with papers on the table before him.

Allan Gray, less trained than Roland, bowed solemnly, and brought him to the fire. “Indeed, and it is cold to−night,” said Roland. “A fire is a good thing, and in this instance it amounts to a personal obligation.”

Allan Gray could not make head or tail of this beginning. He bowed stiffly, and said—

“I had not anticipated the honour of this interview.”

“Lord love the man, you said you would not object, and now I have come you say that you had not anticipated,——and so on,—” said Roland. “Why, if any two men in England want a great talk together to−night, it is you and I.”

“I thought my case was so strong that you would scarcely dare to meet me except by deputy.”

“Lord love the man, again. What is his case? As for daring, I tell you point−blank, that I dare do anything, save wrong.”

Allan Gray had never seen coolness of this kind before. He said—

“You received my letter, sir?”

“Yes,” said Roland. “It seems that you are going to dispute my succession to Stretton Castle. I can't ask you on what grounds, because, don't you see, that would be unfair and ungentlemanly on my part. I can only say that, from all I have ever heard of you from Eddy, you are much fitter to have it than I am. I have the will to do good, you have the way. Why on earth should we talk about the matter?”

“I wished to talk business,” said Allan Gray, utterly puzzled.

“What on earth would become of the lawyers if we talked our own business over?” said Roland. “Here am I, gazetted on next Tuesday. My dear man, how can I talk business with you? If you had got a new and very glorious career before you, would you want to talk on business which had much better be left to your lawyer?”

“I would really be more in earnest about it, sir,” said Allan Gray.

“I will be perfectly in earnest about it,” said Roland, “Tell me, once again, what is the matter? We will begin *de novo*.”

“I am going to dispute your claim to the inheritance.”

“Stretton?”

“Exactly. My case is complete, and is a very strong one. What is yours?”

“I have not the wildest idea,” said Roland, laughing.

Allan Gray was actually angry. “I never believed you frivolous,” he said, sternly, “and this is frivolity, sir. If it is intended as an insult to me, I despise it.”

Roland was on the high horse at once. “My good friend,” he said, “you have called me frivolous. Now it is well known that whatever I may be, I am not that.”

“You are treating a great question very frivolously, sir.”

“*I* don't know anything about its being a great question,” said Roland. “It is possible enough that you may be heir to the property which I at present consider mine: the succession has been disputed before now. I am not in the least degree frivolous when I laugh at the idea of discussing with you a question which, before it is finished, will be discussed by the best legal heads in the land. You have instructed your attorneys, I suppose? I shall at once instruct mine. And from that moment, my dear Mr. Gray, the lowest messenger in the courts of law will have no more influence over the case than you or I.”

This obvious piece of common sense rather staggered Allan Gray, but he said—

“*I* intend to direct *my* lawyers.”

“Mine,” said Roland, “are, I am happy to say, not fools enough to allow of any interference whatever. Are you trained to the law?”

“No.”

“Nor I either,” said Roland. “It is against my interest, but I will give you this piece of advice. You leave your lawyers alone. Come to India with me, and let them fight it out. Only don't let us quarrel. Yours is the old Cecil claim. Have you got any money?”

“No,” said Allan, quite unable to cope with Roland's extreme coolness.

“Then your solicitors can scarcely be respectable men, for this is a *great* speculation. We knew of it before, you know, and we can turn it at every point. Who are your men?”

Allan Gray mentioned a house, “most undeniable,” as the horsey men say. Even Roland knew their names as those of leading and most respectable men.

“By Jove!” he said. “Have *they* taken up the Cecil claim?”

“I know of no Cecil claim,” said Allan Gray. “My claim comes from this simple fact: I have the most unimpeachable evidence that I am your elder brother by your father's previous marriage. Of that there is no earthly doubt whatever. The names of my attorneys will guarantee that. Their respectability, on the one hand, and their well−known cautiousness on the other, would be guarantee that they would not take up the case of a penniless jeweller's *journeyman* on speculation unless they believed it. I am, I believe, perfectly sure of that part of my case.”

“My elder brother!” said Roland.

“Undoubtedly so,” said Allan Gray; “and, what is more, your legitimate elder brother.”

“I cannot believe *that* part of it,” said Roland, after a minute's thought. “My father must have known whether he was married to your mother or whether he was not; and to accuse him of neglecting or not acknowledging a legitimate son, is to insult his memory. I assure you, in the most temperate manner, that you are miles wrong in your estimate of my father's character if you consider him capable of such a thing.”

“He never knew of my existence,” said Allan. “A fraud was practised on him by a foolish woman who loved him—”

“Well, that is all a matter for the lawyers,” said Roland. “You need not show your hand to *me*, of all people. We will fight it out fair and square, lawyer to lawyer. *I* don't see any reason for any personal rancour between us. I want to know nothing at all—”

Roland, who had been sitting hitherto, rose at this moment, and walked hurriedly up and down the room. Allan Gray spoke three times to him before he answered, and then his answer seemed to be scarcely to the purpose.

“I want to ask you one question, and one only, as from one gentleman to another. I assure you that it is only on sentimental grounds, and can do you no harm at all. In the list of the witnesses which you have to call is there one Mrs. Maynard, of Maynard's Barton?”

“There is?” said Allan Gray.

“Hah! thank you. That will account. I will ask no more questions. Well, if you can prove yourself to be my elder brother, I shall not be ashamed of you. Do your duty by the tenantry. I shall be sorry to lose my money, but probably you will do your duty by those few sheep in the wilderness better than I could have done—for I am sick of England. I will be a bigger man than you, even if you gain your point. Well, good−by, and the worst of luck to you in this matter, and the best in all others.”

“I cannot conceive that you understand the great gravity of your position, sir,” said Allan Gray. “Have you read your father's will?”

“You mean, do I know your strong point? Yes, I am a very clever and shrewd person, with a very high education; not unused to debate either. And from the beginning of this conversation I perceived the awful hold which the wording of my father's will gives you, if you can only prove your identity and legitimacy. The will runs, 'To my eldest son,' never mentioning my name. I saw that point a little time ago.”

“Upon my honour, sir, I did not give you credit for such shrewdness,” said Allan Gray, honestly.

Roland drew his head up and laughed nearly silently at him. “You mean that you thought you could match your intellect with mine. Poor dear! I can show you a few other points to amuse you if you will. Eddy is provided for by his aunt, and so my father has omitted his name altogether. My sister is mentioned as 'My only daughter,' so you can't hurt *her*. Goodnight; and as a parting piece of advice, never word your own will if you make a dozen.”

And so Roland departed, leaving Allan Gray lost in wonder at his recklessness and *bonhomie*.

Gray, having lived a narrow, money−seeking life all his time, could not understand Roland's recklessness at

all; and, after long thought, came to the conclusion that Roland thought that he was perfectly safe, and that hence came his easy bearing.

But it was quite otherwise. To Roland, who was a shrewd, clear−headed fellow, matters looked extremely ugly. What on earth was there to prevent his father having married in a secret way before? It was quite likely. Many men had done so. If Gray could prove *that*, the foolish wording of his father's will would point at once to Allan Gray as his father's heir. And—

He determined to knock up Mr. Somes, the head of the London branch of his Shrewsbury lawyers, and speak to him about it. Mr. Somes was over his dessert, and alone, and Roland, after a few preliminary civilities, opened the matter to that gentleman.

Mr. Somes, a young man about thirty, with long whiskers, looking very much like a cavalry officer without moustaches, fixed his shrewd, bold eye on Roland at once, and begged Roland to tell him what he thought of the matter.

Roland gave him the news which has been stated above, and added, “I think very seriously of this business.”

Mr. Somes nodded. “Do you know anything of this young Perkin Warbeck?” he added. “*I* only know that he is a young man of the very highest character,” said Roland. “He is a great friend of my brother's. He is, I believe, admirable in every relation of life. I know enough of him to say that if he did not fully believe in his own claim, all the tortures of the Inquisition would not have made him advance it.”

“It is an ugly business, Mr. Roland,” said Mr. Somes. “It may go well with us, and it may go ill. I feel it my duty to tell you so. What are his proofs?”

“I have not the slightest idea,” said Roland. “Mrs. Maynard knows something, and that is all I know about the matter.”

“Mrs. Maynard of the Barton? Yes, a client of ours. We have half Shropshire for our clients in consequence of our Shrewsbury connexion, you know. The mother of the future Mrs. Evans,” he added, smiling and bowing.

“Why, no, Mr. Somes,” said Roland; “that is off; and a good thing too, for I am going to India.”

Somes showed no astonishment. He wanted to know something more.

“We will hear about India another time, Mr. Evans. So. Mrs. Maynard is one of his witnesses, and there's nothing between you and Miss Maynard? I suppose there is another gentleman in the field, handsomer than you are, although we Shropshire people used to consider you not bad−looking?”

“I believe, Somes, that poor Jasper Meredith is *au mieux* there. But what does it matter to me now?”

Somes gave a sudden start, but Roland did not notice it. Very shortly after, Roland went away, and young Somes, filling himself some claret, took a letter from his pocket−book, and read as follows:— “Bonn.

DEAR SOMES,—I have made such a thundering ass of myself, and have not a soul to advise me. I am coming at once to England.

“I have so far committed myself in writing to Miss Maynard, that her mother makes her write to me every day, and writes herself three times a−week, calling me by my Christian name: what on *earth* shall I do?

“I have no one to advise with but you. You have always been as much of a friend as a man of business. Do advise me, &c.

“JASPER MEREDITH.”

Chapter 28.

Ethel was more than ever with Miss Evans in these times, and these two got more and more attached to one another. Ethel, watching her friend, saw that she was more and more distraught and anxious as time went on.

“I am going to have Eddy home,” she said one morning, abruptly. “He must do something for himself, for goodness knows how many I may have on my hands soon; and the army is not so expensive as Oxford, and so he had better be seen after. Ho! I suppose you know that Roland has got his commission, and passed his examination easily.”

Ethel was very much surprised.

“Ah! you may well stare, indeed. A nice mess we have made of it among us. I am sure I don't know whatever we shall do. I suppose you have not heard that Sir Jasper Meredith is engaged to Mary Maynard?”

“Impossible!” cried Ethel.

“True, young lady, for all that. Mrs. Maynard announces it everywhere, most openly. Well,” she continued, rubbing her nose. “I am sorry for the little cripple, but it has saved our Roland, at all events. *Now*, perhaps, he will believe people when they tell him. I don't myself know what the man's intellect is made of, not to see through such a woman as *that*. In some senses he had better go where he is going; he leaves no fool behind to watch his interests.”

“Will he go abroad with his regiment, then, Miss Evans?”

“Lord bless you, didn't you know? He is going to India for years and years.” And when, with kindly shaking hand, she had administered the blow, she was silent, leaving the girl quite to herself.

Ethel was silent also. At one time she breathed a little quicker, and there was a fluttering in her breath, but it soon stopped. Aunt Eleanor took no notice for a little while, and then went on with affected petulance.

“Of course he must go and fight somewhere. None of our family would have their health if they were not fighting somebody. I am always fighting the Board of Guardians, or the farmers, or Deacon Macdingaway, or you, or Eddy, or some of you. The dear fellow who is gone fought at Waterloo and in India. It is all very well for his mother to say that it is ridiculous. *I* don't see it. He could make himself a rich man and a famous one by going to India, whereas he could do no possible good in regard to this lawsuit by staying here. *I* think it the best thing.”

“The lawsuit!” said Ethel. “What lawsuit?”

“Law, child, they are going to dispute his succession, or something of that sort; but *I'll* sort 'em. That deceitful old trot?”

“What deceitful old trot?” asked Ethel, in wonder.

“Phillis Myrtle. That woman has deceived every one, and now she has let it all out in her drink to Mrs. Gray. I am not going to talk one word more about the matter. Your brother Jimmy is coming home to pass his examination for the army, at Chelsea Hospital of all places, as if he was a wooden−legged pensioner, given to drink and language. I suppose you will say that you didn't know that next?”

“Indeed, I did not, Miss Evans.”

“I knew she would,” said Aunt Eleanor, with scornful triumph. “The next thing she will say is, that she does not know that Roland is coming here to this house, this very night, to dine and sleep, and to say good−by to us all—that will be the next thing she will say, mark my words.”

“Indeed it will, Miss Evans,” said Ethel.

“I knew it,” said Aunt Eleanor, “I knew she would say that. However, child, it is true, and as it is too late for you to go home, you had better stay and make the best of it.”

And now, for the first time, Aunt Eleanor looked at Ethel, and discovered that Ethel had turned, and was looking very steadily at her without speaking.

“Yes,” said Aunt Eleanor, quite coolly, “you are perfectly correct in your supposition. I arranged this meeting here tonight, and so you may keep your eyes to yourself, child. I thought proper to do so, and I did it: I never give any further reasons for my conduct than that. I first of all communicated with Jimmy to know when he was coming, and I got him to promise to be here to−night. Then I sent and ordered Eddy home; in fact, he is at his father's house now. Then I ordered your brother John to step across; and lastly, I sent for Roland. And so they will

all be here to dinner; and I am going to scold the cook and spoil the dinner for a quarter of an hour, and then I am going to dress. If you say a word, I will be civil to you. Go." And Ethel went without a word, and there was silence in the house.

Not for long. A wild storm, which had been for some time progressing towards Pulverbatch Grange, now broke open the door, and held high riot in her peaceful hall. Aunt Eleanor heard it as she was putting on her brooch; and as she listened, her face grew fixed and worn−looking. And she did a strange thing.

She knelt down at her dressing−table and prayed—prayed earnestly, until the first passionate spirit of her prayer had gone by the mere iteration of the words. Then, like a good Christian, she rose from her knees, strengthened, resigned, but perfectly self−possessed and determined; and with her head in the air, went down the staircase saying, "My bonny boys!"

Her bonny boys were misconducting themselves in the most outrageous manner. Jim Mordaunt had gone straight to Stretton Castle, and had driven over with Roland and Eddy in a dog−cart. They had arranged that Roland should sit behind with the groom, and that Eddy should drive, to which James had agreed with a calmness which to Roland foreboded disaster. He had proposed to drive, but was at once objurgated by Eddy and James, as departing from his given word; and so they had departed, Eddy driving. But in the first dangerous lane, Jim Mordaunt discovered that he wanted to drive, and fought Eddy for the reins. Eddy resisted, and Roland found it necessary to interfere mildly, and to send the groom, who was convulsed with laughter, to the plunging horse's head. After long recriminations, James was allowed to drive, and made the horse run away (fictitiously) in the darkest of dark places; and by scientific handling of his whip, knocked Eddy's hat off, and pretended that he could not pull his horse up to recover it. Petruchio at his maddest was not so mad as James was that night; and so, when Aunt Eleanor came softly stepping down the staircase, with her candle glittering on her diamonds, she found Eddy with his curls in disorder, and the rain−drops glittering upon them, scolding James and appealing to Roland; James sedately exculpating himself, representing the whole matter as an unavoidable accident; and Roland standing by laughing, and saying at intervals, "You fools! you fools!"

They did not see her till she said, "Well, young men, have you been having some fun?"

Their good−humoured, kindly riot was stilled in an instant as they came towards her. She was a strange lady this, yet one who could give a reason for her actions, too. She passed Eddy and Roland, and going straight to James Mordaunt, and kissing him on the forehead, whispered to him, "God bless you, my boy: you are not the first, and you won't be the last." And then leaving him suddenly, she shook hands with Roland, looking at him steadily. After this she turned to Eddy, and said, "Where is your hat, sir?"

"*He* knocked it off on purpose," said Eddy.

"Why, bless the boy, his hair is all wet," said Aunt Eleanor, making an excuse to pass her hand over the curls of this "carum caput." "Go and dry it, sir, upstairs. No, don't; you will not hurt. Come into the parlour."

But as they were going the door was opened by one of the men, and a gruff voice asked, "Is my brother here?" And James went back; for it was his brother, and they made their greeting alone.

"How goes it, Jimmy?" said the elder.

"No better, old man," said the younger.

"That's bad, old chap," said the elder. "Keep a light heart, and you'll soon forget it. By−the−bye, the bay mare has come down with Tom, in Bennington Lane, and is knocked all to bits. I always said she was too straight in the shoulder. The Governor must have squinted when he bought her. Is Ethel here?"

"No, Johnny. Why?"

"Because she ain't at home, that is all. I suppose she is somewhere." And so they went into that room which Miss Evans was pleased to call her parlour.

The dinner−table was laid at the lower end, and they clustered round the great fireplace at the upper or drawing−room end, and talked pleasantly and quietly together. There was no more noise now; the last sparkle of the old fun was ever. A great parting was coming, and the shadow of it was upon them. Aunt Eleanor made Roland come and sit beside her, and as she talked to him about his resolution of going to India, and of this wonderful lawsuit, she not only managed to turn himself and her self away from the fire towards the door at the lower end of the long room, but also, in the heat of her assurance that she would manage for his interests in the best way, contrived to get hold of his hand. As she held it, the door opened, and some one came with a candle in her hand, throwing the light upon her face. At which time Aunt Eleanor found herself clasped tightly on the wrist

by Roland; and said, very quietly: “You might have found *that* out before. You may well pinch me black and blue, indeed. Yes, indeed, you may well. I won't scold you because you are going to India. But if you ever have time to think, think what a fool you have been over that matter.”

“It is too late, aunt.”

“Why, you don't suppose, do you, that such a girl as that is likely to allow herself to be played fast and loose with, as you have played fast and loose with her; and to be insulted by a chit of a Mary Maynard, as you have insulted her; and to be 'Etheled' as you have 'Etheled' her; and then listen to a word you have got to say without—without—boxing your stupid ears. You don't suppose *that*, do you? I don't. Look at her.”

And, indeed, she was well worth looking at, holding her brother James's shoulders, and looking into his eyes with gentle, tender curiosity: for Ethel was as well worth looking at as any young lady in the good county of Shropshire that day.

“Roland,” she said, stepping forward and smiling on him, “and so you are going to India: mercy on us, how lonely we shall all be, and how the times will have changed! I shall stay with Miss Evans altogether, if she will have me now.”

She was quite self−possessed, much more so than was he; and as he sat beside her, and talked to her all that evening, he thought more and more what a fool he had been.

Chapter 29.

Roland had been in bed some three hours, when he was awakened in the dead of night by a horse's hoofs on the gravel; and while he was still lying wondering, a servant entered half−dressed, with a light, and put a telegram in his hand.

“The Colonel of the 140th Dragoons to Cornet Evans:—You will instantly join head−quarters, and make every preparation for sailing at once, Cornet Marlow having met with a severe accident. No delay can be permitted.”

His first astonishment over, he bade the servant dress himself and help pack, while he went off to rouse Eddy. Eddy at once determined to go with him, and see the very last of him, and they spent the night in packing, having determined only to tell their mother what had happened in the morning, and then only half the truth.

It was very strange, moving about the darkened house with lights in the dead of night, and coming, under such strange circumstances, on old familiar objects, now to be parted from perhaps for ever. This had been his only home, and yet he parted with it almost without a sigh, as he parted with servant, horse, dog, almost all. The fire of life was burning high and clear with him; there was no present and no past for him, only a glorious future.

The parting from his mother was not difficult, for indeed he told her only that he was summoned to the head−quarters of his regiment. Not another soul save the servants did he see, but had driven off in the carriage long before any of the Mordaunts were astir. He looked across the valley at their house in the fresh morning air, and the house was closed, and no smoke was coming from the chimneys. Much was to pass before he saw them again.

He was very silent, but very gentle and kind in the train. During the whole of the long day's journey to Chatham, he talked only in a wondering, eager way about the future: where they would send him; how he should get his necessaries together in so short a time, and how delightful it would be. The moment they got to Chatham, he reported himself to the Colonel, who seemed pleased at his diligence, and complimented him.

The Colonel looked at Roland with intense curiosity as he did so, and Roland looked intently on the Colonel. He was a tall, long man, with a lean, brown face, and two bright, hazel eyes looking out from under grizzled eyebrows; also a pair of grizzled moustaches, not curled, which scarcely concealed the determined pout of the lower lip. A very pleasant−looking man when in good humour, as he was now. His name, Colonel Cordery.

“I hear all kinds of fine things of you, sir. I hope you will like us. We have the name of being one of the most agreeable regiments in the army. If you will fit in with us, we shall fit in with you. We are a little old−fashioned and quiet, and you will find it dull after Oxford, I fear; but we have not got a single snob in the regiment, which is a great thing.”

“You are very fortunate, sir,” said Roland, by way of saying something.

“It is more good management than good fortune, though,” said the Colonel, thoughtfully. “You see, we have a way of getting rid of snobs; we all get so thundering polite and *genteel* (not gentleman−like, we are always that) that they can't stand us, and exchange. That is the way we manage. We are rather surprised at your joining our regiment. I should have thought that you would at least have tried for the Engineers, or, missing that, the Artillery. However, I have such a letter from Lord S—about you, that you will be one of us at once. You will find us not very high in literary acquirements; we *could* all construe our Caesar's Commentaries, but not many could do so now. But you will find this a regiment which knows its duty. You will find the officers personally knowing the men, and the men respecting the officers. How strange that a man with your prospects should become a dragoon! Well, that is no business of mine. You will find us good fellows, ready to welcome you heartily.”

“I fear I shall have short time to learn my duty, sir,” said Roland.

“We will teach it you, theoretically, on board ship, as they do musketry at Hythe—never allow a man powder and ball till he is a perfect shot. Ha! ha! A man whose father has kept hounds, and who has himself get a first in Moderations at Oxford, need not fear cavalry drill. You will come to mess to−night?

“Certainly, sir. I will step round and tell my brother, and dress.”

“Bring your brother. And look here—you have five days' leave; you must go back to London for your outfit; who are your agents?”

“C—−, I believe, sir.”

“Well, they will see to you. I will introduce you to−night. Go along and dress.”

In a short time the men began to dawdle into the mess−room one by one, and to talk shop to one another. And if you hear the officers of any regiment talking about their duty, get your son into that regiment by hook or by crook, for it is a good one. The Colonel and his boy (the Colonel was a widower, and the boy was in the Engineers, doing well), came in; and the Colonel sat down before the fire, very thoughtfully; and discovering his sword, took it off and put it in the coal−scuttle, from which it was dexterously removed by a subaltern. The Colonel was in a brown study, and the other men talked low.

At last he said, spreading his hands abroad, before the fire, “Well! well! he knows his own affairs best; but it is a most astonishing timing to me.”

Those round him understood him at once. One of them said, “Will the new Cornet do, Colonel?”

“Oh yes, he'll do fast enough. But why on earth did the Minister and the Horse Guards and Lord S— send him to us?”

“Because,” said his son, “they knew, all three of them, that my father's regiment was the best−governed and best−ordered regiment in the service.”

“Well, it is a good regiment. Hush! Here they are; he and his brother,” and he rose.

The mess had got it into their heads that they should see a pale, bent man, over−worn by studies, and a pasty−faced youth from Oxford—his brother. Soldiers can judge of men, and they were taken by surprise.

Again, among men who have undergone a certain class−training, there is an unwritten law by which one gentleman can often recognise another at first sight. The first sight is very often wrong. One may find a finished gentleman in training and in heart, under the disguise of an outward−looking cad, and you may find a thorough−going cad under the disguise of a gentleman. But with regard to Roland and Eddy there was no mistake; and once more they were taken by surprise. Their experience of Oxford men had not been uniformly happy—in fact otherwise; but here were, at first sight, two *traditional* Oxford men.

Roland came in first—grand, imperial, perfectly cool, and perfectly conciliatory—in height reaching the Colonel, in personal appearance far surpassing any man in the room. The unspoken verdict upon him was, “He will do.” And as Aunt Eleanor might have said—“I should think he would.” He met with a warm and genial reception from this jolly regiment, and was from the first moment a success. But by no means such a success as Eddy. Eddy came in with his great eyes staring, and his mouth slightly parted in sheer curiosity. He was introduced to one and to the other, and he made the requisite bow; but the look of whimsical curiosity was still in his face, when Roland, the Colonel, and the Adjutant were deep in confabulation, and when most of the junior officers had gathered round him.

For Aunt Eleanor was right. There was something singularly attractive about this lad. The poor boy had a way of looking very handsome when he admired anything, and of not throwing any expression into his face when he was disgusted at anything. He was admiring now, and they gathered round him. Also he was pleasantly ready with his tongue. Lieutenant Spiller began the conversation.

“Are you going into the army, Mr. Evans?”

“Yes,” said Eddy; “but into the infantry. You see, my aunt is afraid of my falling into dissipated ways if I join the cavalry. Now, does your experience bear her out, for instance?”

“Certainly not in this regiment,” said Spiller, laughing; “but your aunt is in the main right.”

“She generally is,” said Eddy. “I wish you could make a vacancy for me; I should like to go with Roland.”

“Marlow only made the vacancy for him by breaking his leg in two places,” said Captain Markham.

“Then I must decline in the infantry,” said Eddy, and they all went to dinner.

There was contention about Eddy. Roland was made to sit by the Colonel to be talked to, but with regard to Eddy there was contention. “Come here, Evans,” said one. “His place is here,” said another. Eddy was perfectly cool. He said, “I will sit where you like, for you all seem very nice. Don't spoil me for the infantry, that is all; I am not used to be spoilt at home.”

The dinner was plain, but eaten with a good appetite. They had all been hard at work that morning. Roland and the Colonel talked much together, and when warmed with his meat and drink (in moderation), the Colonel, like an honest man, grew confidential.

“To tell you the very real truth, Evans,” he said, “I was not best pleased at your coming here at all first.”

“I am sorry for that, sir; I will try to remove your causes of objection.”

“They are removed already, I think. We don't, as a rule, want scholars in our regiment; they are apt to be bumptious, and we can't stand bumptious men. Now you don't seem in the least degree bumptious.”

“I assure you I am not, sir.”

“No! no! Quite so. I dare say you will do us a deal of good; freshen us up a bit, eh? I suppose you read the Saturday Review now?”

Roland confessed he did.

“Beastly paper, but very clever, is it not?”

Roland said that at the University it was considered able.

“Yes, you are very rich, are you not?”

Roland said, “I ought to have some six or seven thousand a year.”

“Are you extravagant?

“No, quite otherwise,” said Roland.

“Because I want to point this out to you. You are by very far the richest man in this regiment, and we are the quietest and cheapest cavalry regiment in the service. Consider, Evans, what wicked thing you would do were you to bring on habits of competitive ostentation in our pleasant little family. We are not Solomons; I have fools under me, who, poor boys, would resent your ostentation, and hate you for it in the first instance, and then try to emulate it—to their ruin, ay, and to the ruin of the regiment. We are a happy little family, Evans; don't you make it an unhappy one by idleness and extravagance.”

“Before heaven, sir,” said Roland, “I only desire to learn my duty from you.”

The Major, a lean man, with a hungry face, pinched in sharply under the cheek bones, and wandering, speculative eyes, here answered—

“The young man has spoken well. Works are well. What is your faith?”

“My dear Brocklebank,” said the Colonel, “is not this rather soon?”

Major Brocklebank never noticed him. “Have you gone through the fire of ill−concealed Papistry, at Oxford, young man, and have you come out without a scorch? It is impossible. I fear you are a High Churchman.”

“I am very much afraid I was what you would call a High Churchman,” said Roland, rather frightened at having to confess faith in strange company, but perfectly resolute. “And I am afraid—I mean I hope—−I mean I intend to remain as much of one as I can; and since this confession has been forced upon me, I may as well tell the whole truth at once, and say that in politics am an extreme Radical.”

“Come out and see the men, Evans,” said the Colonel. And Roland rose and went after him, pleased and proud at being commanded by a better man than himself. When he got into the barrack−square, under the clouded moon, he discovered that the Colonel was convulsed with laughter.

“Old Brocklebank and you!” he said, when he found his voice. “Why, old Brocklebank is a Dissenter and a Radical, and you are a Puseyite and a Radical. We shall have some fun out of you. Only mind, Evans,” he said, seriously, “don't, by your prior scholarship, make Brocklebank ridiculous. He has proved himself a very splendid officer; you have still to prove yourself that. And he has done more to purify our mess from loose talk than ever I did. They *daren't* before him. Come and see your men.”

“I thought a cavalry regiment was very different from this, sir,” said Roland.

“There is no regiment like ours, sir,” said the Colonel. “Brocklebank and I have made it what it is. By heaven, sir, I wish you could have seen it before our time. Well.”

They walked in silence for a few moments, and the Colonel said, “Will you see your men first, or your horses?”

And Roland said, “The men.”

“I am glad of that. What I want to impress on my subalterns is that they should know their men and should gain their confidence. We will see your troop, No. 2. Pause for a moment, Evans, before you look at these men and boys, and think.”

“Give the key−note,” said Roland.

“I will. These men whom you are about to see will, sooner or later, be given into your charge for life or death, for good or evil. They are ill−educated; they are recruited from the very worst class; not one of them but recruited under a cloud of debt, of despair, or of ruined love for women: or possibly worse. Now, mind, sooner or later there will come a dim, dark hour for you and for them—an hour of disaster and retreat. And in that hour, Evans,

they will cry to you for brains, for dexterity, for courage, for conduct knowing that their lives are in your hand. Are you prepared for this responsibility? We cannot supplement our battalions by conscription, like the Continental nations. Will you undertake the government of these few?"

"I will try to learn from you, sir," said Roland, for this evening was different from what he had expected; and, indeed, seeing that the darkest of dark hours was approaching, it was not at all unnatural.

The Colonel opened a door and passed in, Roland following him.

It was a long, low barrack−room, with beds, now turned down on each side, and tables along the midst. There were about forty men in the room.

The most of them had not gone to bed, but some had, for it was getting late, and as they were to sail so soon, discipline was a little relaxed. Every man rose when he saw the Colonel, and the Colonel bade them sit down again.

They were sitting in their shirts and trousers, playing at draughts, at chess, at cards, mainly "all fours," along the centre tables. They knew the Colonel's humour, and went on with their games, as though he were not present. Round each *parti* of chess, cards, or draughts, there were many lookers−on, noisy enough before the Colonel had come in, but silent now.

"These are your fellows," said the Colonel, in a whisper; "look at them." And Roland did so.

Sleepy? yes. Thoughtless? yes. Largely curious about the Colonel's visit? yes. Utterly uncurious about him, Roland? Yes again. Strange lads! many of them handsome, many ugly; but not a hopeless oarsman among them, so Roland put it. Sleepy and idle, yet looking, by some bright trick of the eye, indescribable, as though they could row, if taught; or, indeed, fight on occasion.

"I only came here to−night, men," said the Colonel, raising his voice, "to introduce your new Cornet to you. Cornet Marlow being invalided, he will go with you to Calcutta, you know."

Every eye was turned on Roland One young man sat up in bed, and kicked another young man in the next bed, who would wake; whereupon the other young man groped under the bed for his boots to shy at the first young man; and was proceeding, with expletives, to ask whether eight hours' stable−guard was not enough, when he was stiffened by the sight of the Colonel, and went fast asleep; for bed is a sanctuary which is utterly inviolable in free countries against all powers.

"These men are in bed before bugle," said the Colonel to a corporal.

"They have been at work on board all day, sir," said the corporal.

"What men are in the sick−ward?" said the Colonel.

"Only one, Job Hartop."

"You have seen your men in health, Evans; come with me and see another side of it."

Job Hartop was in an ill case; in fact, the world was over and past for Job Hartop. The surgeon was there, and said the depression brought on by chronic inflammation of the lungs was so great that he could not rally. The nurse was there, and she said that he was sinking fast, and would rattle soon: the Chaplain was there, and said that his spiritual state was satisfactory, but that there was something on his mind. The Chaplain added that he was going to give him the Communion. Would they stay?

Roland said "Yes," directly. The Colonel said a few words about preparation, but added, "We may have short shrift, some of us, one day. I will stay too."

They spoke in whispers, as we do when one is dying. The priest made ready the elements, and then they aroused the dying lad who had been laid, with his face deep in his pillow, turned way from them.

Such a strange, beautiful, flushed face turned towards them. You would scarcely have believed at first that death was there; but when you looked at the parted lips, with the dry white tongue behind them, you saw him. The battle could not last much longer.

The Colonel put the Chaplain aside for a moment. "Hartop," he said, "you are near your end, and we are going to take the Sacrament together; is there anything I can do for you?

The lad said, "No, sir, I thank you kindly."

"Is there no message to your relations,—to father or to mother?"

"No, sir, thank you. They are well shute of me."

"Is there no message to any one else now, dearer than either father or mother?" said the Colonel, quietly.

The young man paused, and then said, slowly—

“Yes. Her name is here, in this letter, under the pillow. And I want her to be told this. If I'd ever thought she cared for me, I'd never have gone after the other girl. But I didn't see it. And I never cared for the other one. And the other one, her mother wouldn't let her have me, and so I 'listed and come to this. I should like her to be told that, sir, if it could be managed. Who is that young gentleman?”

“That is Mr. Roland Evans, our new Cornet.”

“Perhaps he will take that message for one of his own troop,” said the dying man. “Stick to your troop, sir, and your troop will stick to you. What was that song that daft Geordie Cameron used to sing, the time we were quartered with the 72nd at Carlisle?

“Never mind songs now, my poor lad,” said the Colonel.

“Ay, but—but I do mind. I am giving the young gentleman the message to take to her. I know.”

“'Won't you come back to me, Douglas, Douglas?'“

“No!”

“'And I'll lay my heart on your dead heart, Douglas.'“

“That's near it, but not all.”

“'Mine eyes were blinded, your words were few.'“

“That is it! That is the message, Cornet. Now shrive me, and let me die.”

And the Chaplain began the Communion Service, and they all partook. And the young man had eaten the bread and drunk the wine, but when the Chaplain, experienced in all kinds of death on many fields, came to the passage, “Glory be to God on high,” he substituted another, “0 Lord, receive the soul of this Thy servant”; and the Colonel and Roland, looking on the bed, saw that the young man was dead.

Such was Roland's first introduction to this strange little British army, which has to hold the world on its back like the tortoise. When they were out in the square together, he asked the Colonel, “Who was be?”

“I have no idea,” said the Colonel. “He was one of those young men who come to us from no one knows whither; for what no one knows why; and make our best soldiers for particular purposes.”

“For what purposes?” said Roland.

“For desperate purposes.” said the Colonel. “That stamp of man is utterly careless of life. There is one day in my life I do not care to speak about—the day of Chillianwallah. And on that day I saw hope if we could get a message across to B—, under heavy fire. And I sent a trooper, a gentleman, a man with secret, with it. But he was cut over, and his secret with him. George Peyt wasted two years before he took the title of Lord Avonswood, and Lady Flora Barty has turned Roman Catholic. That is all I have heard, and I don't believe one word of it.”

“Then in cavalry regiments you have your romances,” said Roland.

“Lord bless you!” said the Colonel. “Why did *you* give up your career for us?”

This was dangerous ground.

“What do you suppose makes young men enlist then, Colonel?”

“Women, women, women,” said the Colonel, emphatically. “If the women will only make such fools of themselves as they generally do, we can recruit the British army without a conscription. Why, the British army would never have had *my* services, but for that very cause. Nor yours either, my good lad.”

“I beg your pardon, sir,” said Roland.

“And I beg yours also. Don't tell me. Ho, by the way, I would have told you. You are not junior Cornet. There is actually one who knows less about his duty than you do. I only knew it to−day.”

“He must he rather inexperienced,” said Roland.

“Well,” said the Colonel, “he has been studying in Germany; and I dare say knows German tactics. I don't say that he is a bad man, because, if he were, he would not have been sent to me. But I hate jobbery.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And this is a thundering piece of jobbery. The worst I have ever heard of, or dreamt of. I am not going into details. I am no reformer; I believe we could get on pretty well as we are, if they would let us alone. But this is too strong.”

“Indeed, sir.”

“Yes, and indeed,” said the Colonel. “Markham's aunt is dead, and Markham naturally don't want to go to India; so he sells out. And lo and behold, a schoolboy is gazetted to us—I assure you, a mere schoolboy—from sheer political interest. *I* was never spoken to about the matter. I only was officially informed of the fact. They

may do such things now, but they won't do them ten years hence. It is shameful. Bully him, Evans. I know he must be a Turk."

"Has he passed Chelsea, sir?"

"Oh yes; he is one of your kind, a scholar; I believe that he is a University man. The whole job has been done in a fortnight; it appears that no regiment but ours would do for him, and his father is a considerable man in his county, and so the bear is sent to us to be licked into shape."

"What is his name, sir?"

"James Mordaunt," said the Colonel.

"That bear wants no licking, Colonel. Jim has followed me."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes, sir. I know one of the finest fellows who ever walked—in his way—in your way; by Jove, sir, you have strengthened the regiment by ten men."

"And who is the lady in this case?" said the Colonel.

"I fear it is my sister," said Roland, quite off his guard. In a moment afterwards, he was praying the Colonel to forget, not to have heard, to ignore, his last speech. And the Colonel said, quietly, "My dear young man, I am the best colonel of cavalry, socially speaking, in the army. Is it likely that I could say one word?"

Yes, Jim, by simple sulky ferocity, and threats of (as he put it) making a greater beast of himself than he had ever done before; and what was more powerful still, by threatening to enlist in Roland's troop, had carried the day; and if ever one man was backed up by another, he was backed up by Sir Jasper Meredith.

Squire Mordaunt didn't see his way, so he said. He did not like to ask the Minister. It was an unusual and singular thing. It would be a sheer job; and if he wanted anything afterwards he should be ashamed to ask it of the Whigs. Sir Jasper screeched and hobbled round him for an hour.

"What is the good of talking like that?" he asked, shrilly (Aunt Eleanor once said that he was Pope without his powers of versification). "You have ratted, my dear sir: for heaven's sake take your money like an honest man. You can't possibly rat again, you know, under five or six years; and you may be dead before then, for you are ageing fast. Realise your rat while they remember it, and provide for Jim."

"Don't be impudent, Jasper," said Squire Mordaunt; "you have an ugly tongue: keep it between your tooth, boy. If you call providing for Jim putting him in a cavalry regiment, I don't."

"Then keep him at home," cried Sir Jasper, not one whit abashed; "keep him at home in idleness and sulkiness, away from Roland, and the Lord help you."

"It is no business of yours," said Squire Mordaunt.

"Not a bit," said Sir Jasper; "that is the point of it. If it any business of mine, I should take a side. As it is, I take none; but I know and can see things which you can't. If you send him with Roland he will do. If you don't, take the consequences."

"And if he gets killed there?" said Squire Mordaunt, at a loss for an argument—

"Then you will have no further trouble with him," said Sir Jasper; "which would be a relief to *my* mind if *I* were his father."

Chapter 30.

Roland, assisted by Eddy, rather enjoyed himself for the next a days; nay, I suspect, enjoyed himself very much indeed. C−'s people had the dressing of him; and loving their art, as artists should, gave up their souls to the decoration of the handsomest young officer they had had in hand for a long time. Their trade is one which rises into an art; and they carefully decorated Roland for the feast of vultures.

Nature directed them, I suppose. Game cocks only fight in their grandest plumage. War and marriage must be done in fine clothes, by all accounts. And Roland, kept posturing about before cheval glasses, as his fripperies were tried on, rather wished once or twice that Ethel could have seen him. Thus, one thing suggests the other, and *vice versa*. One can go no further in one's simile.

But Roland, in trying on his gaudy trappings, found out something of which he was not aware. He vilipended some of the most (as it seemed to him) ridiculous extravagances of his uniform. His horse's trappings were laced with money cowries. “How ridiculous is this,” said Roland to the tailor; “this is barbarous nonsense.”

The tailor brought him his best sword, and put a horse's headpiece on a block. “Will you be kind enough, sir, to see if you can cut down to the leather through those cowries?” And Roland declined, laughing, for he looked at the cowries, and looked at the sword, and came to the conclusion that the pure silica of the cowries would beat the sword. “I never saw *that* before,” he said. “I thought there was no meaning in it. I suppose you will tell me next that there is a reason for my wearing a cascade of crimson horse−hair down my back.” And as he said so, he put on his helmet and postured before the glass.

“There is a very good reason for that, sir,” said the little tailor.

“You would find a reason for anything,” said Roland.

“Well, sir,” said the tailor, “allow me to put on your helmet; you take your sword and slash away at the back of my neck through the horse−hair. *I* am game.”

“Well, I never thought of *that*,” said Roland.

“You a'n't in the army tailoring, you see, sir. Sir, what the outsiders call gewgaw and fripperies, all have a meaning and intention. Our army is an old one, and has not been badly managed on the whole. Our army, you see, sir, we having no conscription, has always been a small one, over−matched and over−worked. Consequently, our army developed the greatest defensive powers of any. And our officers are rich and extravagant. Consequently they have ornamented their defences. But there a'n't a gewgaw or a button in the British army which don't tell of some old fight when the thing was found to be necessary. Some are obsolete, some have run into sheer gawdry. But they all mean something. The extra hussar jacket, for instance, defends the rein−arm, leaving the sword−arm free. That a'n't obsolete yet, sir.”

“I never saw this before,” said Roland: “but with these new rifled muskets cavalry will become obsolete altogether.”

“Well, sir,” said the tailor, “these arms of precision will for a time play the devil with the cavalry tailors; but you will always require cavalry for pursuit, sir, and we must revert to old ideas.”

“As how then?” asked Roland.

“Armour, sir; aluminium. The specific gravity is small; in hardness it can nearly compare with rhodium, and it dresses up very nice indeed with scarlet and gold, or with blue and silver. Here, for instance, sir, is a cuirass of the Cent Gardes; you may hang it on your little finger. Our house is prepared to go into aluminium to any extent, if we only knew which way the Horse Guards were going to move in the way of cavalry. A gentleman with your strong Parliamentary interest, three seats, dear me, so they say, might tell us what they were going to do. And I am sure we shall be grateful. That was a sudden thing, sir, your poor pa's death.”

“It was sudden,” said Roland.

“And you going to India, too, so soon,” said the tailor; “without even the will proved; so some say. If you happen to want any cash, sir, our house is in the habit of advancing cash to young gentlemen of your expectations. Our terms are five per cent., and we would sooner take your interest than another's.”

Roland, in his gawdries, turned from the glass, and said—

“My father dealt with your house for many years, and he always said that they had treated him well: I mean in

a friendly way. He always spoke affectionately about you. Now I tell you point blank that I am not in a position to borrow money. There is law in our house, and Lord only knows where law may end. My Aunt Eleanor will pay for this outfit. Beyond that I can guarantee you nothing."

"Lord bless you, sir," said the little man, "you mean about the disputed succession. All humbug from beginning to end. The plot of two foolish old women. *We* know, sir. We haven't been your father's bankers for so long as not to know his affairs. Our opinion is expressed, too, when I tell you that you can draw on us for any amount you choose. Though why not stay in England and fight it out, *I* can't see."

"I am sick of England," said Roland.

"Quite so, sir. Many are. *I* am. But Miss Evans will see it through for you better than you could yourself. We have a deal of these sort of matters on our hands. I don't know what would become of our trade if it wasn't for the young ladies not knowing their own minds. Well, sir, they think the better of you for it, which is a comfort. Here is your young lady's brother in the shop at this moment."

"What young lady's brother?" said Roland, aghast.

"Miss Mordaunt's brother," said the little tailor, "Mr. James Mordaunt: Cornet Mordaunt. May he come in? He has been cross about his tunic, and wants to see it on in the glass."

Roland called out: "Jim, come in here;" and added also "Go out, and leave us alone," which the army tailor did.

Roland was grand, in full cavalry uniform; James was only dressed in ordinary clothes. Still it would have been difficult to say which was the grander out of the pair. They both had that knack of carrying their heads erect, and neither of them was sentimental, though each had a deal of sentiment to dispose of.

The relations between these two young men were as deeply sentimental as ever were these between Frenchmen or Germans. They knew that there was a sort of sentimental love between them; Roland had found out that he was in love with Ethel; and James, poor boy, knew too well that he was in love with Mildred. But they were both ashamed of it; and met like mutually convicted vagabonds. There was no "effusion" in their meeting.

"Well, young Mordaunt," said Roland, "what do you think of this?" meaning his (Roland's) personal appearance in his cavalry uniform.

"I shall be quite as fine as you, old Evans," said James, "when I get my clothes. Are you cross with me?"

"No, I am not cross with you. No, I don't know that I am cross with you. Stay, Jim, don't let us be fools. I am so very glad that you are going with us. I wish you had been a hundred miles off, old chap, but I am glad you are coming with us."

"Why do *you* taunt me? I have done no wrong."

"Nor I," said Roland. "Come, Jim, let us be friends, and go through it all together. It might have been otherwise, but it was not to be. Let you and I tackle to this regiment, and do our best."

"I never wavered in my loyalty to you, since you saved my life," said Jim. "Tell me what to do, and I will do it. I am brave, strong, and affectionate, but I am a fool; you must tell me, and I will do it."

"We will go hand in hand, my boy," said Roland. "There will only be you and I out of the whole boat together. The old four is now reduced to a pair. You must row bow to me."

It was their way of swearing everlasting friendship, unsentimental, but quite effectual. There was no more "tall talk" after this, until the very last.

"How do I look, James?" said Roland. "Am I fine? Are you frightened at me?"

"Not a bit," said James. "What would be the good of me if I was? I grant that, as a spectacle, you would be imposing on horseback. But I don't see the use of you. You seem to me to be purely ornamental. Let me fig out; I was always better−looking than you, and may play the *rôle* of a dismounted dragoon better than you."

So they figged *him* out; "But he did not look one whit better," said Roland; and at last, tired of posturing in armour which they had not proved, they walked away together arm−in−arm; and from that moment the two were never separated any more, neither in quarters, nor in march, until the midnight march at Belpore.

They walked round and they picked up Eddy, who was prepared with any amount of nonsense, which they let him talk as he would, feeling a little solemn themselves. Then they went to the play, and saw Charles Kean in the "Corsican Brothers," and Eddy, in silly way, pretended that he was frightened. Then they had oysters and porter, and went soberly home, just as the boy Arbuthnot might have done before he sailed for the Crimea. Eton, Harrow, the plough−tail, the working bench; then all the sudden fury of war. Such was the history of most young soldiers

in those days.

On the morrow the three met again, and went to Chatham. The regiment was paraded, and Eddy saw Roland and James, on their new horses, all a−blaze with scarlet, blue, and gold, with gilt helmets, and cascades of crimson horsehair falling down their backs—−a great sight. They did not partake in the parade, but sat on their horses by the Colonel, not yet knowing their places; but Eddy and others thought them the two finest young fellows in the whole regiment.

Motion of any kind was delightful to Eddy. The motion of next the two days was singularly delightful to him. The business of a great transport is always pleasant; surely that of a great cavalry transport is the most pleasant of all.

Eddy, awakening from late slumbers, found that Roland and James had been gone long before, and going down to where the ship lay, found them in neat undress uniforms, hard at the work which they had selected for themselves.

The ship lay by the wharf, and the horses were being *led* on board, not slung, the Adjutant superintending. Early as it was, our two lads seemed to have got themselves recognised as knowing, at least, some part of their work, for their voices were loud and their remarks were emphatic.

“That is an ugly, straight−shouldered brute,” said Roland, to a farrier; “fifteen pounds and half a crown back.”

“He'll go in a crowd, sir. Rear rank horse.”

“Scarcely pay his passage,” said Roland. “*Here's* another. Jim, look at this hammer−headed one.”

“I'm looking at him,” said Jim. And, indeed, so was every one else. He was a horse with a head like a carpenter's hammer; a horse with a shoulder back to his croup, well ribbed up, with splendid gaskins, long fetlocks, and enormous feet—a splendid cavalry horse, but with the temper of D'Estournel. This horse refused to go on board on any terms whatever.

No man could live near his heels—human existence was an impossibility in his rear, and a weariness in his van; for pull you never so hard at his halter, the beast would not move at all. There was a hammer−headed brutality about him which nothing could affect for an instant. The British army was puzzled.

“Put the bridle on him,” cried Roland; and a trooper brought a bridle, and did so; the horse submitting in a way which astonished those who did not know his tactics. “Now, Jim,” said Roland, “up you go” and before any one had time to speak, Roland had given Jim a leg up, and Jim was sitting bare−backed on the dangerous brute. “Keep clear,” said Roland, as he took the bridle, and began heading the horse towards the gangway.

The horse, finding a man on his back, began going, and went until he found the boards under his feet; then came the tug of war, and every one held his breath.

The fury of the brute came all of a sudden. For an instant he planted out his fore−feet, and was quiescent; then Roland said, “Heels, Jim!” and James rammed his heels in. For the next twenty−five seconds there was a struggle, which no one who saw it forgot. The brute reared, but Roland was hanging by his head, with both reins gripped under his chin; he kicked furiously, but James was on his back laughing. He backed until his heels were over the green sea−water, fifteen feet below, but he was kicked forward again by James; biting, squealing, striking with his fore−feet at Roland, he made a whole life of terror to the bystanders, over the slippery plank; but our two boys had him on deck before many had time to utter an interjection, and stood beside him laughing.

The Adjutant complimented them in very strong language, and the men admired them from that moment. Roland took no notice of the matter; James only said, “We have many Irish horses in Shropshire; I shall be delighted at any time to ride or break any horse which every one else is afraid of. But I am nothing to Evans.”

“There is another ticklish subject there,” said the Adjutant.

“I see,” said James, “a nervous chestnut. Is that you, Eddy? I say, old man, ride that chestnut aboard for them.”

Eddy, unnoticed till now, turned to a trooper, and said, “Leg up, please,” and they put him on the fidgety chestnut, much admiring the pretty little plucky dandy.

“Horse! horse!” said Eddy, when he was on its back, “how can we be fond of you if you do these things? On you go, now. Come, old man,” he said, patting the horse's neck; “let us go aboard.”

Trembling with terror, the kindly timid brute went forward step by step. On the plank he paused, and there was the silence of sheer terror among the bystanders; but Eddy, by patting and gentle talk, got him ever; and there was a cheer from the men.

“A fine little fellow,” said the men. They saw him again in other circumstances.

It was noticeable that Roland and James, though asking the commonest questions about their duty, were recognised as first−rate pacers by every rank. They were reckless and cool—they were proud and familiar. No man would have hesitated to ask a favour of either of them; and, at the same time, no one would have dared to take a liberty. The men thought that in the long, dull, garrison work in India, these two bold lads would stand their friends; and the officers thought they would be good companions. They were appealed to already, in spite of their ignorance of duty. The officers had heard that they were men who could have done anything they chose at the University; and the men had heard, possibly through the gossip of the regimental servants, of their physical accomplishments, which reports they had now seen singularly confirmed. They had made a very good start with their regiment.

Both of them were lads who put their hand to anything which they found ready to it; and they worked hard at this shipment of horses for two days. At the end of that time they were all aboard, and Roland, Eddy, and James were talking between deck, stroking the noses of such horses as would let them, and congratulating one another on the successful issue of their effort.

In the narrow passage left between the larboard and starboard horses' heads, the narrow passage amidship, there were only two young men on stable−guard, who sat on deck, with their arms round their knees; they were nobody at all, and so James Mordaunt thought that there could be no harm in making a row with Eddy.

“Here is a horse with a pink nose,” said Eddy; “they are all beasts, these pink−nosed horses. 'Pink nose, seedy toes.' That is rhyme and reason too.”

“I don't think you know much about the matter,” said James Mordaunt.

“Well, I never knew a horse with a pink nose that could keep his shoes on,” said Eddy. “And no more did you. I know as much about horses as you do.”

“That is very possible,” said James, “but you bring in your little sciolisms in such an offensive manner that it is difficult to avoid thrashing you; so difficult that I cannot avoid it. In fact I am going to do it now.”

“James, my dear James, remember where you are,” said Roland.

“I will not be always lectured by you,” said James. “Edward, come here.”

Edward not coming, James fell suddenly on him, and they fell over the stable−guard, who was intensely amused and delighted by the whole proceeding. Roland interfered, saying, “James, do remember the men, and the fact that you hold Her Majesty's commission. For heaven's sake, don't play the fool like this.”

Eddy, meanwhile, finding James too strong for him, had got loose, ran up the companion stairs, and nearly brought down some one who was descending by the run. After a few defiances and challenges to James, he went on deck, without seeing for a moment who it was he had so nearly knocked down.

Allan Gray, unused to shipboard, descended clumsily. He had been in many queer places, but this was the very oddest. A long, well−lighted passage, with rows of horses' heads on each side. Confronting him were two young men, one of whom he hated, the other of whom he dreaded and respected.

James Mordaunt he hated with his whole heart. Worthless, empty, frivolous, cruel, were the best words Dissenter and Radical had for *him*. With Roland it was far otherwise. He respected and dreaded Roland. He had wit enough to see that Roland had not only ten times his brains, but had had ten times his education, and had made use of it. And Roland was behaving so strangely and so recklessly, that he was persuaded that Roland had some reserved power. The North American Indians give free pass to a lunatic, on the grounds that he knows his business better than they do. Such respect was paid to this reckless young Roland by young Allan Gray.

It was inconceivable to him. Roland, as any one knew, might have taken the highest honours at the University, might sit in Parliament, might be the best man his family had ever produced. Lord S— had talked to Allan Gray about Roland at Field Lane, praising him to the skies, and lamenting his High Church proclivities. Yet what did the puzzled Allan Gray see, coming as he thought to save this young man?

Roland, the possible prime minister, in blue trousers, with a scarlet stripe down them; with a blue fatigue−jacket buttoned with one button at the throat, but open below, showing his white shirt. Bareheaded, for the between deck was hot; with his hands in his pockets, swaying himself to and fro, as the ship rolled. For the message had come from the sea, and the ship was afloat. This was what Allan Gray saw.

And, in addition, the proud, clean−cut, cruel, inexorable head of James Mordaunt, similarly attired, looking over Roland's shoulder. The good Allan Gray had meant to say all sorts of kindly things, but this was forced out of him.

“Is this what your talents and education have brought you to, Mr. Roland?”

“Yes,” said Roland. “I am going to be a good centurian; a thundering good one, too. Eh, Jim?”

“I am sorry you should throw your talents away in such a fashion,” said Allan Gray.

“My dear soul, some one must do it, or what would become of those who stay at home and groan? We render your existence possible.”

“It is hard to see such talents as yours thrown away in slaughtering your fellow−creatures,” said Allan Gray.

“That would apply to Cromwell as well as to me,” said Roland.

“Cromwell fought for the Lord,” said Allan Gray.

“I fight for civilisation and the spread of the Christian religion, old man,” said Roland. “Come, you have something more than this to say to me. Let us go on deck; we must always be friends, mind, come what will.”

“I am here as a friend,” said Allan Gray, as soon as they were on deck. “I am come to remonstrate with you about going abroad just now, when this suit is pending between us. My case is terribly strong, and I could gladly have a compromise. You, with your territorial traditions, might do great good at Stretton. I know nothing of the management of an estate. I beg you to pause, if you can. It need never come to law if you will behave reasonably. I want money from the estate for my claim, but not for myself, only for religious purposes. I swear to you for nothing else. You shall stay at Stretton, and I will never move. I would never have moved if it were not for my poor. Roland, I beg you pause and think.”

“I have paused and thought,” said Roland, very quietly. “There is no personal quarrel between you and me. Let the matter go which way it will. I only go to claim a share in what is inconceivably the greatest inheritance of modern times, the government of 180,000,000 in India. What are our few sheep, under Longmynd, compared to *them*? Go to, man, I have longer views than you. You, if you live, may gain a small property in Shropshire; I shall be satrap of the greatest empire which the world has ever seen. Would you not change with me, Allan?”

The wind was screaming and booming through the rigging, and the lights were dim and blurred on shore. The tide was hissing down to the sea, while the great ship was heaving slightly as though impatient to be gone. Close by, sentries in ramparts and fortifications were walking to and fro, sometimes challenging—throbs of the heart of the greatest empire in the world. Gray listened and said—

“Roland, you are undertaking responsibilities which I should not have dared to undertake. God prosper you; to move you from your purpose would be ridiculous, I know. I will say no more. I shall establish my claim, but I think you and yours will be none the worse for my doing so. Yet, is there no one who could plead better than I *I*?”

“Not a soul,” said Roland. “Go away. Don't say a word more; *he* is listening. Go away, and God go with you.” And Gray went.

“What did that mad fellow with thee?” said Jim, coming up with his hands in his pockets.

“Well, he did not *do* anything,” said Roland; “but he showed me something.”

“For instance?” said Jimmy.

“Well, he showed me a fanatic,” said Roland.

“Only that. *I'm* that. What is he fanatic about?”

“Good,” said Roland. “We must *try* to be as good as that man, and know the world and our duty as soldiers; and when we are killed in some petty squabble in India, Jim, our brother officers will say 'they were thundering prigs, but not bad fellows, take them all in all.' So you see your dinner of glory, my child.”

“Well, we will eat it together, Roland,” said Jim.

On the bright spring morning Roland stood on the deck with a telegram in his hand, which he had read, and which he laughed at—

“Miss Evans, Shrewsbury, to Cornet Evans, transport 'Vigilant,' Chatham.—It will all go against us. Come back at any risk, and compromise. Ethel thinks as I do. She wants you to come back very much indeed.”

“I will come back to you, darling,” said Roland to himself. “I'll come back to you. We will come back to our Ethel some day, Jim?”

“Possibly,” said Jim. “There are Eddy and Allan Gray. Good−by, you two.”

And, indeed, it was good−by for some of them. The screw began throbbing, and the ship moved resolutely down the river. Allan Gray and Eddy saw Roland and James standing on the bridge as they rounded the point, and then they lost sight of them but not for ever—not for ever; they met again.

Poor little Eddy, gallant little heart, broke down and cried on his old friend's shoulder. Gray cheered him up, as

well as he could; but Gray's precious oils (good fellow as he was) were apt to break heads, and did not mend Eddy's heart.

“There she goes!” said Gray, at last.

There she went! A cobweb of rigging aloft, and two great white funnels, pouring out volcanoes of black smoke; seen above the sand−hills and the straight lines of the fortifications. So she went, throbbing her way down the great river, with Roland and Jim on board, towards the heaving Channel; towards the restless ocean; towards the vultures' feast in the far Easterly lands.

And Allan Gray took off Eddy to Field Lane, just to cheer him up with a little dissipation.

Chapter 31.

“So that is all over and done,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“What is over and done, Miss Evans?” asked Ethel.

“Roland.”

“Is he over and done?”

“Yes, there is an end and finish of the boy, body and bones. He is gone to his death: and there were elements about him, too. I am sorry that he should die so young, unpitied and alone; but it was mainly his fault, and *hers*.”

“Who is *she*?” asked Ethel.

“Never you mind. I suppose they bury them decently in Bengal; no suttee, or anything of that kind.”

“My dear Miss Evans, you are speaking at random.”

“My poor brother, Roland's father, saw the thing done, at all events. The woman gets on the top of the faggots drunk, and they smother her with straw and burn her up; which, on the whole, seems to me the best arrangement for all parties. A woman who would make such a fool of herself entirely deserves it.”

“But that only refers to widows,” said Ethel.

“I am talking of Roland's widow,” said Miss Evans. “Of course he will marry a black woman now; and she will naturally want to burn herself. I should myself. A nice mess you have all made of it among you.”

Ethel sat perfectly quiet. “Don't talk to me!” said Aunt Eleanor, and Ethel did as she was bid.

For Aunt Eleanor was busy in the great room at Pulverbatch with her farming accounts. And Ethel was sitting and sewing very patiently and very quietly. “Bother the things!”said Miss Evans.

“Which?” said Ethel.

“Well, if you choose to be epigrammatical, Ethel, I will tell you. Everything. There!”

“What in particular?”

“Allan Gray.”

“Certainly; and again?”

“Eddy.”

“What folly has he been doing now? He might obey you, I should fancy.”

“He wants to go to India. His regiment is ordered there almost at the moment he joined, and he won't exchange. Now, I made a solemn compact with him when I paid for his commission that he was to stay with me. And he is going to break his word.”

“I am very glad to hear that,” said Ethel.

“Why, then, Miss Mordaunt?” asked Miss Evans.

“Because you had no right to extract such a promise from such a child; and he is perfectly right in refusing to be bound by it.”

“I have done everything for him, Ethel. The love and devotion I have shown that boy has been more than any mother's. No boy ever had such tender indulgences poured on his head as I have poured on his. And oh, that he should fly in my face! That *is* bitter!”

“Shall you do well with your pigs this year, Miss Evans?” said Ethel, quietly.

“Don't be bitter and hard with me, Ethel. I have no friend but you.”

“I have no friend but you, yet you whetted your wits on me just now. *You* were cruel to *me* just now. And what is your love to mine?”

“I am very sorry. I am a poor old woman, I doubt, and not good−tempered. Don't be hard on me. Say you think that Eddy has been wicked in going.”

“I don't see that he has. For me, I begin to respect the child. Do you mean to say that he refuses to exchange without any prompting?”

“Not without prompting,” said Miss Evans. “Allan Gray has set him against me. Allan Gray, whom I brought up, has turned against me, and has persuaded Eddy to rebel.”

“I don't know what you mean by rebelling,” said Ethel. “You put Eddy into the army at your expense, but you never bartered the boy's honour. If Gray has persuaded him to keep what my bonny Jim calls his *sacramentum*

militaire, I can only say that it is the best thing I have ever heard of him."

"You look on with complacency, then, at Eddy's being killed."

"I shall be very sorry for the child," said Ethel. "But you must remember that I have a brother there, and also many people go to India who are *not* killed."

"I wanted him to stay at home," said Aunt Eleanor, showing her imbecility on the only point on which she was capable of showing it—Eddy.

"Well, and Allan Gray did not choose him to stay at home, rightly it seems to me. When he has gone to India Allan Gray is to be our lord and master, and we have only to submit."

"Ah! you may laugh, who love no one; but for me, I am an old woman, and love Eddy."

"Heaven save you, Miss Evans, from ever being as heartsick as I am, and forgive you the words just spoken. Here is Eddy. You say I love no one, do you? That was a cruel and bitter thing to say, Miss Evans. You lose your better nature when you say such things as that. I will not bear it from you, Miss Evans. I will go to John and my father. *They* can love me, at all events."

And so both these very good souls began to cry, both resolute in their causeless quarrel, just as Eddy came into the room, and said, "Hallo! you two, I am off out of this by next week."

Ethel scornfully withdrew herself into a window. She did not *hate* Eddy, but, putting him always beside his brother, she despised him. Aunt Eleanor wept.

"Have you been quarrelling, you two?" asked Eddy. "There is no good in that. *I* used to quarrel with Jim until that bathing business. For me, I am going to quarrel with no one in future except Her Majesty's enemies."

He said it in mere fun; but looking at them again, he saw that they had really been quarrelling. He looked right and left for a moment, and thought; then he went up to Ethel, stood beside her, and took her hand.

"Ethel! my glorious Ethel! Will you think for one moment how dear you are to me, through James, and, if I dare say it, through Roland! I am going away after Roland and James, into that dim East from which many never return. Come, Ethel, sister of my heart, let me tell them that you and old aunt were good friends. Come! make it up. Aunty! aunty! aunty! whom will you have when I am gone?"

Ethel sat quite still. She meant no permanent quarrel, and was quite prepared to let Miss Evans walk ever her body. Yet she waited and listened; for Miss Evans had been uncommonly reticent lately, and Ethel was determined to know as much as she could. She took Eddy's hand, however, and kissed it, saying, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Aunt Eleanor resorted to tears, and bemoaned the general ingratitude of the age. She did this categorically, stating her case against the world. The next time Mr. Gladstone, or it may be Mr. Disraeli, goes out, they will do exactly the same thing. At this moment, it is possible that we may hear the same sort of thing from Mr. Johnson before this is published. What Mr. Johnson may say I cannot tell. Aunt Eleanor's ease was simply this:—

Her brother had been a good brother to her, but had been indiscreet, and she had kept his indiscretions perfectly quiet. And now every one was turning against her. She had faced her own father and mother, in the Waterloo time, when accusations were brought against him, and when she was the only soul who knew that he had married that ridiculous child. She had fought her brother's battle, and then her brother had been hard on her about her way of going to market for herself. She had fought George Mordaunt's battle, and his daughter Ethel had turned on her. She had fought the Dean of St. Paul's battle (how she did not say), and he never came near her. She had been a good friend to every one who had known her. She had been a good landlady, good sister, good aunt, good everything; but every one had thrown her overboard. Allan Gray, for instance. Take him. She had no idea of his perfectly ridiculous pretensions; but had been more than a mother to him. He had got hold of this Phillis Myrtle story, and was turning against her. To Eddy, that black−hearted boy, she would say nothing at all. He was past that. She had believed at one time that Ethel would be her friend, but now Ethel had turned. She wished she was dead. She was proceeding to say that she had a reputation for common sense, but there was no one near enough to her to appreciate it, and was becoming blinded with tears, when she found that Ethel and Eddy were kneeling before her, with their hands in one another's.

"What are you doing, you very ungrateful creatures?" she said.

"Please, aunt," said Eddy, "we are kneeling to ask you not to be silly."

"Well, I won't if you don't drive me to it, my pretty ones. But you will if you don't take care. Have I been *very* silly?"

“Extremely so,” said Eddy. “Come, aunty, what is the matter? What has put you beside yourself like this? Why do you quarrel with us two?”

“Law, it is all Allan Gray,” she said. “Get up, do.”

“Have you forgiven us?” said Eddy.

“No,” said Aunt Eleanor. “You are a couple of fools; and I hate fools.”

“Why am I a fool, Miss Evans?” said Ethel.

“Because you might have managed better. I have no patience. Why, bless you, time was when, if I had given encouragement——”

“To the Dean of St. Paul's?” said Ethel.

“Don't be ridiculous, I beg of you,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“Why am I a fool, aunty?” said Eddy.

“Because you won't exchange. Because you will go to India.”

“Then I will not go, if you command me, aunt,” said Eddy, sighing, and looking at her. “I owe all I have in the world to you; and if you command me, I will stay at home. For you, aunt, I will desert all—Roland, Jim, honour, career; you have only to say, *stay*, and I will exchange. Aunt, say that word 'exchange,' and I will do it. Roland and Jim shall not stand in the way if you say it. Come!”

Aunt Eleanor rose and leant against the wall, hiding her face. Her sublime agony was so terrible to the young people that they were hushed and dumb. She turned after a time, and she said—

“Eddy, my own, my best−beloved, go. Ethel, stay with the poor old woman. I shall have no one but you.”

“You have told me to go, aunt,” said Eddy, very cool, but a little pale.

“I will tell you again if you will. My brother was at Waterloo.”

“Then I will go,” said Eddy. “But I will stay now if you will unsay your words.”

She held her peace.

Chapter 32.

“What is Allan Gray like, Miss Evans?” asked Ethel.

“Well,” said Aunt Eleanor, “you will see him directly for yourself, for he is coming here in a quarter of an hour.”

“Then I will fly,” said Ethel.

“Indeed and you just exactly won't,” said Miss Evans. “I will not be left alone with him, I assure you. I might be tempted to say something unbecoming my position to him. And he is a very good fellow, when all is said and done—a deal better than some of us.”

“But I also might say something to hurt his feelings,” said Ethel. “I am exasperated with him also. Is he handsome?”

“He is amazingly handsome,” she replied; “as handsome as Roley Poley, in his way. You shall see for yourself, for here he is coming across the moat. Tell James to show him straight in, and stand behind my chair.” And so the good lady faced towards the door; and Allan Gray entering, for the first time saw Ethel Mordaunt.

Aunt Eleanor saw a sudden startled flush in Allan Gray's face as he caught sight of Ethel's splendid beauty, and she said to herself, “Here is all mischief to pay. Bother the fellow! what did he want coming here for? He is going to fall in love with her. And so you shall, my fine master!” she went on in thought, in a moment more. “I'll plague you for this business. I have got you, my young master. I'll have the plaguing of you. Ah! look at and blush; you may well. I will be cat, shall I? Ho!”

And, to the unutterable astonishment of Ethel and Allan Gray, she said suddenly to the latter—

“How d'ye do, Mouse?”

Ethel bent down. “Why do you call him that?”

“What?” she asked.

“Why, mouse.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Miss Evans, slightly disturbed.

“I meant to say, 'How d'ye do, Mr. Gray?' I am very sorry to see you. I always was, you know. You and I don't owe one another anything, and don't like one another. You have heard of Miss Ethel Mordaunt?”

Allan Gray said that he had had that honour.

“Well, now you have the honour of seeing her. That is she behind my chair, looking at you, and thinking—what are you thinking of, Ethel?”

“I am thinking that unless you offer Mr. Gray a chair, I shall go and get him one.”

“Excellent; witty, in faith. My dear Gray, sit down. I am not at all glad to see you, as I told you before—and yet I don't know, Allan, when all is said and done. I am getting old, and the faces I love best are going into the East, to be seen no more. It may come that I may be so utterly alone in my old age that your face may become dear to me. You are going to try to dispossess my Roland, but you believe in your case. Let it be; we will fight that, you and I. But you love my Eddy, and that is a bond between us. Do you know that your Eddy is going to India?”

“I am glad to hear it, Miss Evans; but I am surprised that you should let him go.”

“Honour orders him there. My boy shall never exchange to avoid service, though it may tear my heart out. Come, Allan, *you* never would; I know you well enough for that.”

“I—no,” said Gray; “but Eddy is so different in your eyes. He has seen no sorrow and no sin. You will not spare him then? Mine has been a most unhappy life; and God knows I have risked it often enough.”

“And indeed you *have*,” said Aunt Eleanor, roundly. “Ethel, my dear, our boys will have the chance of charging half a dozen times into desperately ranked masses of our enemies, and perishing gloriously or winning fame which lives in men's months. Mr. Gray faces death, not once in a way in the fury of battle, but every day, in fever−plagued courts and alleys. Ask Letheby what he has got to say about Mr. Gray's work in the cholera, and then you will understand that when the Victoria Cross is allowed to civilians for valour, Allan Gray will have five or six of them.”

“So I should be disposed to think, from his personal appearance,” said Ethel, as coolly as if she was admiring a

handsome sideboard.

Even Aunt Eleanor started for an instant, and looked round at her. Ethel was leaning over the back of the chair, and looking fixedly and with every symptom of admiration on Allan Gray. Aunt Eleanor had not at that moment time to reflect that when such a pure and noble woman as Ethel has utterly given her heart to one man, as Ethel had to Roland, she would allow herself freedom of speech in all innocence towards other men, a freedom of speech she never would have dreamt of had she been fancy−free.

Aunt Eleanor was quite puzzled for the time, but she went on, speaking very quickly—

“Are you come to see me about any law?”

“No, madam,” said Allan Gray. “I only came to pay my respects to the lady to whom I owe everything in the world—to yourself. You say we do not like one another, Miss Evans. I have often heard you say that before. But allow me to say that the dislike is entirely on your side.”

“Well, I believe it is,” said Miss Evans. “It exists, however, and perhaps I have sufficient dislike to keep us both going. For I *don't* like you, you know, and I never did. I'll tell you what is the best thing you can do, if you don't mind. Spend the day with me, and stop to dinner.”

“I would if I thought I could remove some prejudices from your mind,” said Gray.

“Lord bless the man you'll never do that with me. I am all prejudice from beginning to end. Most women are. My dear young man, everybody's creed is a mere mass of prejudice—Whig, Tory, Democrat. The only party in this country which will never see power are the doctrinaire Radicals, the only unprejudiced party. And if they do get in, a nice mess they will make of it.”

“You do not believe in academic Girondisms,” said Gray, smiling.

“Not a bit. I tried it forty years ago, when I was beginning to get old, and it won't do at all. Be a Radical or a Tory at once. But come, Allan, as an old enemy, stay with us to−day and dine; and I will see if I can get evidence from you and upset your ridiculous lawsuit. Come.”

“As an old and obliged *friend*, I will,” said Allan Gray, “with the greatest pleasure. Remember, I have never sat down to table with a lady in my life. What time do you dine, Miss Evans?”

“Miss Evans dines at one,” said Ethel, very quietly. “She calls it lunch. Shall I stay and dine with you, Miss Evans, because I am going with Johnny riding at three?”

“If you please, dear,” said Aunt Eleanor, feeling rather guilty, and a little frightened. “Yes, do stay. Let us go for a walk on the farm. It is a great farm, Allan Gray. It is one of the greatest farms in the county. It is all to be Eddy's, and a nice mess *he* will make of it. Few people, I should be inclined to say, have greater capabilities of making a great mess of a farm than Eddy. What is your opinion?”

“I should be inclined to agree with you,” said Gray. “But he will scarcely venture to farm it himself. So he might get a good tenant, you see.”

“Might! Yes, he *might*. But he would choose the first smooth−spoken goose who offered for it. However, he will get his throat cut in India, and so it does not much matter.”

So they walked and talked till dinner−time, and then they dined together. Miss Evans's talk was sharp, sarcastic, nearly boisterous, all the time. She was in terror of what she was doing. And immediately after dinner Allan Gray went off, and Aunt Eleanor knew that she had gained her object. Allan Gray was entangled with Ethel.

Ethel went across the valley home; and she went home with a vengeance. She caused visitors to come to Miss Evans that very evening—no less than three of them. Aunt Eleanor seldom had worse times than that evening.

Chapter 33.

She sat by herself before the window, and as soon as she knew it was quite too late, she began reflecting what an awful thing she had done in a moment of spiteful triumph. It looked pleasant at first. But it looked more terrible as the afternoon went on, and she sat and pondered over it.

The first thing she said was, “Now, young man, I have got a rod for your back. You know nothing, I fancy, of her feeling for Roland. The time will come, however, when you will. I do not like you at all, when all is said and done; and I have let you sit at table with a lady. You quiet men, when you *do* get hit with a woman, will go further after her than any others. And you are hit. It may not have been wise, but I am not always wise. *If you come here, thrusting your claims in on county families, you must take the penalties*. You can't blame me. If you win this suit, as they say you will, you would be forced to know ladies. I have only introduced you to one; and you seem to have taken your choice.”

Such was the illogical nonsense with which this excellent woman strove to excuse herself from the only silly and spiteful action I shall have to record of her at all. She was too sensible to believe in her own logic for long. She began to look at her action from another point of view.

“If he does turn out to be heir after all, and Roland only halfbrother, I have done a very silly thing, I doubt. I wish I had not done it now. But he must have seen her some time or another in that case, and so it would have been just the same unless he had thought of ranging himself with some one else. In which case it might have been different. Why, here is George Mordaunt.”

It was that ponderous squire indeed, who gave his horse to a man, opened the door of the Grange, came straight into her room, and, leaning against the chimney−piece, confronting her, said, “Eleanor! Eleanor!”

“What is the matter, now?” she asked, sharply.

“You might have thought of our two poor boys upon the wide sea, of Roland and James—good lads as ever walked, good lads—before you recognised that scoundrel publicly, and introduced him to, and let him sit at meat with, my daughter.”

“What scoundrel?”

“Allan Gray.”

“He is no scoundrel. I brought him up. He is a very good fellow.”

“Well, then, that watchmaker's apprentice. I don't wish Ethel to sit at table with watchmakers' apprentices, Eleanor.”

“Jeweller,” said Aunt Eleanor, rubbing her nose and looking straight at him.

“Or jewellers' either, then,” said Squire Mordaunt. “Eleanor my dear old friend, why did you do such a thing?”

“Spite, mainly,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“Against whom?”

“Against him. I wanted him to fall in love with Ethel, and he has done it. Now, then, what do you think of that?”

Squire Mordaunt stamped his foot. “Eleanor, are you *mad*?”

“I was when I did that. I fancy I am a little less mad now.”

“It is time you were. It is not the least use talking to you. You are in one of those strange downright moods, which I never saw any woman in before or since; when you will make a fool of yourself, and confess it in the most exasperating way. How dare you do such a thing? How dare you even show my daughter to an impostor like him? Ethel comes here no more.”

“You won't tell HER?” said Aunt Eleanor, thoughtfully, with head on her hand.

“How could I dare?” said Squire Mordaunt. “Do you think I am mad? But she comes here no more. Do you know that the fellow may succeed in his suit, and that he is very handsome? Do you know that Ethel might lose her heart to him?”

“Do you suppose, George,” said Aunt Eleanor, quietly, “that if I had not known Ethel's character perfectly, and had not been aware that her heart was irretrievably gone already, I would have done such a thing? I tell you that I did it to plague the man.”

"I wish you would plague him with some one else than my daughter. What is this that I hear about Ethel's heart being gone? To whom has she given it then?"

"To Roland."

"Good Heavens! He seems to have taken the matter rather lightly. I thought that he was almost engaged to Miss Maynard."

"Sit down, George."

George sat down.

"No one knew where Ethel had given her heart but myself and James."

"My James?"

"Yes; and James had given his heart elsewhere."

"My poor Jim! Do you know where?"

"To Mildred Evans—Mildred Maynard."

"Well, I pretty nearly knew that. That is nothing."

"I don't know about *that*," said Aunt Eleanor.

"These details are nothing to me. I want to know why you had young Gray here. If it is as you say, you have made him a rival of Roland. Does Roland care for Ethel?"

"Ay, he loves her now."

"Confounded young prig! I hope he will eat his heart out. Like his impudence, not to say so before going to India."

"I am not sure that he did not. But see, George; you knew Mrs. Maynard, of the Barton, well enough to know that she lives in mischief."

"Well?"

"She has made mischief between Bob Maynard and his wife about your boy. Poor furious Jim wrote her a letter from sea; and she cried over it—not once, nor twice, but three or four times. And the old—Lady contrived that she should be crying over it about the fifth time, when her husband came and demanded it from her; and she had to give it up."

"What was her object?"

"To make that stupid ox, Maynard, jealous, and keep herself and Mary in the house; moreover, to make Maynard savage with Sir Jasper Meredith, and keep *him* to book."

"What has that child been doing?"

"Well, he has proposed to Mary, and been accepted, and now he wants to cry off."

"Proposed to Mary?"

"Yes, he did it to save Roland, and the old woman is keeping him to book; and we shall have much fun out of it, Are you satisfied with my explanation?"

"Not a bit," said Squire Mordaunt. "You have only confused counsel, *nigra loligine*. Only until you *chassè* Gray, Ethel sees you no more."

"Well, well! I agree. Come, are you angry still?"

"I think, Eleanor, that you have done a thing I should have conceived you utterly incapable of. You have admitted into your house the pretender to your nephew's fortune, and have introduced him to my daughter, as you yourself confess, with a view to his being attracted by her. If there was a woman in England, I could have trusted you. But this is outrageous!"

"I know, I know. I am nearly out of my mind over my Eddy. George, don't give me up. George, be my friend. I will do what you tell me—Heavens! here is my sister−in−law, full speed! George, stay by me."

There was, indeed, Mrs. Evans. Nimbly the widow dashed up to the Grange in her pony−carriage, and in half a minute after came swiftly into the room, and without any preparation of any sort or kind whatever, denounced her:

"It was not enough, Eleanor Evans, that you kept my husband's guilty secret for so many years—you pretending to a saint−like godliness of life. It was not enough that you persistently and systematically set Ethel Mordaunt against my Roland, until he was driven to his death in India. It was not enough that your changing your intention of not marrying again renewed old overtures to the Dean of St. Paul's, relinquished by him years ago, and repenting of your intentions towards my Eddy, sent him abroad after his unhappy brother: this was not

enough—no—”

“I should have thought that was enough for anybody,” said Aunt Eleanor. “What is the next thing?”

“You must receive the illegitimate rival of my son in your house, pet him, and give him lunch. I wish to see no more of you, Eleanor. You are a bad, false woman; and if Charles rises from his grave, I hope he will knock at your door!” With which singular conclusion Mrs. Evans departed swiftly: Eleanor saying not one word.

“Little pots are soon hot,” said George Mordaunt.

“Not one solitary word,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“You seem to be in the way of catching it,” said Squire Mordaunt.

“I shall catch it worse than this before all is over. Sit still. Don't desert me.”

Chapter 34.

“Here comes John,” said Miss Evans. “I suppose he will begin on me next.”

“I will stop his; you have had quite enough of it. But I say, Eleanor, you'll let us have that right of way, won't you? Come?”

“No, I won't,” said Miss Evans. “I'll nail my colours to the mast about it. I'll tell you what I'll do with you—I will let you have it the very day that Eddy comes home from India.”

“That's a bargain, you obstinate woman. Mind that.”

“Come in,” said Miss Evans, and accordingly in came John Mordaunt, grown even since we first knew him in size, good−nature, good−humour, and quiet shrewdness.

“Have you been catching it, Miss Evans?” he said, laughing.

“*Rather*,” she said. “Mrs. Evans has been here and cast me off for ever, and your father has damaged my feelings to that extent that I feel ten years older than I did ten hours ago. But we have made it up, your father and I.”

“Has he got the right of way?” asked John Mordaunt.

“No, and he just exactly has *not*,” said Miss Evans. “He has *asked* for it.”

“Hey, sir—hey, sir,” said John Mordaunt. “Have you been taking advantage of a British lady in distress, sir? Oh, father, this was most mean.”

“I have as good as got it, though,” said Squire Mordaunt, triumphantly. “I am to have it the day Eddy comes home.”

“Well, don't talk of it any more. Stay here and be comfortable. I wish you would talk to me about the claim.”

“I should like to talk it through with you, very much indeed. Let us do so. I have found out the crux of the whole business,” said Mordaunt. “I want you to tell me every word that you know.”

“I will gladly do so,” said Miss Evans.

“John, my boy, just step down and do exactly as I told you,” said Squire Mordaunt; “be very civil and kind to her, and bring her up here. Give her a glass of wine, or gin, or brimstone, or something in Miss Evans's servants' hall to keep her tongue going till we are ready for her. Don't let her get too drunk, or she may get pot−valiant.”.

“Well, this is a singular order in a lone woman's house,” said Miss Evans.

“*It is*. You shall see why, my dear Eleanor. Now tell us the whole business, from beginning to end.”

“You know you thought I deceived you when you got that anonymous letter, and I told you that it was the old Cecil Evans' claim.”

“Yes, yes, I beg your pardon. I want to see how much you know about this Allan Gray.”

Aunt Eleanor got up and walked slowly up and down, very slowly, with her hands folded behind her back, and began speaking slowly and methodically.

“It was the eve of Waterloo,” said Aunt Eleanor, “that my new maid came to me: a girl we had brought up almost in the family; my own foster−sister indeed. I was like many other British women, mad at that time, and I set all the doors open and strode up and down the room ejaculating, for I did not mind making a fool of myself before her. I was rampaging; you know my way; when I turned round and saw that my sister−in−law was crying hysterically.”

“Your what, did you say?”

“My sister−in−law, my brother Charles's wife, then acting for me as my lady's−maid.”

“Then it *is* true,” said Squire Mordaunt.

“All *that* is true,” said Miss Evans.

“The devil!” said Mordaunt.

“Don't interrupt. Late that night I found I could do nothing with her. My mother went to her, found out the truth, and I never saw her again. I had no conception of what was the matter, but I knew afterwards that she and he were in love, in the honourable way customary in our family and in yours.

“My mother sent the girl to Carlisle, for she had relations there, and it was far enough off. My mother believed Charles was guilty. He was not; he behaved nobly. He knew that no consent could possibly be gained from his

parents to such an alliance. He knew that he had gained the girl's love; and so when he came home from Waterloo he went straight to Carlisle and married her; after which he wrote to me and told me all the truth, binding me to secrecy.

"The secret was not mine, but his, and I kept it. I told him that he had acted like a man and a gentleman, but also like a fool and a coward. You can't think how often I told him that last piece of my mind."

"Very often indeed, I doubt not," said Mordaunt.

"Don't be absurd, I beg. My father found out from a very foolish servant of Charles's, who was the girl's brother, that Charles was at Carlisle with her. He was furious. You know the horror our houses have of such matters. Charles was recalled by his colonel, and ordered to Chatham, still keeping his secret. In six months the poor girl was confined, and Charles was a widower. He was ordered to India, thinking it still well to say nothing, in spite of my remonstrances. He knew the horror my father had of Scotch marriages, and he left the child to take its chance, with only myself with a knowledge of the truth, and one more."

"Phyllis Myrtle?" said Squire Mordaunt.

"I see you know more than I thought," said Aunt Eleanor.

"I am very much afraid that I know everything, Eleanor. But I must know more from you. Did the girl's mother, this old hag Gray, know about this marriage?"

"Certainly not. How is it possible? Would she not have made her claims if she had? But to proceed, my dear George; this child of Charles's died, legitimate or illegitimate, it does not matter much now. I saw it dead with my own eyes."

"Exactly. Now we come to the soldier Gray. Tell us about him."

"Well, he got married to a girl in Donnington just about the time that his master married his sister at Carlisle, and his wife was sent home to his mother for her confinement. The child which was born there was Allan Gray, whom I brought up, by my mother's request, as being legitimately I knew, illegitimately as she thought, my own nephew."

Squire Mordaunt uttered a terrible oath. Remember that swearing had hardly gone out even twelve years ago among old−fashioned people. He said his oath, apologised, and then went on, very quietly, and very much ashamed of himself.

"My dear Eleanor, I beg your pardon. I am very sorry indeed. But answer me a few questions. You say that you saw poor Charles's baby lying dead?"

"I did."

"Can you remember it? I want to know particularly."

"Yes. I am not likely to forget; for, George," she said, laying her hand on his arm, and bursting suddenly out crying, "it was the first time I ever looked on death. Oh, Eddy, Eddy, Eddy! I shall never see you lying dead, my darling. Why did I let him go? Why did I let him go?"

Squire Mordaunt walked to the window for a little time, and then came quietly back and kissed her. "Come, old girl, never mind Eddy. I have sent a boy, and you have sent a boy. Be quiet, we shall want all our wits about us directly. I want to know about that baby of Charles's which you saw lying dead. Was it dressed?"

"No, it was naked, with a cloth over it, and they raised the cloth, and I cried a great deal; and I looked at it closely, for it was very beautiful, George."

"Now you are going to begin to whimper again," said Mordaunt, "and I won't have it. Was there any mark on it?"

"Not one that I noticed."

"No wart, no wen, no mark of any kind by which you could swear?"

"Not one, poor little thing."

"Then we will drop it, and go on to business. Do you know what they have done?"

"No."

"Changed foxes—I should say babies; *that* is it."

"Good Heavens! give me time, George. What do you mean?"

"Who showed you that baby, and under what circumstances?"

"Mrs. Myrtle sent for me, or was it Mrs. Gray? It was one of them—I know our secret began then—and asked me to come down, and I went. And Mrs. Myrtle told me that my brother's wife was dead. I think it was so. I am

not certain. And I asked to look at it, or they asked me, and I saw it, and I cried."

"That baby you saw was the soldier Gray's child, and not Charles's at all. The heir of Stretton is Allan Gray, or, as they venture to call him, Charles Evans. And these two old trots have some strong proof of it also, or the solicitor's house which they are employing would not look at their case for five minutes. Hi, Johnny, bring in Mrs. Phillis Myrtle."

Chapter 35.

John Mordaunt had so far fulfilled his father's injunctions as to bring Mrs. Myrtle in sufficiently sober for business. Yet Mrs. Myrtle was dimly conscious of requiring some sort of apology for coming at all, or for coming as she was; or for having done what she had done; or for venturing to exist at all, that she appeared before Miss Evans and Squire Mordaunt in a deeply apologetic frame of mind. Dickens would have made something out of her: she has too few salient points for a slighter hand at caricature. Possibly John Mordaunt described one phase of her character better than any of us, by saying that she was a persistently complacent liar. This was, however, only one phase in her character. She had Quicklyisms other than that, some of which we cannot deal with; one certainly which we may. For example; she was a perfect and absolute mistress of the art of sotting. Her knowledge of drinks was enormous and varied. Her experience of different kinds of strong waters was absolutely gigantic, yet to a certain extent limited. She would never on any account touch a strange drink, such as champagne or Eau des Carmes. Offer her gin; she would take as much as she wanted; offer her Chambertin, a more innocent liquor, she would stoutly refuse. She knew exactly how tipsy she wanted to be, and she regarded Chambertin, green Chartreuse, champagne, as unknown liquors, not to be trusted. She disliked being sober, but she dreaded being drunk. She had too much to tell.

She is one of those women of whom doctors can tell you. A woman of infinite good nature and immeasurable wickedness. Mrs. Gray was no better than she should be—a bold, coarse, handsome, grey−headed woman, with a rude, wild tongue. A woman not of the best character. Put Phillis Myrtle beside her, a gentle, good−natured, apple−faced little woman; nay, an affectionate little woman towards young people; which was the better of the two? Mrs. Gray immeasurably. She had saved more young girls from evil than even Phillis Myrtle had succeeded in ruining.

Squire Mordaunt, an old, trained, diligent county magistrate, knowing the world in which he lived, by having it brought before him in its lowest aspect, knew this woman, and recoiled from her. He looked at Aunt Eleanor, and she recoiled also. “Be gentle and civil to this old hag, Eleanor,” he said, in a whisper, leaning over her chair. “I will,” said Aunt Eleanor, “but you make her tell. Stand where you are.”

So Squire Mordaunt, leaning over Aunt Eleanor's chair, with the power of whispering in her ear without being heard, brought out Mrs. Myrtle's story in her own manner.

“Sit down, Mrs. Myrtle. Will you have a glass of wine, Mrs. Myrtle?”

“Thank your honour's handsome face, no.”

“Had enough, eh?”

“Quite enough, thank you, sir.”

“You won't get any at all in prison, you know,” said Squire Mordaunt.

“I am equally aware of the fact, sir,” said Mrs. Myrtle, coolly. “But I don't mean to go there, if it is the same to you.”

“Conspiracy is a dangerous thing, Mrs. Myrtle.”

“As a general rule it is. But when such a lady as Miss Evans has to go into the dock with an old woman like me, I naturally feels comfortable.”

“What do you mean?”

“I only mean that Miss Evans knew as much as I did; and that where I go she shall go, if I am treated uncivil.”

“That is false,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“It is good enough to swear to if I was drove to turn Queen's evidence,” said Mrs. Myrtle. “Conspiracy indeed! *You* told all you knew, didn't you, Miss Evans?”

“Woman! woman!” said Aunt Eleanor, “this will not serve you.”

“It will unless I am treated civil,” said old Myrtle, crying. “I came here from the best of motives, and Squire Mordaunt (you are a sweet saint, a'n't you, to talk so to an old woman who *remembers* you when you were a boy) he begins on me about *conspiracy*.”

“Well, and so you are going to be civil and tell us all you know, Mrs. Myrtle?” said Aunt Eleanor.

“Certainly, Miss,” she said. And so she did.

Chapter 36.

“Lucky beggar, he has got married, *and hung his hat up*.”

That hanging up of the hat was in old times the *façon de parler* by which naval and military men made one to understand that Captain or Major So−and−so was utterly and entirely free from all earthly cares of any sort whatever. Listen to them at the Naval, Military, Marine, Militia, Volunteer, West Coast of Africa Club in Pall Mall. “Where is Joe Buggins?” said Captain Kimberton, R.N.

“Lucky beggar,” says Captain Bob Singleton, R.N. “He has hung up his hat, got married, and gone ashore for good.”

“Has she money?” said Kimberton.

“400*l*. a year,” says Singleton.

“Dash it, some men are always in luck,” says Kimberton. “Well, I shall be afloat till I die.”

Says Toodle, of the 944th West India Regiment, to Teedle, of Her Majesty's 80th, “I made a mess of it in leaving the best regiment in the service. Boodle is over my head now, I doubt.”

“Boodle has hung up his hat,” says Teedle (or used to say). “Boodle has married a widow with 500*l*. a year, the least penny, and has cut the service.”

“Lucky *beggar*!” says Toodle, and thinks that Boodle has arrived at the summit of all human happiness.

Now it so happens that I have lived alongside of both Buggins and Boodle in my time, alongside of these men who have *left* their professions to be married, and all I can say is, that Buggins would give ten years of his life to be on the West Coast of Africa, and Boodle would give twenty to have been in Abyssinia.

These men had served so long that they began to know how to serve; and then they found themselves in a position to marry. And they fell in love with two girls with money. And the paterfamilias of the period, finding that they could make no great settlements, demanded of them that they should insure their lives, and give up their profession.

I can point out a case now, of a girl without a farthing being engaged to a man who might have done well at the bar, and who was solely dependent on his father. She insisted that he should give up his profession, and he, being in love, did so. Those two lives are as good as lost. But to return to Buggins and Boodle.

A great many women who marry men in the services stipulate that the men should “hang up their hats,” and cease to be men. Should turn into spaniels, to dangle after their wives' heels to balls and croquet parties. Now this is an intolerable thing, although the virtuous and unattackable paterfamilias encourages it. Look at the common sense of the matter. Fancy locking up two entirely idle people together for their lives. Can love stand it? I fancy not. Man and wife will go to the world's end, or farther, for one another any day of the week, as the end of the world well sees, provided the wife sees that the husband is working, and the husband sees that the wife is minding. A couple such as that will pull through great things. But to lock up two young people alone, apparently for ever, she frivolous and silly, he capable of better things, but bound either by his wife or his father−in−law to forego them; this, I say, is dangerous.

To go in for another moment about Buggins and Boodle. Contrast the lives which these two excellent officers might have lived, with the lives which they were forced to lead, in consequence of the foolish English notion, that marriage is to be a perpetual honeymoon, with, after a time, babies superadded.

Take Buggins's case. Buggins was a man extremely valuable to his profession. A man passed in steam, which all were not in those days. A man who saw among the first, that naval tactics would more than ever consist in rapidly turning on an individual enemy, that the nation which could best imitate the old Elizabethan tactics must win. A speaker of five languages, a geologist, a botanist; a man whose credit for personal amiability could fill a ship in a week, while others stood empty for months, or never filled at all. A man of pure and godly life, and a man who could keep his head, as he had proved once or twice, under the most desperate circumstances. A man in a dozen. Where was he? With Lyons? With Peel? Not at all. Wasting all his power and knowledge at the heels of his wife; because his wife's family had stipulated that he should not leave the United Kingdom.

Take *Mrs*. Buggins again. She was one of the first to pray and beseech that it should be rendered impossible for dear Joe to go to those horrid wars. It *was* rendered impossible. When she got a little less silly, she began to

see that she had married a ghost and a dead man. A ghost of a dead man, who scarcely cared to read the telegrams to *her*. A ghost of a useless man, who would come suddenly in with the *Times* in his hand, and say, gloomily, "Lyons has taken the 'Agamemnon' in under Constantine, with the 'Retribution' on the larboard side. The Russians have cut away the mainmast of the 'Retribution.' Edmund Lyons has done no good with all his bravery. Wood against stone. I wish I was there."

And then, seeing that he was pacing up and down the room, eating his heart out, she would show him baby, and jump baby up and down till the poor little thing was sick. That was her remedy for a man whose comrades were dying round Sebastopol.

Look again at Boodle, if you will have the goodness. The private in the British army is not much given to sentimentalities towards his officer; as a general rule he values one officer much the same as another. Privates don't *discuss* their officers much. Corporals and sergeants do. Yet Boodle, when he left his regiment to marry the rich widow, was followed by the lamentations of all the privates in his company. They would have followed him to the ends of the earth, and farther. But the good widow said she was not going to ride on a baggage−waggon, and that he must give up his profession. They get on very well, because the amiability and pluck which attracted the widow were just the same qualities which attracted and bound the private soldiers. But Boodle was sick of his life.

It could scarcely be pleasant for a well−preserved widow to find her young husband walking wildly up and down the house, saying, "If I had been there at my place this would not have happened."

"What is the matter now?" says Mrs. Boodle.

"Willoughby has been forced to fire the magazine at Delhi. My God! my poor friend! If I could only have died with him instead of rotting here in inaction."

And Mrs. Boodle has not even a baby to dance before him; and when he is forty she will be fifty−two, paint she never so wisely. And she brought him 600*l*. a year. And as a general he would have had 1200*l*. I don't like to go into the old age of the Boodles.

But Moral. My dear young lady, whenever you marry, make your husband *work*. The more he works, the better for him; and for you also. Don't get too easily into the delusion that "dear George is overworked." Overwork means very often "Club" (and you should set your face against all clubs, save the Athenaeum and the Garrick). Overwork means very often sheer laziness. Think of the numbers of fine fellows hungering for work up and down England, but who cannot get it—in the Church for want of opportunity, in the army for want of money, in literature for the one fatal fault, the want of felicity of expression. If your husband in any way finds work to his hand, I beg you as a special favour, in return for any little pleasure I have given you, *keep him at it*. No man ever worked himself to death yet, except Pitt, and his four bottles of port wine a day had much more to do with it than the sheer work.

846,000,000*l*. first and last.

A low remark you say. Well, but we extinguished France and left her a third−rate Power for ever, with her navy quite destroyed. The Spaniards know nothing at all of our immortal Peninsular Campaign, though they *did* make the Duke of Wellington grandee of the first order. But about young Maynard, who had nothing to do with Pitt's war, or the wars which succeeded on Pitt's policy. We had possibly better speak of him soon.

He had not much chance of being overworked, though he was paying his share of the annual 26,000,000*l*. Mrs. Maynard had insisted, and had got her daughter−in−law to back her in her request, that Maynard should leave the University, leave his proposed career at the bar, and come and live at home. And the good−natured fellow, pressed by his bride's tender coaxings, his mother's persistent clatter, and his sister's repetitions of his mother's arguments, had consented.

There had always been an understanding between mother and son, that the mother should leave the house when the son was married. This was well enough, and Mrs. Maynard had always spoken of it as a foregone conclusion. She had more than once taken Mildred over the house, shown her the store−closets, asked if she might carry away this or that trifle with her, when she went; and so on. But when they were married and had settled down in their home, and had looked about them for a month or so, they made the remark that Mrs. Maynard was not gone, and had made no particular preparations *for* going. Likewise a still greater discovery, that there was not any place for her to go to at least no place in particular.

They never said one word about this at all, but submitted as quietly and as dutifully as possible. They talked

about it in bed sometimes, but very slightly. It was no annoyance to them. Old Mrs. Maynard took care that it should not be.

She had given up her comfortable rooms on the ground−floor, and moved into three little rooms on the third, carrying Mary with her. They were good enough, she said, for them, during the short time they were to stay. Maynard and his wife remonstrated with her, and begged her to make herself quite comfortable. But she was quite resolute. The understanding, she said, had always been that she was to leave the house when her son was married, and she only begged house−room and victuals till she could get a home of her own. Nay, this high−spirited lady begged Mildred to let her pay her own and Mary's board, which made Mildred cry.

“That is an artful old toad,” said young Mordaunt to his father one evening.

“What is the last move?” said the Squire.

“Why, she has bought a waggon−load of furniture at Old Dempster's sale, and she has brought it home to the Barton, and has begged the Big One as a special favour to let her store it there for a week or so before she goes.”

“Law,” said Aunt Eleanor, “why, the very bugs in the bedsteads will be dead for want of their natural food before *she* ever sleeps in one of them. And they live long, don't they, Ethel?”

“I call them ladybirds, Miss Evans,” said Ethel.

“Ah! but then I call them bugs, don't you see,” said Miss Evans, “which is quite a different matter. You might call them what you liked, so long as some of them got hold of her and dragged her out of her bed on to the key−cold floor on a frosty night. The old trot, *she* won't go.”

“Well, it is not any business of ours, Eleanor,” said Squire Mordaunt.

“I never said it was,” said Miss Evans, “but I mean to talk about it for all that, and so I don't deceive you. Fiddle−de−dee; everybody talks over my affairs and over Eddy's, and I shall talk over everybody else's. *I* suppose *you* never mention your neighbours' affairs, eh?”

“Well, I do sometimes,” said Squire Mordaunt.

“You never talk about anything else,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“For me, I love it. It is the only real amusement one has in the country, or in town either. For example, George Mordaunt, and in return for your delicately expressed advice that I should mind my own business, look here,—that woman is an artful old trot, and she will stay on there, if she lives in the shoe−hole (I wish she did), to keep the ear of her son, the Durham Ox, and make him bring Sir Jasper Meredith to book, and marry Mary. When she has done that she will go, not before.”

“Where will she go then?” asked Ethel.

“To Sir Jasper Meredith,” said Aunt Eleanor, “and I wish him joy of her. Now I have been talking sense so long that I wish some of you would open your mouths. *I* don't mind nonsense in season; but I'd give fifty pounds to the man who would set that house afire while that old trot was safe in the top story.”

With this exaggerated statement of her sentiments, Miss Evans concluded. Let us look with less prejudiced eyes on the real state of things.

Of all mothers−in−law, living in the same house with their daughters, Mrs. Maynard was the most perfectly discreet. Eleanor Evans, who had the sense of ten ordinary men, saw why she stayed there—too keep her son's ear.

A very common character in fiction is the rich mother, who schemes and lies to get her daughter well married. She is generally held up to ridicule and scorn. She should not scheme and lie, of course, but what is the poor woman doing after all? only providing for her own flesh and blood, and very probably pushing with a great deal of actual money to get her girl well placed. The scheming dowager of comedy seems to me the most unreal character of all. In a vast majority of instances a mother only wishes to see her daughter well married, for pure love for her daughter, and for no selfish reason whatever. What benefit does a woman in high society get by marrying her daughter to a nobleman instead of another? Very little. She has the *entrée* to all houses to which people go: she can gain nothing there. She has as much money as she wants, and will have to part with some of it when her daughter marries. Now it seems to me, and to others also who know better, that the aims of a mother in making frantic efforts to secure a husband for her daughter are almost always sentimental, and rarely actually mercenary.

I like to sec a good honest woman trying to get a rich, good−humoured lad as a husband for her girl, at an expense of a couple of thousand pounds or so to herself. I think that she is doing her duty. I would give her every

possible assistance. I would go so far as to take her into the tent or the supper−room, and give her chicken and wine, and say to her: “You silly old woman, why did you drive fifteen miles with your horses well tired last night, at Mrs. X—'s ball, in order that Eliza might meet Ferdinand (let us be genteel) there? You hunt him about too much. I have been round to the stable−yard just now, to get some friend's coachman to put my wife's pony to, and the very grooms are talking about it; and all the grooms and footmen in the county are there; the coachmen and butlers are in the servants' hall, and they will all laugh at you for the way you are hunting this rich lad, who really loves your daughter, but whom you, with the best intentions, are doing your best to disgust.”

That is the way I should talk to her, but then, you see, she wouldn't stand it.

Mrs. Maynard was no such mother as I have spoken about above; her objects were purely selfish. She cared little for an establishment for her daughter, provided she had no share in it. In fact, Mrs. Evans told her so, and Mrs. Maynard would not stand it for an instant.

Creeping up to her great scheme of confounding Sir Jasper Meredith, this good lady crept through many dirty ways. That most wonderful and powerful fiction, “Melmoth,” is written to show, or to try to show, that no human being, under any circumstances, will make a compact with the Evil One and barter away his salvation. The author proves it, or tries to prove it, by putting various groups of people into situations which it is horror to read, and nightmare to remember, always with the offer before them. He thinks that he has proved his thesis by making none of them do it, even in the most frightful extremity. Of course the idea of the book is great balderdash, though it is written with a literary skill which makes one remember it after many years. Of course no one ever gets the chance of selling himself to the devil; and the writer of that book has fortified his argument by making his characters almost preternaturally good: yet, had he taken characters of a lower order, I doubt if ho would have proved his case so well. There are some people who would do it. Do I mean Mrs Maynard? Of course not; no gentleman would so far forget himself as to say such a thing about a lady.

Still she would go a long way. Look at the splendid object before her.

She, with her ox−like son, had been mistress and manager of a noble house,—a house of plenty and of influence for many years. She was called on to give up this, and she knew that she must give it up, sooner or later. She was utterly vain, selfish, and extremely fond of good living; loving also *power* as well as Chaucer's lady did in a story which is far too cool to name here. All this was slipping away from her. Her son, though good−natured among men, was a very determined bully among women; and being a good fellow enough, did not at all approve of all his mother's ways and words.

In calculating the chances of the comet of 1858 hitting the earth and burning us, the most sensational of the astronomers told us that if it had come x^{2-n} something nearer to us, we should have been disagreeably warm. In calculating chance in the same manner one may say, confining oneself to arithmetic, and leaving mathematics alone as dangerous, that it was ·333 against the tiny residuum which goes up to make 1000, that if the devil had appeared to Mrs. Maynard at this time she would have traded.

For look at what this worthless woman had before her. On the one hand an entire loss of what she loved dearest,—power, prestige, and good−living; and on the other hand the chance of being absolute and perfect mistress of Lawley Castle, the place of Sir Jasper Meredith, with an almost incalculable number of thousand pounds a year. The woman was dishonest moreover. She calculated that if she could bring Sir Jasper Meredith to book, and rule at Lawley for say six or seven years, she could “feather her nest.” Meredith, good lad, was the best landlord going, for he let his farmers do as they liked, on the sole condition that the wages of the labourers should not fall below 13s. The farmers would growl at that sometimes; but Sir Jasper, that honest little heap of bones, one day, in a fantastic mood, got one of his gamekeepers to get him a crow, and he nailed it up outside his porch. And he got the village painter to come and paint under it the words of Anne of Brittany:—“*Qui qu'on grogne ainsi sera. C'est mon plaisir*.” And when a farmer growled, Sir Jasper would take him out and show him the crow, and translate the French to him. And that farmer would go away and tell his acquaintances that there weren't a more resolute bit of stuff within sight of the Wrekin than that little cripple up at Lawley.

One farm only had fallen in since Sir Jasper's majority. There were fifty applicants for it. Young Brereton got it, at a lower bid than some others. Young Brereton met Aunt Eleanor at market at Shrewsbury, and she sold him some seed oats.

“Mind you cash up this day week, you know,” said Aunt Eleanor. “I shall be here.”

“Yes, Miss. I have a kind landlord to start life with.”

“Law, you may revel in plenty, man, and die rich, if you give him his own way. You leave his poor alone, and treat them well, and he will do well by you. You just oppress Christ's poor, and he'll *smash* you. Good morning. Don't forgot the cash this day week.”

Such was Aunt Eleanor's judgment about Sir Jasper Meredith. Mrs. Maynard's was far otherwise.

The man, if you could call him one, had to be carried about by valets and grooms. He had brains and education, they said; but what were brains and education to a miserable anatomy like him? He was not a marriageable man at all. If it were not for his money, he would not be worth looking after. He could not live. Mary would do as she told her. It was one of the most splendid chances over seen. She, Mrs. Maynard, would be lady of Lawley to her dying day, for the title being extinct, she could easily make that heap of bones make over the whole property to her daughter, Lady Meredith. She could arrange for the killing of every deer in the park till she was eighty. She could arrange to have a haunch−day once a fortnight, and a dinner−party. She could take fines from the farmers under threats of raising their rents. She could do anything. It was really a splendid prospect. One thing only was in the way. Her son, young Maynard, was extremely resolute; and he distrusted his mother. She had shown him the letter which Sir Jasper had written so sillily for Roland's sake; and his only remark had been—“The little beggar! How dare he talk about marrying any woman, leave alone my sister?”

This was by no means hopeful; she had to try something further.

It is, I am sure, disagreeable to me to write about disagreeable things. I would be myself in favour of all sunshine. But it is not so in life; and in the slight caricature of life which we call fiction, very disagreeable things must be handled, if you are going to tell a story fairly out.

And the dreadfully disagreeable thing is this. Jim Mordaunt had not been so discreet with regard to Mildred Evans, as he had represented himself to Sir Jasper Meredith at Bonn; and, unluckily, Mildred had not been so discreet as people believed her to have been. More had passed between these two than should have passed—a great deal more. Jim had written a frantic letter to Mildred, and Mildred had answered it. Jim had sent her back her letter, and she had not burnt it; but, like a kindly little fool as she was, had tied it up with Jim's letter. The child meant no harm. The child was fond of her husband, and fond of Jim also. She would have been glad if Jim had stayed in England, and was sorry he was gone. Yet she tied up her own letter with Jim's, and put them in her desk.

They were safe enough there; the desk was an inviolable thing. If she had only left them there, it would all have been well; but she would take them out; and her mother−in−law, peering over her shoulder one day, saw Jim's hand−writing. And the old lady robbed the girl's desk. And when the poor innocent child went to her desk next time, she found poor Jim's innocent letter to her gone, and her equally innocent letter to him, which was tied up with it, gone also. And it was so dreadful, that she just laid herself down on the hearth−rug, and moaned, and her husband found her there.

“What is the matter, my pretty one?” he said. “Get up, my darling, and let me carry you to bed. Pretty love! pretty love!”

“I want to lie down here and die,” she said. “I have done no wrong, but I want to die.”

What could he do? It was a case which the mother−in−law could understand far better than he. The mother−in−law was called in, and took the case in hand with a will.

There was a terrible handle for her hero. They would not got I her out of this house in a hurry—not yet—not for over, unless she chose. She could stay here until she chose to move to Sir Jasper Meredith's. However, this was the first thing in hand. She got ~ her daughter−in−law upstairs, and attended to her. Poor Mildred was lost for a time; but at last she said—“Mrs. Maynard, you have two letters. If my brothers were here they would burn you alive.”

“I have the letters; and I have not the least doubt that your brothers would do so.”

“Are you going to show them to my husband?” said Mildred.

“Yes, my dear. I have no grievance against you; but I mean to show them to him, most certainly. I have purposes of my own to carry out. And—I shall show these letters.”

“You mean it?”

“I most certainly mean it.”

The effect of those words was frightful. The girl dashed out of her bed suddenly, and, opening the door, began crying for her aunt.

“Aunt Eleanor! Aunt Eleanor! they are all upon me. Come and help me!”

It was well for Mrs. Maynard that Aunt Eleanor was not by.

The poor little woman, you will understand, was as honest, and pure, and good as any woman could be. She was as innocent as Eddy, and very like him. But she was very fond of Jim, and she had written a very kind sisterly reply to his grossly indiscreet letter; and Mrs. Maynard had got hold of it, and, saving her presence, Maynard was a fool. And so the poor little thing ran out on the landing. Even now, if Mildred had got hold of her husband, and told him the plain truth, all would have gone well, I fancy; but Mrs. Maynard only told her son that the girl was hysterical, and kept them from an explanation.

It would have been better for him to have been at Oxford than at home, now.

Poor Mildred moped and moaned to herself. She never knew how much her mother−in−law had told her husband, and she dreaded him. At one time she fancied that he must know all; at another time that he knew only a part. But she could not trust him. That he knew something was evident; for his manner was altered. Though kind as ever, he was more staid and distant in his manner. And she, poor child, had no one to turn to—not one soul; for Miss Evans's visits to the Barton were extremely few and far between, and, to tell the truth, were far from successful when they did occur. Mrs. Maynard's very presence had such an extremely exasperating effect on her, that it made her show at her very worst. Ethel, her noble ally, begged her not to go there at all.

“You are not yourself with that woman, Miss Evans, any more than I am.”

And so poor little Mildred was left alone.

What Mrs. Maynard had done was this. She had told her son that Mildred was in communication with James Mordaunt, and that she could prove it at any time. That she enclosed a letter to him to Roland. Maynard had a terrible dispute with his mother. He declared that, to begin with, Roland was utterly incapable of such baseness, and that she was out of her mind. The dispute was only ended by her showing him James's letter and Mildred's reply.

The poor young fellow was dazed and seared. If at this moment he had taken those two letters to his wife, and been kind to her about them; if he had taken them to young Mordaunt, to Aunt Eleanor, to any one, it would have been better for him and for Mildred. But he was not a wise youth. He was inexperienced, and he brooded over it. To him it was ghastly that Jim, his old college mate, one of the great and famous four, had actually, as it seemed, tried to supplant him in the good graces of the very girl he had been, as it were, brought to love. It was terrible. The wild side of poor Jim's character was almost unknown to him, for he had been to Eton instead of Gloucester, and he could not conceive it possible. Had it not been for his mother, he would never have known it. And if he in any way offended her, she would talk about it. And so there she was. And from this ground she opened her trenches on Sir Jasper Meredith, that very unhappy young gentleman.

She could not act against Sir Jasper. It must be Maynard, now head of the house. So she drew her first parallel, and it was about that unhappy expedition to Bonn.

Who was James Mordaunt's confidant? Who went after Jim to Bonn? Sir Jasper. Why? Ah! That might be known some day. Did Robert ever hear that horrible story of Jim's nearly murdering Eddy Evans? Heard something of it? *She* had the details. In short, her first parallel against the unhappy Sir Jasper was that he was James's friend: it was Jim, Jim, Jim, all day long.

Maynard was extremely kind to his wife, but they both saw that mutual confidence was at an end, and their wills being of about equal strength, they were afraid of one another. Yet one gush of silly sentimentality at any moment might have brought Mrs. Maynard's castle about her ears with an explanation. So I am happy to say she was very uncomfortable. And besides there was always that horrible Frankenstein, Miss Evans, in the background, who might make inquiries if her niece looked peaked, and ruin all. It was only Miss Evans's extreme dislike of her that prevented this happening. Mrs. Maynard knew this. She used to say, “That woman would take off her shoe in the mud, if she could box my ears with it.” And, upon my word, I should be sorry to say that Mrs. Maynard was altogether wrong.

And Roland and Jim were standing on the bow of their ship, and looking at fantastic palaces and temples. The sky was bright overhead, and they were joyful with youth, friendship, and adventure. The land was green, and bright overhead, but beyond the foreground loomed a heavy, black, formless cloud, which the captain said was the coming monsoon.

Chapter 37.

Roland and James were safe at Belpore, sleepily wondering at the wonderous temple which rises from the edge of the lake, and Eddy was on the broad sea following them, when there took place, at Pulverbatch Grange, a great corroborree, or palaver, of which it now becomes necessary for me to give an account.

Miss Evans usually was very sweet−tempered, and was accustomed to sleep the sleep of the just, particularly after a good day's market in Shrewsbury. She had had a good day's market that day. She had watched the prices, had in the “steamer,” thrashed out three ricks, and sold at 60s., which, as she remarked, would do for those who had no rent to pay. “Why!” she said, as she was riding home on her cob alone, rubbing her nose, “it was only 76s. in Berlin, in 1806: and *they* did well by it. I wish, though, that we had the prices of 1801 and 1812. Fancy getting 140s. What cottages I'd build—what schools I would have.” She was a Radical, in her way, and a great professed admirer of the late Mr. Cobden. Still, given a farm of 700 acres, and 240, or thereabouts, of them in wheat every year, 140s. becomes very tempting. Few farmers are free−traders in corn in their hearts. They hanker after the flesh−pots of Egypt. They have been out−talked and out−argued, and are glad to hold their tongues; but any one who fancies that love for protection is dead will be deceiving himself utterly.

She, however, had done very well, as Eddy found when he got to Calcutta. For old Colonel Smith, H.E.I.C.S., now taken into her deepest confidence, had told her about the frightful extortions of the native money−lenders; so she dismissed large sums out of her income to Eddy. “They may cut his throat, and no doubt will,” she said, “but he shan't go in debt.” Indeed, Eddy never knew what to do with half the money she sent him.

The good bargain she had made for her wheat kept her in good humour the whole of her way home; but when she got home things began to get wrong with her. When she got to her own gate the cob wouldn't stand while she opened it. She had had that cob for five years, and every time she came home on him she had tried to open the gate from his back. He had never allowed such a proceeding for a single moment; he had nailed his colours to the mast about that. Yet she, on her side, had always tried with her usual resolution, and been beaten with her usual good temper. You may reckon that a woman riding about as much alone as she did, must have tried this matter, to be within bounds, say once a day, one day with another, and 364 x 5 = 1820, or something near it. And the cob had never let her do it, and she had never lost her temper, though she had failed every time; but had always slid off, opened the gate, and led him in. But on this occasion, the 1821st, she decidedly lost her temper, when she had to get off and lead the honest horse in. But she never showed it. She never showed her temper with her horses. They could not reply.

Again, with her oldest gardener. If she had told him once to move away the roller out of the ride when he had done with it, she had told him fifty times. But he was as obstinate as the cob, and there was the roller on one side of the ride, and the old gardener on the other; and the cob being led, politely but firmly refused to pass either the one or the other. She lost her temper over this old man, but she never showed it, and he never knew it. For he also had no reply. Her groom was ready for her, with bright brown face and honest eyes; she would have liked to lose her temper with him, but he gave her no opportunity, being ready; but if she had he would never have known it, for he also had no reply.

“I will *not* lose my temper any more to my people,” she said to herself. “It is cowardly. They can't answer you. I have lost my temper too often with them, and they will cease loving me if I do. Not even with my maids. I'll keep my temper for those who can meet me on equal terms.” And with this good resolution she rang the front door bell.

No answer.

She rang again.

No answer.

“Tiresome young hussies!” she said; when there was a noise in the hall of scuffling, giggling, and kissing, and the umbrella−stand was hurled headlong over.

“Oh, my dear young people!” said Aunt Eleanor, with an emphasis which those inside would have little liked; “if you only *knew* about Somes' letter. But I will compromise. *I'll* keep *my* temper. You can't reply.”

Immediately afterwards the door was opened by a very pretty girl, who was not by any means prepared to see

her mistress home so soon from market, for, indeed, it was only half−past twelve. She was touzled, and her cap was all awry; as well it might be, for she had just been kissed in the hall by the footman, to whom she was engaged to be married. And if there is any harm in that, I hope sincerely that we are all guilty.

But Aunt Eleanor hated what she called scuffling. But she kept her temper in reserve.

The girl said, “La! mum, I never thought it was you. I beg your pardon.”

“Have you heard from your mother, Maria?” said Miss Evans, laying down her whip.

“Thank you, mum; yes, mum.”

“And from your father?” said Miss Evans.

“Thank you, mum; yes, mum.”

“Both well, I hope?” said Miss Evans.

“Quite well, thank you, mum,” said the girl.

“Send my compliments to them, Maria, the next time you write. And ask them, in addition, whether, before they were married, they were in the habit of scuffling and kissing one another in the hall while their master or mistress was waiting to be let in. It is a mere matter of detail, but I should be glad to collect their sentiments on the subject.”

The girl departed, horrified and dumb. But nothing came of it. Aunt Eleanor rang her bell twice, and it was answered by the footman with singular alacrity. To say that that young man shook in his shoes, is to understate his frame of mind. No people are so terrible as those whom their inferiors know to be possessed of firmness and resolution, and yet who never *scold*. Their inferiors give them credit for a reserved power of scolding which is terrible to them. I have heard a story of a great and very quiet man, who once, after receiving an answer, turned on the offending servant, and said *Sir* in such an awful manner, that the young man was taken ill, and the family physician had to remind his grace (I suppose it was the late Duke of Wellington) that the nerves of indoor male servants, from their want of physical exercise, were not so strong as those of a groom or a gardener. His grace, we will hope, never behaved with such want of consideration any mere. Good John Leech's outrageously ridiculous picture of “Who dares kill Marius?” shows pretty much the same idea. Aunt Eleanor's young footman was thinking of Australia and California when he entered the room.

“Ho!” said Aunt Eleanor, “and so that is *you*, is it?”

“Yes, Miss,” said the terrified young man.

“I have four or five people coming to lunch,” said Miss Evans.

“Is everything ready?”

“Everything will be ready in twenty minutes, Miss.”

“That is good. Have you cleaned all the plate?”

“Yes, Miss. All as clean as you could possibly desire.”

“*Then*,” said Aunt Eleanor, turning and looking at him, “before the guests arrive, *just go into the hall, and pick up the umbrella−stand!*“

He understood. He did it. And going to the kitchen told cook to mind and be smart, for that “Miss Evans was in the horfullest wax ever he'd seen her.”

When he announced the first arrival, “Mr. Somes,” he did so with such emphasis and *empressement*, that he got another stare, and wished he was well out of it. Young Somes, the long−whiskered, gentlemanly young barrister, whom we have seen before, was left alone with Miss Evans, who received him in the kindest manner, much to his surprise.

“My dear soul,” said Miss Evans, “you have broken my heart altogether.”

“My dear madam,” said young Somes, “what *could* I do? Our house has been made by yours. We are under the deepest obligations to your family. The whole case, as we have seen it, was sent to me, and I got the highest advice on it. The result was the letter you got the day before yesterday. I suppose that that advice has cost my father, and consequently myself, some 8000*l*. Believe, madam, that there are honest lawyers.”

“Your house were always the best of friends, and the best of advisers,” said Aunt Eleanor, fairly crying; “but it breaks my heart.”

“Oh, no, no!” said the young fellow; “your heart is too big a one to be broken. No, no!”

“I thought your father would have fought,” said Miss Evans.

“So he would, dear old gaby,” said young Somes, laughing; “but I wouldn't have it. It is all my doing. Are you

very angry with me?

"I am not at all angry with you. I think you an excellent young man. Talk no more about it till the others come. What is the news in London? Come and sit by the fire."

"Well, madam, there is no great news. There has been news enough and to spare lately. The peace will keep us talking for a time."

"What says public opinion?" said Miss Evans.

"Public opinion says that we were right in the last war, and that we were wrong. That we never exhibited our utter prostration so signally as we have just done; and that we never before showed how infinitely stronger than ever we were before. That if it hadn't been for the French we should have been thrashed in a week; and if it hadn't been for the French we should have conquered and annexed the Crimea in a month. That the French did all the fighting; and that they ran away the moment they caught sight of a Russian. That the Russians were the most splendid troops we have ever met; and that they never would come near us unless their officers beat them on with the flat of their words. That our commissariat broke down; and that no army was ever more magnificently furnished in the world—"

"Yes, yes!" said Miss Evans, laughing, "I know all that. But what do you young wiseacres say? You young barristers, with Parliament before you. What are you saying?"

Young Somes turned and looked at her. She was wonderfully handsome, and one of those quaint fancies—incipient brain−waves, I suppose—came into his head, and made him think that she would have made a splendid *sailor*. To put it strictly, there was a combination of forethought and reckless audacity which justified, to some extent, the young man's opinion.

"You are looking at me with pity," she said, sharply. "Tell me—India now?"

"We are out of one mess only to fall into a greater," said young Somes. "Why on earth, Miss Evans, did you ever let Mr. Edward go to India? Matters can't possibly go on as they are going. There are *plenty* of people who know what is going to happen."

"Reconquest," said Miss Evans. "Well, if he chooses to tie a sword round his waist, he had better be somewhere where he can use it. Here is Miss Mordaunt. Ethel, this is Mr. Somes."

"Compromise Somes," said Ethel, laughing. "No, really. You will catch it directly, sir; the Mordaunts are coming."

She was so brave, so frank, and so free, that young Somes fell in love with her on the spot, of which fact he informed his wife that evening; and his wife, after hearing his description of her, what she said, and what she did, applauded him highly, and immediately fell in love with Ethel herself by deputy.

The next arrivals were the elder and the younger Mordaunt.

"You are very late, you two," said Aunt Eleanor; "why could not you have come with Ethel?"

"We did," said the Squire; "we have been putting the horses up. How do, Somes?"

"Always some excuse," said Aunt Eleanor. Young Mordaunt rang the bell for lunch. "*Twice* I sold my corn, George Mordaunt, at sixty; not bad, I take it. How much have you lost on your farm this year?"

"I have recouped," said the Squire.

"Fiddle−de−dee!" said Aunt Eleanor; "you *think* you have. I should like to see your books. It ought to be written up over the door of every great school in England, in large letters, 'No gentleman can farm his own land, because he must send his bailiff to market, being too fine a gentleman to go himself.'"

"What would you write up in the ladies' schools, then?" said Squire Mordaunt.

"That a good woman is ten times as shrewd and twenty times as courteous as the best man of the lot; and that the remark don't apply to them in any way; for that they must be fools from the mere fact of allowing themselves to be sent to a ladies' school, as at present conducted, at all. A finishing establishment! Bah! I'd finish some of them. Lunch (to the footman). There is Ethel, now, knows nothing except what she has learnt from me and who is there like Ethel, I would like to know? Why, nobody. She can play the piano, certainly, which I can't, and which I hate. Why couldn't she have been taught to play the fiddle? I love the fiddle, and it is the real woman's instrument. There is ten times the feminine delicacy of touch required in it which there is in the piano. Why, a *man* can play a piano better than any woman, in the same way as a man can fill a cart with gravel better than a woman, by superior strength of wrist—though I doubt even that, mind you."

"But what woman has ever been a great violin−player, Eleanor?" said George Mordaunt.

“That is it. You men have voted it unladylike, and so they have never been taught. Look at Ethel's fingers and at her brother's, and tell me which is the likelier to make a good fiddle−player. You voted it unladylike, because it is the instrument you have chosen to dance to in pot−house brawls. I can conceive no other reason.”

“My *dear* Eleanor,” said Squire Mordaunt.

“There, I have talked out my talk, and here is lunch. Compromise Somes, sit next Miss Mordaunt. George, come and sit next to me. John,” to the footman, “remove the covers. Have you picked up the umbrella−stand?”

“Yes, Miss Evans.”

“Then mind it stays up, will you?”

“Yes, Miss Evans.”

Squire Mordaunt was very sorry to find Miss Evans in one of her quaintest and most reckless moods; but he consoled himself by thinking that she had possibly “blown her steam off.” A very important discussion was about to come off, and he wished that she would have been more cool.

But she was cool enough when, the lunch being removed, they all sat together talking about weather, crops, fishing, grouse chances, the new coal−pit at Longnor, and many other things, each desiring that the other should begin. Squire Mordaunt was one of the most resolute men in Shropshire; but Aunt Eleanor was the first who came to business.

“Now, my dear people, we will talk business, and leave coal−pits alone. If we fight this matter, I shall require a coal−pit myself; and I know there is coal on my property. Deacon Macdingaway is of the same opinion. I was walking with him under the south wall, by the moat, looking at the peaches, and I said, 'Deacon, there is coal under here;' and he said, 'Without doubt, if it pleases your leddyship to think so.' Now, that, coming from a long−headed Scotchman like him, amounts to a certainty. I'd begin sinking to−morrow, only it would make such a mess in the garden at this time of year.”

“Eleanor! Eleanor!” said Squire Mordaunt.

“Well, you had better talk nonsense than sit dumb−founded and say nothing at all, as you are doing. Will you begin?”

“Mr. Somes,” said Squire Mordaunt, “we have asked you, as a well−tried friend of the Evans' family, to meet us, equally well−tried friends of the family, to discuss the claim of this young adventurer, Allan Gray.”

“I don't think he is an adventurer myself, sir,” said young Somes; “I frankly confess that I believe his story.”

“That looks bad,” said old Mordaunt. “Will you lay the case before us?—not legally, or in legal language, but as you would to a common jury, and to a common jury at quarter sessions. I am, you know, chairman of quarter sessions; and you gentlemen put matters in one way before me, and quite in another way when you have a keen, wise old judge sitting over you. Let us have quarter sessions statements, not assizes. Ethel, go and feed the chickens, old girl.”

And Ethel went. Young Somes laughed, and proceeded—

“The late Captain Evans fell in love with Ellen, or Elsie Gray, who was at that time lady's−maid to Miss Eleanor Evans, and made his sentiments known to her, and those sentiments were reciprocated.”

“That is all true,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“Captain Evans went into the campaign of Waterloo, taking two of Miss Gray's brothers with him; one of whom was killed in that last ghastly imbroglio with the Old Guard, and one of whom returned.”

A nod from Aunt Eleanor.

“On the eve of Waterloo, the late Mrs. Evans, the Captain's mother, found the girl in an hysterical state, and in that state got the whole matter from her. Captain Evans had promised Miss Gray marriage. I can say, now that Miss Mordaunt is not in the room that the late Mrs. Charles Evans was a model of virtue; and, even if she had not been, Captain Charles would have sooner cut off his right hand than have done her wrong.”

“Yes, Charles was no rascal,” said Aunt Eleanor, quietly; “we don't breed them in our family.”

“Mrs. Evans the elder,” said Somes, continuing, “by some happy or unhappy fatality, sent the girl out of the way to Carlisle, of all places in the world. The late Captain Evans, returning home from Waterloo with the one remaining brother, followed Miss Gray to Carlisle, taking her brother, a favourite and very dearly−loved comrade, with him; so that no scandal could ever rest on his future wife's name. Brother and sister were alike willing. The brother took the sister over the Scotch border, where Captain Evans was married in Scotch fashion. After which the brother was sent home, and Captain Evans wrote to his sister to tell her of the marriage, but entreating her to

say nothing about it."

"Which, like a fool as she was," said Aunt Eleanor, "she did not."

"But Gray the soldier came back," continued Somes, "and, like a wooden−headed lad as he was, let out the fact that Captain Charles was at Carlisle with his sister. Suspicious arose, and Miss Evans's tongue was tied by what I very humbly think a mistaken notion of honour. Captain Charles lost nerve, dared not face his parents, and was sent to India under a cloud.

"Meanwhile the young soldier, Gray, seeing his betters making indiscreet matches, thought that imitation was the finest form of admiration. He came home, and made a singularly indiscreet match himself. Marriage is very catching, Mr. Mordaunt. When I married, five bosom friends of mine all went off in a heap."

"It did them credit, sir," said old Mordaunt.

"Well, young Gray had no earthly provision for his wife. And Captain Charles Evans had none for his. The soldier sent his wife to his mother, old Mrs. Gray, and the Captain's wife retreated to her, to be under the protection of Miss Evans, who is sitting with us now. And it so came about that both the innocent, pretty little souls had their babies wailing at their breasts at one and the same time."

"Quarter sessions! quarter sessions!" said Squire Mordaunt, blowing his nose; "you wouldn't try *that* before a judge, you know."

"Wouldn't I?" said young Somes. "I'd put any piece of *real* sentiment before any of our judges without being afraid for a moment. They are only men. I have known one of them lie awake crying all night after he had pronounced sentence of death."

"Sir, we must get on. The facts of the case, as I make them out, are these. The soldier's child died, and Captain Charles Evans's child lived. These children were changed, the dead for the living. Follow me, please, because probabilities are so extremely in favour of their case, that I confess I looked on it favourably from the first.

"We have two young women, both confined at the same, or nearly the same time.

"Mrs. Charles Evans, what was her position? She was deserted, lost, ruined, and degraded, on the very estate where she had been brought up. Who was in the possession of her secret—of the secret that she was actually married? Only two people, Eleanor Evans and Phillis Myrtle, and neither of them spoke. The one from a chivalrous sense of honour towards her brother, the other from a dim and distant chance of making money from her secret."

Aunt Eleanor looked up deadly pale, and she said, "You see a lie is a lie, and brings its consequences. Go on, young Somes you are a good young man. That lie of mine will be indirectly my ruin. For if I had spoken out, don't you see, Roland's position would have been different in some way, some inappreciable way, and he might not have gone to India. And so Eddy would not have gone. I hope God will not deal too hardly with Eddy for my fault."

Young Somes, with his solemn white face, looked steadily at her, as at a fact to be respectfully studied, saying to himself, "I don't mind a Sorites, but I don't like a dozen in a heap. That woman's conclusions are logical enough, but how the deuce does she get at them so quick? Well, I must stick to my original creed, that I am a thundering fool, but will try to be something better. That old woman is cleverer than I am."

"Now, sir, not only Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Phillis Myrtle are prepared to swear that the child which died was the soldier's child, and the child which lived was Captain Evans's, but they got a declaration from the mother that such was the case, and I honestly believe it to be the case myself. Mrs. Gray knew nothing whatever of her daughter's marriage; had she, she would have urged these claims before. She believed him to be the illegitimate son of Captain Evans by her daughter. She conceived, and I think rightly, that he would have a better chance of good treatment from a family so extremely scrupulous as the Evanses, if he came before the world as an honestly born child, with an indirect claim on the family, in consequence of the wrong that had been done her daughter, than if he came to them in the shape of an illegitimate child, the disgrace of the house. For there have been none such among the Evanses within human memory. Mrs. Gray persuaded the other two women to consent, for she is a woman of great force of character; and the thing was done."

"So you *think*," said Squire Mordaunt. "Are you going to compromise an old woman's tale like *this*?"

"Wait, sir, if you please," said young Somes. "I have seen the deposition of the soldier Gray's wife, and it is very awkward. You can't tell what a jury would do with it. I now begin to speak of Mrs. Phillis Myrtle. Mrs. Myrtle, who was in and about during all this, was all the time in possession of the fact that Captain Evans had

honourably married Miss Gray in Scotland. The poor girl had given her time and place, and the names of the witnesses, because—"

"Go on," said Aunt Eleanor; "I can stand it."

"Because she would like some one to know it besides Miss Evans. It was utterly base and ungrateful of her, I know, but she did it. She told Mrs. Myrtle."

"I know she did," said Aunt Eleanor. "Poor little dear, we loved one another well. She must have consented to this, though."

"Of that I know nothing; of the whole conspiracy we can know but little. Still here remains the fact. These two women are prepared to swear to their conspiracy and take the consequences, and meanwhile, Mrs. Maynard, of the Barton, has known the whole business from one end to another for a considerable time, and is expressing a strong desire to unburden her mind of its guilty secret."

"*That* woman!" said Aunt Eleanor.

"The very same, madam. Do you remember who Mrs. Myrtle *was*?"

"Certainly," said Aunt Eleanor. "Why, she was that woman's nurse!"

"*Ex*−actly," said young Somes; "and Mrs. Myrtle, totally unable to keep a secret, yet loves having the power of one. Had she let out her secret to Mrs. Gray, they would have moved years ago. But she must tell the whole story to some one, and she told it to Mrs. Maynard. Why did she not tell it to Mrs. Gray? Because she *hated* Mrs. Gray. Mrs. Gray bullied her, and annoyed her. They would no more mix than vinegar and oil. This wretched, tipsy old woman, knew the whole truth. She admitted one half of it to Miss Evans (that about the marriage), and the other half to Mrs. Gray (that about changing the children). So Mrs. Gray knew one half and Miss Evans the other. But she went off and told the story in its entirety to Mrs. Maynard. Mrs. Maynard has in her possession at this moment the declaration of the woman Gray, and the names of the witnesses to Charles Evans's marriage. That is the reason, Miss Evans, why she so furiously opposed a match between her daughter and Mr. Roland. That is why Mr. Roland is in India."

"Ho!" said Aunt Eleanor, "and so that is the way the he has fallen from heaven on my head. So *that* is the reason why Roland has gone to India, and Eddy has followed him. *I'll just ride over and see that woman tomorrow*."

Why did I put that in italics? Because it was said in italics. In italics so low, so fierce, and so threatening, that Squire Mordaunt said, "Eleanor, *be quiet*;" and she only folded her hands and was dumb.

"Well, sir," continued young Somes, "to be short: young Gray, or we should rather say, if my advice is taken, Evans, took his grandmother into his house in London, as a dutiful godson should; and she, a fierce, resolute, wild, godless old tiger, as she is, led him a fearful life. His ways were not her ways, and she hated him for his precise religionism, and still more because she believed that he was the fruit of an action by which her daughter had been unutterably wronged. He, as a man of the most true and high nobility—"

"*What* did you say?" asked Squire Mordaunt, aghast.

"He, as one of the most splendid and noble young fellows I have ever met," continued Somes, "bore with her and her ways, though she was a thorn in the flesh to him. I can conceive of no fate worse than his was. He, with every high and noble instinct in his head and his heart, devoting himself to God and to God's poor night and day, to be locked up in the same small house with a godless old fury like that! He is a Dissenter, sir—I a very High Churchman; but when I look at that man's life, sir, I blush for my own."

He blushed certainly, but it was with warmth, not with shame. Aunt Eleanor said, "He is quite right, George. It is all true;" and young Somes went on.

"This old Mrs. Gray, bored to death in Camden Town; no seeking excitement in stimulants (she has too much vitality for that—she is as sober as a Mussulman, but as fierce as an Arsascide), thought she would like to have Mrs. Myrtle to come and gossip with her. And Mrs. Myrtle came, and in her drink let the whole matter out to Mrs. Gray, from beginning to end. I need not tell you that Allan Gray moved in the matter at once. The good old house which backs his claim wavered about it for a little, but took it up in the end. They have had more trouble with him than ever we shall, if we treat him wisely and well. What they know more than we do I can't say; but they were perfectly prepared to go on, until Allan Gray, against their wishes, proposed a compromise, and I think that we should meet him."

"It seems to me a mere old woman's story," said Squire Mordaunt.

“It does not seem so to others,” said young Somes. “The other house think it a very good one. *I* think it a good one.”

“But we could smash these two old trots for conspiracy,” said Squire Mordaunt.

“And Miss Evans with them, if they were vindictive, possibly. Yes, you might get that satisfaction for about 8000*l*., if you cared to do it.”

“You are rather cool, young Somes,” said the younger Mordaunt.

“Some one must be, young Mordaunt,” he replied. “Look here; you would employ us, and the money is all out of my father's pocket. The governor would fight: I won't let him: Is that being disinterested or not?”

“It certainly is, sir,” said old Mordaunt, emphatically. “But what compromise is proposed?”

“Recognition as head of the house, and a rent−charge of 1000*l*. a year for his lifetime. All further claims on the estate to be abandoned. There.”

Dead silence.

Old and young Mordaunt were debating wildly whether it was too much or too little, and whether they ought to advise compromise at all. But Aunt Eleanor, with her pocket−handkerchief before her face, hit, unwomanlike, the nail on the head.

“Supposing that this monstrous compromise was accepted, Mr. Somes, there will, I suppose, be no future stipulation in it in the case of his marriage?”

Somes blushed up scarlet. “Madam, there is not the slightest possibility of his marrying. I think you know that as well as I. But there is no further stipulation.”

“You have been seeing a good deal of him then,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“Yes, madam, a good deal; and the more I see of him the more I like him. He might have made harder terms than these.”

“Well,” said Squire Mordaunt, “all that remains to be done is to send his terms to India to Roland. That will take nearly four months. Meanwhile?”

“Meanwhile, are you going to advise Roland to compromise?” said young Somes.

“*Most certainly*, on these terms,” said Squire Mordaunt.

“Then it is as good as settled,” said Somes. “Will you receive him?”

“Not as an Evans. I will *call* him Evans, but I don't recognise his right until Roland has done so.”

“He is coming down here,” said Somes, “to put you all to rights. However, you will see him fast enough. Good−by.”

Chapter 38.

“Cornet Mordaunt is ordered to attend on Colonel Cordery immediately after to−morrow morning's parade.”

“What *have* you been up to, Jimmy?” said Roland.

“Well, I haven't been up to anything in particular,” said James.

“Old boy, *do* be more careful. There is no better fellow in the world than you, and you are a splendid officer. Can't you leave off this everlasting tomfoolery? Will you ever be out of a scrape? What is the matter now?”

“I don't know,” said Jim. “Not in particular.”

“What did you do to−day?” asked Roland.

“Well, I got up and was at parade, and I was late; and so was the drummer. And I got on the drummer's horse in a hurry, and told him to get on mine, which he wasn't fool enough to do. And, being on his horse, I thought I would try to improve my mind by drumming; but I could not come it, and kicked up a devil of a row. Then my syce brought my horse, and I was in time; but the drummer was late, and caught it. Do you think it is that?”

Roland groaned. “What did you do next?”

“Well, I went to the bath; and I ducked the doctor.”

“Did he get angry?” asked Roland.

“Didn't he! My eye! Such a wax. Wanted to know if was an officer and a gentleman, and I told him no; and sent his bald old head under again. *I'll* physic him.”

“What did you do then?” said Roland, in despair.

“Well, I looked in to see how the judge was getting on in his court.”

“Did you make a fool of yourself *there*?” said Roland.

“No; I only went in to study the language, and I sat and looked at him; nothing more, I give you my word of honour. But he got in a wax about it, and went so far as to ask me whether he was to be insulted by military subalterns in his own court.”

“What did you say?”

“I don't exactly remember,” said Jim; “but it was something that made him waxier than ever.”

“Well, what did you do next?” asked Roland.

“Well, I went and knocked up the Nawab.”

“Which Nawab?”

“He of Belpore.”

“That is right,” said Roland, eagerly. “For Heaven's sake have nothing to do with the Rajah of Bethoor. Don't be seen speaking to him. He is an utterly unsafe man. W— never lets him into his house. Will you be serious for a moment, James?”

“Yes, if you a'n't more.”

“I *know*,” said Roland, “that that man had the lines fired the other night when W—was dining at the Residency, with a view of getting the keys of the magazine, where he pretended to believe that the fire−engine was. Mrs. W— (bless her noble soul!) refused to give them up, and ran in the darkness, mud, and rain, towards the Residency, and luckily met two of the conductors, who informed her that the fire−engine was not kept in the magazine at all. That man is a traitor and a scoundrel.”

“The dirty sweep!” said Jim. “I'll get a pea−shooter, and the Nawab and I will give him a volley from the Nawab's drag the next time we pass his barouche.”

“On the other hand,” continued Roland, “the Nawab is a most respectable and excellent young man—a thoroughly noble and excellent young Indian gentleman. He is absurd sometimes in his imitation of English manners, but he is thoroughly *good*. You should try to regulate his Anglo−mania, my dear Jim He is apt to make himself absurd by it. I fear you encourage him to be foolish. Have you and he been at any particular folly today?”

“No,” drawled Jim. “I found him going out in his drag, Cutcherry's old coach, you know, with two Australians for wheelers, and two imported black Flemish mares for leaders. And, as Edie Ochiltree says, he behoved to drive. But I asked him to let me drive, and he was pleased at the idea of getting a lesson at it. And as we drove, I told him that he would never feel the full pleasure of four−in−hand driving until he had had a good spill, and he was

perfectly game; and so I told him that his black Flemish leaders were in reality hearse−horses, used only for funerals in England, and that they would always bolt into a burial−ground. He is thoroughly plucky, and at once proposed that we should cross the nullah and try them past the cemetery. And when we came to the cemetery, I put the leaders at the wall, and we came to everlasting grief, to his immense delight."

"I wish you would not do such things," said Roland, impatiently.

"My dear Roley, he liked it. I was shot on to a soft grave, and he fell dexterously atop of me. I assure you he is charmed. As soon as the fragments of the drag are got together, he will ask me to do it again, which I certainly shall. He considers it as a phase in our ruder national sports. He is going to get up a prize−fight."

The interview with the Colonel was not quite so satisfactory.

"Mordaunt," said the Colonel, very kindly, "we are all very fond of you, and should be very loth to lose you."

"Now, I know what is coming," thought Jim. "K— all over. I shall be head−mastered till I am dead, I believe. I wish he would let me off with lines. The moonshee would do them. I wonder what is up!"

"About you, Mordaunt," said the Colonel, "I have to say that a brighter, brisker, more promising young officer don't exist."

"This is getting worse and worse," thought Jim. "I know this style of thing."

"I have a strong personal feeling towards you myself. You are popular among your brother officers; your men like you extremely. You are learning your duty admirably, and I have no fault to find in that way with you."

"This means expulsion from the British army, if I know anything of being sent up to head−master, and I ought to," thought Jim.

"*But*," continued the Colonel, "there are parts of your conduct which will most certainly entail your retirement from the regiment, if not from the army altogether, unless they are immediately mended. Court−martials have been held for half of what you have done, sir. Do you suppose for a moment, sir, that the British rule in India can be kept up, if officers in the British army come out from balls at the Residency at four o'clock in the morning, seize the palanquin of the Judge's lady, induce a not very sober collector to get into it, run away with it into the bottom of a nullah, and turn it upside down, with the collector inside?"

"Hang it all," thought Jim. Then aloud,—"I didn't know it was *her* palanquin, sir; and Phipps and I apologised afterwards."

"Then the other fellow *was* Phipps," said the Colonel.

Whereupon Jim grew sulky, fierce, amid silent, cursing his tongue.

"Of this singular friendship of yours with the Nawab, I decline to say anything. Such intimacy with native princes, however estimable, is always considered highly indiscreet, more especially in the case of King's officers. However, with regard to that particular matter, I refuse to say one single word further than I think you are utterly lowering yourself by it, and had I ever dreamed that such a friendship would have taken place, I would never have admitted you into the regiment."

"I have sat out heavier wiggings than this, sir," said Jim, suddenly, which made the Colonel think him a strange young man, as indeed he was. But the Colonel had taken up his ground, and was not to be diverted.

"I therefore say nothing of your friendship for the Nawab. I even pass over your yesterday's extraordinary performances, enough for several court−martials; but on one point I particularly request an explanation—the extraordinary familiarity which you are showing to your moonshee."

Jim was utterly taken aback at this accusation. His tomfooleries were so innumerable that he felt guilty on all points. But this one! He stammered out, "What, old Baghobahar?"

"Yes," said the Colonel. "Your behaviour to that old man is reported to me as something I have never heard of out of Bedlam. They say that you have him in your room for hours together, and that you sit him up at one end, and lie in your hammock and look at him."

"He is a most respectable old man, sir," said Jim, blushing scarlet. "We study the language together."

"I have no doubt of it," said the Colonel, kindly. "And now to conclude, my dear lad. You are one of the best and most honest lads that ever stepped, but *do* try to curb this fantastic behaviour. *I*, as a man of the world, and an old officer, have seen plenty of it, and know that it is only the outcome of the intense vitality and vivacity of our nation, a handful of whom can keep these millions in order. But curb it here. It does us ill−service among these solemn Asiatics, who have nearly lost the art of laughter with their cruel ritualisms and their life−long struggle to live. In the most successful of your tomfooleries did you ever see a low−caste man laugh at you?"

“Why no, sir.”

“Believe me, no. I am young enough yet to go on a frolic with you anywhere but here. Be more dignified, my boy. Don't play the fool. There, cut away, you have had your wigging. You are a good young man, and a good officer. Don't play the fool any more; and, if you continue your friendship with the Nawab, upset his coach somewhere else than in a graveyard.”

“Do you know, sir,” said Jim, standing up erect and solemn before him, “that you are a very kind and good man, and that I would go to the devil after you?”

“That presupposes my going to the devil first, my good lad,” said the Colonel, laughing; “which is a thing I don't mean to do. Come, are you going to be good?”

“I don't think so,” said Jim. “I never was. I'll be as good as I can. Am I to cut the Nawab?”

“Certainly not,” said the Colonel; “but don't make a fool of him.”

“Am I to cut my moonshee?” asked the incorrigible Jim.

“There, get out of this, do,” said the Colonel. “I do believe that K—'s boys remain boys until they are eighty. All except Evans, who seems to have been born when he was ninety.” And so Jim departed.

“I'd go to *somewhere* after that fellow,” he said to Roland. “But I've *caught* it,” and he offered no further explanation. So Roland left him alone.

The moonshee business, which the Colonel thought to be the worst of all poor Jim's business, even including that of the Judge's lady's palanquin and the collector, must be explained.

It was absolutely necessary that Jim, to go the way King Roland wished him to go, towards staff promotion, must learn Hindustani at least. And Jim admitted the fact. So Roland, who had quickly the ear of every officer on the station, cast about for the very cleverest moonshee procurable. And that moonshee was old Baghobahar, and he was incontinently told to attend to Jim, and instruct him in Hindustani.

And so this happened to Jim. He was lying on a sofa, singing, “Barbara Allen” at the top of his voice, and looking out at the scalding sunshine beyond, when there entered to him an aged wan, who salaamed and came towards him. And Jim was stricken dumb.

Out of that depth of humour, which the English and Scotch have in common, came a voice which told him that this was the old man. Jim had, like most young men of his fresh, wildish constitution, and good disposition, loved old men, for their pretty gentle ways, and their complacent politeness. But here, in India, appeared to him the old man of all old men. The ideal of all Ideals. And Jim arose and took him to his bosom; that is to say, he salaamed to him again, and made him sit down.

From that moment the mere contemplation of this aged Hindoo gave the profoundest satisfaction to Jim. He was content to lie on his sofa and look at him.

He was a little old man, very old, with a very dark complexion, snow−white hair and beard, and large spectacles; whenever Jim could get that old man cocked up before him, with his spectacles on, his soul was satisfied. Roland called him a fool, but Eddy was as great a fool about the old man as Jim.

There the old man used to sit, hour after hour, with his heels tucked under him (not cross−legged), reading Hindustani to Jim. And there Jim would lie, smoking and listening, never weary in the contemplation of *his* old man. He would have liked to *buy* that old man, had it been possible. He relieved his mind by giving him handfuls of new rupees, which, however, were generally declined by the quaint old Hindoo gentleman.

Roland looked into Jim's bungalow one day, and watched them. The old man was cocked up at the end of the room, reading sententiously. Jim lay smoking and contemplating his jdol. “Is he mad?” said Roland. “Not a bit, my dear Roland; but he has got what you have not, 'humour.'“

The other object of contemplation in which Jim most delighted, was the Nawab of Belpore, or of “Baal Peor,” as Jim delighted to call him, not knowing that he was merely reproducing exactly the same words. This grand young Indian prince was a perpetual source of delight to Jim. And after Jim had spilt him over the churchyard wall, given him fifty at billiards and beaten him, pitched his best wrestler on the back of his head, and ridden his worst buck−jumping Australian for him, the kindly, honest young Nawab was as fond of contemplating Jim, as Jim was of contemplating him.

These friendships are extremely rare. But this was a real one. I believe that they will be as rare in future. Our people have dropped the horrid word “nigger,” now. Fancy calling Scindiah, for instance, a “nigger!” Can one wonder at what happened?

Do they love us yet? It is hard to say. But we are doing our duty, and we must hope that they will get as far as that when they see what we have done for them. Social impertinence had much to do with one phase of the Indian Mutiny. The most courteous people in the world get sick in time of continual insults. To a certain kind of fantastically Radical mind, like poor Jim's, social distinctions are impossible. His moonshee and his Nawab were new and astounding facts to him, but he considered them quite in the light of equals—a point of view which his good Colonel or Roland could never be brought to.

Poor Jim had not the least discretion in speech, though a great deal in judgment. He was lying one day with his book before him, pretending to follow his moonshee, who was reading aloud to him, but was in reality contemplating that great moonshee, when there was a scuffling of runners, and a carriage drew up opposite his door.

He was in hopes that it was his Nawab, but a native servant came in, and said that it was the Rajah of Bethoor.

“Tell him to go to hell,” said Jim, lying back on his sofa. “Go on, Baghobahar.”

The frightened servant departed trembling. Immediately after a sergeant of his own troop came in and said, “If you please, sir, the Rajah of Bethoor is at the door.”

“That rascal has not given my message, then,” said Jim. “Jones, you go out and give it. Tell him to go to hell.” And the sergeant went out and gave some sort of message, not possibly the same as Jim's, but sufficiently, strong to prevent his ever coming again.

And the moonshee took off his spectacles, wiped them, looked at Jim with supreme satisfaction, put them on again, and said “I have now to call the sahib's attention to the fact that there are twelve months in the year, consisting on an average of thirty−one days, each of twenty−four hours. We now enter the ninth month of the contemplations of the Fakeer Dhalblat of Ferosepore.”

And Jim said, “Cut away, old man.”

Chapter 39.

So the Colonel and Roland let Jim go his own quaint way with his Nawab and his moonshee, and went their own. Before many months were over, it became apparent that Jim was exercising an immense influence over the Nawab. The drag was discontinued; he was taught to ride. His Royal Highness likewise left off dressing himself in puce−coloured velvet and gold, white loose trousers, and patent−leather pumps, and came out in a neat costume, between English and Asiatic. He likewise smoked less, and rode harder, and what is more, liked it.

“I told you, Colonel,” said Roland, “that there was good in this. He will make a man of that Nawab.”

“He is a queer fellow,” said the Colonel; “as mad as a hatter; but I suppose we must leave him alone. He is certainly making a gentleman out of the Nawab.”

“What are the Nawab's antecedents?” asked Roland.

“Same as the rest of them,” said the Colonel, yawning; “married when he was twelve, and four times since. Now twenty−three. Spent all his time learning European languages and manners, and flying kites for a recreation, till a couple of years ago, when he took up with a kind of Orleans Anglo−mania. I dare say Mordaunt will make something of him. What is this building going on at his palace? That is a new kick.”

“Jim and he are studying fortifications together,” said Roland; “and they are reducing it to practice.”

“Well, he is a safe man,” said the Colonel. “He might spend money worse. I will go and have a look at these two fools. By−the−bye, Evans—”

“Yes, sir.”

“You speak French?”

“Yes, sir.”

And the conversation, until Roland's departure, was carried on that language, which had the very strange effect of causing the punkah over their heads to go faster, as though with exasperation. Colonel noticed it, and laughed.

“I wish you would go out and stick a pig for me, to−morrow.”

The Colonel looked at him so very straight that Roland only looked back again, and said—

“Yes, sir.”

“Between this and Delhi it is only a hundred and forty miles.”

“And not a dozen pigs in the distance,” said Roland. “Yes, sir.”

“And put this cypher in your pocket, and let your horse run away; and let him run away as far as Jellapore, where they will remount you; and then let *that* horse run away as far as Bugapore, and they will give you a fresh horse there; and let him run away with you as far as Delhi; and give that cypher into L—'s own hands.”

“I see, sir.”

“If you are assassinated I will see after your affairs. I don't *think* you will be, if you can get safe to Jellapore. Don't come back alone, but come with the 201st.”

“I will obey your instructions, sir. I am very much obliged to you for this mark of confidence.”

“Whoy! for the matter of that, I always pick out the best man for a dangerous and secret service, with no possible chance of reward attaching to it. The compliment is quite mutual, I assure you. Ride in the open as much as possible till you are past Jellapore.”

“Are our communications threatened already, sir?” asked Roland.

“I suppose that is more my business than yours, is it not?” said the Colonel, quietly. “What you have to do is to obey orders. Go to bed now, and slip off before day with a hog−spear. Do as you are told.”

And Roland nodded, and turned to the door, when the Colonel called him back.

“Come, young man, I will trust you as far as this. They have learned our cypher, and you are the first bearer of a new one.”

“Are they going to move yet, sir?”

“Who knows? Who cares? It will all be the same. What was done before can be done again. Be careful of yourself. You are the best man I have, or I should not have sent you on this dangerous errand. You know, of course, that you will get no credit by it.”

“Good evening, sir,” said Roland, in *English*, laughing.

“Good evening, Evans,” said the Colonel, also in that language. “Mind you are not late for parade.”

And the Colonel went out into the verandah, and pleased himself by staring steadily at the punkah wallah, who had pulled the string so violently when he and Roland began to talk French.

And Roland went away to his errand; and before day broke, on his best Australian, dressed in the old Shropshire hunting breeches, and boots, with a hog−spear in his hand, he had put a good twenty miles between him and Belpore.

These were the first days of it, when those who warned were not listened to. The end was not yet by any means.

On the very morning on which Roland had so innocently cantered out of Belpore with a hog−spear, and two running scyces, blown and distanced very soon by the pace of his Clarence River bred Australian horse—on this very morning Jim was lying on his sofa, contemplating his beloved moonshee with greater satisfaction than ever. The moonshee had long before finished “Contemplations of Dhalblat,” and indeed the modern Hindustani comedy of “Rumsi Door, the Cloth−Merchant of Jellalabad,” a work of great art, directed against the Mahomedans, but which has fallen dead in England, in spite of Captain Rollingstone's *most spirited translation*. The moonshee had finished these two on Jim's head, and was beginning with the “Dhollery−bagh; or, Garden of Rupees" (a poor piece as to plot, but admirable for its Anglicised Hindustani). He was propped up on his haunches at one end of the room, and Jim was lying on his sofa at the other, contemplating him and smoking.

The old moonshee's knees were up to his nose, and his wise, good old face looked at Jim from between them. He adjusted his great round spectacles, and began—

“It now becomes my duty to call the attention of the sahib to the ravages and dacoitees which his language has committed on mine,” when a voice in the doorway said—

“Come, old man, don't talk about dacoitee. If we have not altered your language for the better, we have at least rendered it possible for you to know the finest literature which the world has ever seen.”

And Jim, rising in astonishment, saw the Colonel before him.

The moonshee got off his seat, shut up his book with his spectacles in it, and salaamed. The Colonel said, hurriedly—

“Sit still, Mordaunt. Moonshee, go out and send those men away, and then come back to us.”

And the old man did so with rapidity and dexterity.

Jim, sitting upon his sofa, in his shirt and trousers, was a little dazed by these very sudden proceedings. Before he had time to say a few commonplaces to the Colonel, the punkah was stopped, the Colonel was sitting on one side of him and the old moonshee standing on the other.

“Sit down,” said the Colonel, “and speak low.” And the moonshee sat down with a bow.

“James Mordaunt,” said the Colonel, *in French*, “I am a man who never refused the combat or the retractation where I thought either the one or the other thing was in any way necessary. I owe you the apology at the present. I owe you the apology because I doubted, on a recent occasion, the capability possessed by you of selecting acquaintances with discrimination.”

Jim said, in such French as he had got at Gloucester, that he was profoundly penetrated with the sentiments of Colonel the Commandant; and he couldn't have done better if he had tried.

“But you have shown—you—that you have power of selection enormously. I believed for a long time that you were vain and foolish; that your old friend, the moonshee, was rascal; and, again, old babbler; and, again, spy; and, again, once more, betrayer of deposed trusts; but I have changed all these opinions. I have disclosed the very bottom of my heart to you on this business; and now we will speak English.”

Jim, thinking it was the best thing they could do, if they wanted to talk sense, acquiesced without a murmur. And he was wondering idly how the French got through their business with such extremely florid language, when the Colonel began in his native tongue.

“That old man who sits beside you has rendered service to the Queen's Government which shall not be forgotten.”

“Sahib,” said the old man, “I desire nothing, take nothing, and will accept nothing. I think British rule is good for India, and my three boys have died for you. I have sown, and I will reap. It would be strange, I think, that a father who has lost three sons in a cause should turn against it at last.”

“There spoke a *man*,” said Jim, suddenly and loudly. “There spoke a man, Colonel. *I* know a man when I see

him. You go into boat−racing, and you'll be able to do the same."

"Do you know what he has done?" said the Colonel.

"No," said Jim, "I don't know anything about him, except that I spotted him for a gentleman, and that he sits at one end of the room, and reads that balderdash, and I sit at the other and look at him. Whatever he has done is no harm."

"He has refused every offer of the Rajah of Bethoor, and has discovered for us that our cypher was discovered, and our despatches mutilated, and he refuses reward."

"It was little enough to do, sir," said the old moonshee. "Peace for India means merely a strong British Government. Ah, you don't remember the *old* days. I take my leave," and he went.

They watched him go. To Jim he had been a friend, and yet he had been a subject of an almost absurd contemplation. An abnormal, and consequently, to Jim's mind, in some sort an *absurd* creature. He was absurd in Jim's eyes no longer now; Jim knew, after this story of the Colonel's, why he had loved the old man instinctively, and without knowing it. The quaint, fantastic old moonshee was a very noble person; Jim was a judge of men as far as his training went, and he had judged this good old man as honest from the first moment he saw him. And as he and the Colonel watched the good old man go fluttering down the sandy road towards the nullah and the patch of jungle beyond, Jim said to the Colonel, "There goes a good and honest man, sir;" and the Colonel said, "You are right. Now I want to go with you to the Nawab."

Let us follow the old moonshee first. With his books at his breast, in fluttering white robes, he went down the long broad sandy road towards the nullah, towards the patch of dark green jungle beyond, towards his poor little bungalow, now empty for ever.

He had been married many times, this quaint old man, but all his wives were dead, and he was all alone. Daughters he had alive, but dead to him in zenanas. He had thought and read, this quaint old man, until he believed that he had thought through all recorded knowledge, and his thoughts had always been towards one solitary point—the good of India. He was old enough to remember when he had resisted the British invasion in arms in his own person. But afterwards he had seen more and more hope in the British, and he had sent three sons to die for us. He saw more chances for good, day after day, in the British rule, and day by day he was strenuous to uphold it. Lastly there had come to him a young man, also of the Indo−Germanic race, whom he chose to believe was the image of one of his own sons, and that young man was singularly enough Jim Mordaunt.

It is not to be supposed that Jim and he entirely confined themselves to Hindustani. They had a few talks together, and James had altered the old man's opinions with regard to the Nawab of Belpore, whom he had always considered as a young man without worth. Jim had altered his opinion somewhat. Jim thought highly of the Nawab; and the old moonshee was determined to make a greater acquaintance with the Nawab, and see whether, after all, there *was* anything to be made of an Indian gentleman.

He believed so far in the transmigration of souls as to believe that our poor Jim from Shropshire was his own son. He had left all his little wealth to him. But leaving alone this superstition, there was more sense and reason under the turban of that old moonshee than there is under ninety−nine out of every hundred beaver hats in England. When he turned the corner and lost sight of Jim's bungalow, he turned, and on his way gave his blessing to Jim. Then he crossed the nullah, and came beside the patch of jungle which lay between Jim's bungalow and his.

The good old man was turning all politics over in his head when he arrived here. There were few passing on the road, and the sand was heavy on his feet. At once within the jungle, he heard the low wail of an infant. "It is a case of exposure," he said. "I will go and pick it up. I have none of my own; it may live to serve Hindustan."

And so the good old man, parting the thick, heavy, green leaves, left the sandy track, and turned into the jungle on his errand of mercy after the wailing infant.

Chapter 40.

The Nawab was excessively fond of billiards, but did not play well by any means. He had therefore looked round for a moonshee for billiards, as it was not very agreeable to be always beaten by Jim. And he had discovered one. Let us see who he was, and how he found himself in this *queer* out−of−the way business.

How quaint this bringing together of England and India is! The great Squire Todhunter, of Cambridgeshire, rode eighteen stone, and consequently had to be horsed at the expense of nearly 500*l*. Now, the Squire was a saving and discreet man, and he did not like his horses thrashed unnecessarily. Consequently, in choosing a second horseman, he looked for the qualities of extreme smallness and extreme cleverness. He was very particular about this; and one day he got a letter from Sir Gregory Dowes, to say that he had found him a treasure. The treasure was sent over for inspection, and into Squire Todhunter's library came one of the strangest little men the Squire had ever seen—a handsome little lad, weighing six stone, and four feet high, very well dressed, like a gentleman, who seemed perfectly cool and unconcerned.

“Hallo, my lad, you are a flat−race rider! That won't do, you know.”

“Never rode a flat−race in my life, and never mean to, sir; certainly not, at my time of life.”

“How old are you, child?” said Todhunter, liking the looks of him, and thinking he might be licked into shape.

“Thirty−one,” answered the child. “Married; one son; no other incumbrance. Wife takes washing when she can get it. Talk French and German, but not Italian. In the stables of the pasha of Egypt; but didn't like it. Sober; honest. Eight years' good character from the Pasha. Loves his horses as his horses love him. Used to a gentleman's place, or wouldn't be here.”

“Why, I thought you were a boy.”

“So has many; but they found theirselves deceived.”

“Where are your wife and son?” said Squire Todhunter.

The little man went and rang the bell, and waited in cool silence till the footman came.

“Send up my wife and the boy, James,” was all he said, after which he drummed on his hat.

Then there came up a very tiny woman, and a strange mite of a bright−eyed boy, about twelve, half the size of his father, who stared persistently at Squire Todhunter until that gentleman was uncomfortable, and the bargain was concluded.

“Can that boy ride?” said the Squire. “He would make a good feather−weight.”

“He rides well enough, sir; but he has took to flat−racing and billiards; and I am busted, sir, if you'll excuse the expression, if the present turf business a'n't too much for *my* stomach. I'm a−going to send him to the Pasha of Egypt's stables, to improve his moral tone.”

“That won't do the boy any good,” said the Squire.

“Excusing me, sir, I know Cairo and I know Newmarket; and that boy's a−going to Grand Cairo.”

The Squire gave some sensible advice, but it was not taken by this wonderful, resolute, little cross−country rider; and the boy went East, and East again, for ten years, winning flat−races, on sometimes hopeless horses, sending the large sums he earned home to his father, to be invested in the funds (which was scrupulously one for him), and paying his travelling expenses by billiards and safe betting. He was at Bombay, and thought he would go to Australia; but then again thought he would go to Calcutta. And at Calcutta he heard of the Rajah of Belpore and his horses; and so he went up and looked in on our Nawab.

Our Nawab was immensely flattered at the visit of such a distinguished young man. He at once allotted him apartments and money. When he found that Billy Lee could play billiards, he instantly sent to the right−about a tipsy, cashiered old captain, his previous instructor, and installed Billy Lee in his place.

Jim Mordaunt had, of course, met Billy Lee, and disliked him extremely. For Roland, he had never given two thoughts about him; only once called him a rascally little renegade.

The Colonel scarcely knew of his existence. It was, therefore, not very pleasant when the Colonel, and Roland, and Jim rode into the Nawab's courtyard, to hear this young man's voice in high conversation with the Nawab, during the clicking of the billiard balls.

But they heard what he said before they went in at the window.

“I tell your Royal Highness that it is horses, and all horses, with them. Your horses should be brought inside this fortified compound, or else, in what is going to happen, you will let 'em go to the enemy. Did you over hear me talk Hindustani?”

“No,” said the Nawab; “you can't talk it.”

At this moment our three friends entered the billiard−room. They were confronted by the little jockey billiard−player, and noticed him closely for the first time.

A bright, handsome, resolute little fellow enough, and not a bit afraid of them. He struck out at them at once in French.

“His Highness says I cannot talk Hindustani. Me, who was three years in Bombay. I can talk it fast enough; and I lie in my bed at night and hear them talking; and their talk is mischief and devilry, which things I hate. I am no renegade, Lieutenant Evans, as you have called me. I am an Englishman to the backbone; but *n'importe*. Cornet Mordaunt, I have something very particular to say to you.”

Such a gallant little figure standing in front of such a strange group! The jockey was a little tiny dandy, whose head reached to one of Jim's waistcoat−buttons. The Colonel was in scarlet and white; Roland, Jim, and the Nawab in simple close−fitting white—solemn group. But the little jockey was not a bit afraid of them.

“Colonel,” he said, “I have been giving advice to his Highness which I think you will approve. You will hear what I have said from him. Cornet Mordaunt, I was just coming over to your bungalow, to say a word or two to your good old moonshee, if you would allow it. You and I know a brick when we see one.”

“I fear you will not find him there,” said Jim, greatly pleased by this mention of his old friend. “The Colonel came in, and I sent him away.”

“Not home. Don't say home,” said the little jockey, sharply.

“Yes,” said Jim, quietly. “We saw him walking down the road homewards.”

“But I thought he always stayed with you till late at night, and often all night in your bedroom, reading to you when you were restless?”

“He is gone home to−day, however,” said Jim, still more quietly.

The jockey uttered a great oath. “Get your horses, gentlemen. I wouldn't have had this happen for a thousand pound. I playing billiards there! Come along, in God's name!”

He was first on his horse, and sped away out of the Nawab's pound. Jim was second, and rode as hard as he could to the old man's house. There was nothing there but a very old woman, who was boiling rice in a pipkin, and stirring it round and round with a stick. And when Jim brought his horse half−way to the bungalow, and asked her if the old man had come home, said “No,” and spat at him. For she was our moonshee's mother, and most devoutly believed that the world was so governed by the great God that her son would be sent to everlasting torment, by losing caste in consequence of sitting in the room while Jim was eating bacon to his breakfast. But you must respect their prejudices, such as suttee, for example, if you are consistent. Jim rode off hard, and found the others on the sandy road, in front the patch of jungle which lay between Jim's bungalow and the moonshee's.

Here there was a very old lean man in leg−irons, a convict, who was pounding on the road with a rammer, and had nothing on but a pair of drawers and a turban. When Jim rode up, the old gentleman had got his rammer between his knees, and had his withered old arms stretched out before him, with the palms of his hands close together, after the Indian manner. Those withered were stretched alternately from one sahib to another. “Colonel Sahib, sir, he did not go by here; Jockey Sahib, sir, did not see him; Lieutenant Sahib, sir, I will tell all I know; Nawab Sahib, plead for me;” and so the poor ironed old convict went on with helpless, hopeless lie after lie until Jim rode up, and giving his bridle to the jockey, went up to the poor trembling old man, and put his two hands on his shoulders.

“Old man,” he said in Hindustani, looking down into his face, “we have missed some one whom we love. Tell us all about it.”

It was strange beyond measure to see the splendid young Englishman looking down into the face of the poor old lying Indian convict. England and India face to face. That love which the best of our men have for extremely old people told here. There is a kind of royal arch−masonry between the very young and prosperous and the very old and unfortunate. “I was like you once, and you may be as I am hereafter.” This thieving and lying old Hindoo looked into Jim's honest face, and for the sake of what he saw there, undid all his lies and told the whole truth.

“Sahib, he did not come so far as this. But he turned into the jungle there, and you can see his footprints in the

sand. Lieutenant Sahib, I will speak all the truth. Lieutenant Sahib, the Rajah of Bethoor went by in his carriage, and he stood up and looked into the jungle. And then, sir, your moonshee came along with his book on his bosom, and there was the wailing as of a child in the jungle, and I knew that it would turn him, for he has a kind heart. And I would have called louder than I did, but durst not. And he passed in there, and I heard two shots."

The party were awed enough now. The syces who had run after them had their horses, and they moved together towards the jungle, and passed into it, the little jockey first.

"Is there any one here who is afraid of seeing death?" said he, and looking round confronted the tall solemn Nawab.

"When you have seen the suttee of your own mother, as I did, sir, you will not ask that question of me." And the sharp−tongued, honest, clever little Cockney understood in his clear, good little brain the whole matter, nodded to the Nawab, with his head on one side, and went on.

Jim's poor old moonshee! It was really very sad. He lay straight in their path, shot stone dead, on his face, with the book which he had last been reading to Jim crumpled up under his honest old heart; a heap of snowy white amidst the dark greenery around. Jim did not mend matters by any means. He never thought that the old man was dead. He called out, "Baghobahar, most excellent and admirable of moonshees, sleeping in the forest of golden delight, get up and come home. We thought that we had lost thee, thou aged one."

Roland put his hands on his shoulders, and said suddenly, "Hush, Jim, he is dead."

"Dead!"

"Assassinated."

"My moonshee! Damnation! Let me get at him. Assassinated by whom?"

A very quiet voice said, "By the Rajah of Bethoor," and Jim knew that it was the Nawab of Belpore who had spoken. These two young men looked at one another for a moment, and saw that they understood each other.

Jim was perfectly quiet after this one outbreak—far too quiet to please Roland. They picked the old man up and laid him on his back. His face was very quiet; he had been shot twice through the heart, while on his supposed errand of mercy.

The little jockey said, "I knew they had a plot for his life, after his giving information about the cypher. Why, I have laid in bed and heard them talk it over. I'll tell you why it is, gentlemen, that I never let out my knowing of Hindustani; because I want to hear what is going to be done about the nobbling of horses. An unworthy motive. Let that pass. I knew that this would happen if the old man came home, but I thought he was always at the Cornet's bungalow."

Blurted out Jim, "The Colonel didn't like him at one time, and so he turned out when the Colonel came."

And the Colonel said, "That is perfectly true, in one respect. But it is not a thing which should have been said, and I like you the less for saying it just now, Mordaunt."

The jockey had picked up the moonshee's book, and had shaken it. Nothing dropped from it but a few loose papers and a photograph of Jim, which the jockey handed to him. The Colonel and Roland walked away together, lamenting over the accident. The Nawab and Jim remained behind, looking at one another over the dead body. Unless history is altogether the Mississippi of lies which Matthew Arnold says it is, you will find, I think, that when two members of the Indo−Germanic race get scowling over the dead body of one whom they have loved—it means mischief.

Chapter 41.

Jim and the Nawab looked steadily at one another over the corpse for a little time, until the others were out of hearing. Then Jim said, steadily, “Are you with me?”

And the Nawab said, “To the death.” And the two young men shook hands. “What shall we do?” said the Nawab. “You are of the conquering race, and should suggest. I will follow.”

“Beat him up in his own quarters.”

“Who?”

“The Rajah.”

“But how?” said the Nawab.

“Will you follow me, and let me do the talking?”

“Of course I will. But it is terribly dangerous.”

“Tigers are. Yet we kill them.”

“Yes, but armed,” said the Nawab. “We are unarmed. Nevertheless, I will go with you. It is horribly dangerous. The crash is so near that we might precipitate it, and we have only your regiment here, and the two companies of the 201st, which came with Roland Evans, against five thousand native troops. But I will go.”

Jim only nodded. And the Nawab saw how India was conquered.

“Lee,” said Jim, “my good−hearted little fellow, get this poor body seen to for me.”

And the jockey said, “Yes, sir. But are you going to the Rajah's palace?”

Jim said, “Yes.”

“I wouldn't; but you know best. Here, you wallahs, all of you, come here. And while you are about it, you had better go and fetch half a hundred more. There is enough of you round somewhere.” And so Jim, giving one more look at his poor old friend, mounted his horse and rode away with the Nawab.

I must for a few minutes follow Roland and the Colonel.

Roland said, “This is a sad business.”

The Colonel said, “That a good old man, whom I, God forgive me, disliked, is gone to his God swiftly, with a smile on his face? I don't agree with you there.”

“Jim, Jim! my dear sir,” said Roland. “I am not one to behowl myself over the swift death of a good man after a well−spent life. But Jim. All the boys from our school are strange and fantastic, but our Jim was the most fantastic of us all. I love him, as you know. But I tell you that there is in Jim a vein of cruelty and ferocity. He half killed my own brother, but he is most unhappily in love with my sister, though he never opens his month on the subject. He loved, in his quaint odd way, this old man, and I think that he has never looked on death before. I cannot be answerable for what he will do.”

“My good lad,” said the Colonel, “who ever said you could? We English are the oddest people on the face of the earth. The French have a notion of that, but their caricatures of us fail because we are utterly beyond any Celt who was ever born. I have commanded this regiment for nine years, and I have seen stranger fellows than your Jim. Have you tried religion with him?”

“He won't talk it,” said Roland.

“I wish he would,” said the Colonel. “I always know where to have a religious man. I am not what you may call deeply religious myself; but if I could get a regiment of religions men behind me—by Jove”—The Colonel was puzzled to go on. Words failed him. What he could do with a regiment of the men called in the service “Methodists,” was too much for his brain. But he knew them, and so does English history.

“You tried him with High Church formulas?” said the colonel.

“He was always used to them.”

“I wish Havelock was nearer. I wish Havelock would take in hand. Havelock has done wonders for some of our wildest ones. There's Willoughby, again. By−the−bye, you saw Willoughby last week. Did he say anything odd?”

“Yes,” said Roland. “He said something very odd indeed. He scarcely spoke to me at all during the necessary business of sending the company here; but he never left off looking at me. I did not know whether he liked me or

not; but when we parted he laid his two hands on my shoulders, and said, 'You are a man knows how to die.'"

"He said that, did he?" said the Colonel. "And what did *you* say?"

"I said I was ready to die for England; and he replied, 'For India, India. God has given us a great trust here, and we must it out.'"

"Just like him," said the Colonel. "That is the best young man in India. Did he say anything else?"

"No. Why?"

"Because what he says is generally worth hearing," said the Colonel. "That is why. But about Jim Mordaunt. Can you prevent his making a fool of himself?"

"I never know what he will do for five minutes together," said Boland. "I had power over him once, but I have completely lost it. At one time he would do what I told him. Now my only way of influencing him is to ask *him* not to do the thing I want done. Whereupon he does it at once. But he is getting up to *that* now."

Roland and the Colonel would have been much more anxious about Jim had they known of the strange errand on which he had set himself, and into which he had induced the Nawab, a longer−headed man than Jim, to follow him. Though the Nawab followed Jim, he had opinions of his own, and after his return from this ridiculous expedition, set all his people fortifying his palace under the tropical moon.

They cantered away towards the Rajah's palace, which stood on the summit of a rock, and they rode leisurely up to the gate, and through the gate, and through other gates, as far as they could go. Jim was the first European who had ever got so far. They went through court after court, and cloister after cloister, swarming with staring natives of all ages and sexes, diligently doing infinitesimally small things, and earning about three halfpence a day on an average.

Then they jumped off their horses, and left them to the grooms. And pushing on, the Nawab close to Jim, they came to a heavy teak gate which entirely puzzled Jim. The Nawab put him aside.

"We will get in here," said the Nawab: "we shall never get out again, but I will go to the devil with you. Put your foot in the wicket when it is opened." And the Nawab knocked nine times.

"Why that number?" whispered Jim.

And the Nawab explained it to him hurriedly. And Jim pulled a long face and said, "Well, this is Queer Street." And the Nawab said, "*It is*." Said the Nawab, "You English fancy that you know India. Ha!"

The wicket was opened cautiously, which gave Jim the opportunity of pushing it wide open, and knocking the aged porter on the flat of his back. In another moment they had shut it again, and the Nawab and Jim stood alone and defenceless within the courtyard of a palace more unutterably given to the devil than possibly that of Heliogabalus.

One may distrust Suetonius, as one habitually does State papers, as being *ex parte*. But no man out of Bedlam can distrust the contemporary evidence about the state of Indian courts.

Jim from Shrewsbury, and the Nawab of Belpore, stepped swiftly on through a broad cloistered quadrangle, as nearly like a college quadrangle or court as need be, surrounded by cloisters but deluged with floods of water in square pools.

I must cease here; I know too much to speak. Might we not, however, allow a little more liberty in the working of fiction?

Jim and the Nawab, however, held their heads in the air, and passed along the broad path which runs between the baths towards the awful, barbarous building which closed up the quadrangle on the farther side. It was a building in which every idea of art (as we know it; there may be art of which we know nought) was polluted and rendered abominable. I have no worse word to say against the Cotsea Bhang at Delhi, or the Mosque at Benares, than I have to say against the Mosque at Ispahan (probably the greatest and purest thing in the world), or Contances Cathedral. I say that they are all exquisitely beautiful, but this building was an exception. It was like the great Temple at Pegu; it was like the Pagoda at Tanjore; it was like the Pavilion at Brighton; the walls of Jericho with the gates of Gaza.

"But see what we *can* do," said the Nawab, laying his hand on Jim's shoulder; "look there."

Certainly there was a mosque to the left, with two minarets soaring into the summer air. Certainly Western art, called Gothic, had seldom produced anything so perfect. Certainly the two tall stalks of the minarets cast themselves aloft in the air, and branched out at intervals, like the Equisetum. Certainly even dull Jim got into his head that the builders of the present day were making rather a mess of it. But equally certain was it that the other

building was before him, and that he was going to tell the a Rajah piece of his mind.

They went in under the dark, low, barbaric doorway, the Nawab keeping his left hand on Jim's shoulder and the right hand on his dagger. Jim was the first British officer who had ever entered that abode of sin and horror. The first long, cool corridor they entered was perfectly empty; but at the end of it, on a flight of marble steps, was an old woman, who fled nimbly from them, in silence.

"I will go first; I have been here before," said the Nawab.

And they passed on up the staircase, and through corridor after corridor of the building, now silent and deserted since the old woman's alarm, until retreat became utterly impossible, as it seemed to the Nawab.

"If he is *ready*," said he to Jim, "we are dead men. Here is the door. Shall we knock?"

Jim gave no answer, but pushed it open.

Gilt looking−glasses, French china, Dresden china, Wedgwood, Minton, old Chelsea, Giotto, and Grindling Gibbons; an expensive Copy of the Madonna della Seggia, beside an evil photograph. Why go on? One is not writing a catalogue for Christie and Manson. No method, no tone, anywhere; ghastly barbaric brutality—namely, scarlet and gold; a brutal barbarism, beside which the half−toned fantasticism of Ghengis, Baatu, and the gentle Kublia Khan, relieved only by jewels and gold, look high art. Brutal, senseless, godless!

In the centre of it lay the Rajah, reading the *English* translation of a French novel, not by any means a Balzac or a Jules Janin; quite a different sort of one.

He was quite alone, and had violated every rule of art in his person as he had in his room. He was dressed in green velvet, scarlet silk, and gold. He was a very handsome man, lighter in complexion than the Nawab—lighter than many Englishmen—somewhat fat for his age, with a black drooping moustache. And before him, as he pretended, suddenly, came Jim and the Nawab.

With pretended surprise, he turned over on his divan, turned down his page, and lay looking at them.

"The dog is ready," said the Nawab.

"I'll break his — neck for fivepence, first," said Jim, in a whisper.

"You are the Rajah of Bethoor?" said Jim.

"I *thought* I was till this moment," said the Rajah, in very tolerable English. "I have begun to doubt it this last few moments. My agreement with the Company is well known, and one part of it was that I was to be left in possession of my domestic peace. I now find that I am to be insulted by the invasions of drunken English subalterns and their miserable native imitators."

"*Il n'est pas prêt*," said the Nawab. "*Allez vous en, jeune Evans*," which was what he made of the oft−repeated Shrewsbury slang. "Go it, young Evans."

"I do not understand Italian," said the Rajah, "and I know not Evans. It is Mordaunt who is here. What do you want?"

"I want to know about my moonshee," said Jim.

"I am not an impressor of moonshees; ask your Colonel," said the Rajah. "If you want a moonshee, ask him to find you one."

"I believe that you have murdered mine," said Jim.

"What can I possibly care what a subaltern like you believes or disbelieves?" said the Rajah. "If I had had him assassinated, do you think I would confess it yet? You can go—for the present."

"I'll have the truth out of you if you were fifty Rajahs," said Jim.

"Possibly," said the Rajah. "You can go for this once, however."

And as he said this he rose and advanced towards them, his book in his left hand, and his right finger pointed, not at Jim, but at the Nawab.

"For you," he said, in Hindustani, "you shall NOT die. You shall pray for death, but I shall keep you alive. You shall roll before my feet, praying me to kill you; but you shall not die. You English−lover, have you read 'The Curse of Kehama,' the only thing worth reading the English ever produced? You shall not die! No, you shall not die!"

"You shall, though!" shouted the Nawab; and before our poor Jim could collect his thoughts, the Nawab had dashed out behind him, with a long gleaming knife in his hand, and was preparing for a tiger spring on the Rajah.

Jim had just time to cast himself between them. He got the knife through his deltoid muscle: it was as likely to have gone through his heart. He forced the Nawab back, crying, "Consider, old boy, consider. Before a British

officer! Old man, you have stabbed me accidentally; but I will throw you on your back if you are not quiet”

The Nawab was quiet at once.

“Why did you not let me get to him? It would have been better. Come away.” And turning to the Rajah, who stood perfectly still, he said, “If you have any gratitude in your dog's heart, you will remember that Mordaunt saved your life day.”

“I will remember Mordaunt and remember you,” said the Rajah. “You are free to go.” And they went—not having gained much.

Jim was badly wounded, and the Nawab was in the deepest distress, at which Jim chaffed him, telling him that he was not an Englishman yet. It was no worse than a bloody nose. Still the blood was soaking in an ugly manner through Jim's white sleeves, and the Nawab wanted him to stay on the outer quadrangle and have it dressed. But Jim said, “No; let us get out of this hole. I can't stand this.” And so they went out through the great teak door once again.

So came one of the strangest surprises ever seen, yet one of most easily accounted for. Surprises *do* occur in the world, but they always arise from the most natural causes.

When they got out into the sunshine beyond the gate, there stood before them a British officer in blue coat and white trousers, with a sword hooked up to his side, and his shako on the side of head. A smallish officer, just up to regulation. A marvellous neat, tight little officer, up to any amount of work. And when Jim looked on the officer, he cried, “Heavens and earth! it is Eddy!”

And it was Eddy. And Eddy said, “I have exchanged into the 201st Foot, in order to be with you and Roland.”

Chapter 42.

The Dean of St. Paul's had long wearied of his Oxford work. Eternal grinding at bad Greek, bad Latin, and bad logic, had become deeply wearisome to him. Most of the men of his time, too, had gone away, and the men he sat with in common were bright, clever, hearty enough; but they were too young for him. He was getting a Fogy among Dons.

Why, he had often put it to himself, should he stay there trying to live down the old Provost, who was not so very old, and become head of the house himself? It was a miserable life. Certainly, Norway, in the long vacation, freshened him up a little; but then he was the only man in the college who ever went to Norway. He could see that his salmon stories bored men at dessert, and, like a wise man, he left off telling them. And, indeed, for him, there was little left to talk about, save the everlasting pettinesses of hebdomadal board, or something which he hated still more.

When he had been young, there had been a great and brilliant school at the university. A school of men who, in various ways, have left their mark upon the generation, and whose names are familiar in all men's mouths even now. *He* had been one of them. But they were all gone. Some to Rome, some to bishoprics, some to deaneries, one particularly to a school, leaving his seal for a whole generation or more on the boys of England, partly through his own genius, and partly through the surprising genius of three or four of his pupils. They had split off in opinion, this mighty old band of giants, and there were only two left “up” now. Himself and one other. The Dean and this last of the giants of the old time had extremely diverged in opinion: though in gentle social intercourse, whenever they met, there was no change.

In a pretty garden by the river walked the Dean all at ease, looking at the silly deer under the overarching elms; and towards him, along the walk, came this old giant, with his head bowed low, walking fast and steadily.

Their eyes met as the Professor raised his head, “Ah, Dean!” he said, “we never see one another now; and we are the only two left. Let us walk and talk together.” And they hooked arms, and walked and talked.

Over all the old ones who had fought and striven in the old times. Gently, like elderly wise men, not like hot−headed boys, they talked over their differences; and as they walked and talked the dear old times seemed to come back again in wave after wave of reminiscence, until the tide of good−will was high. Boys in your full high blood fight, squabble, and quarrel for your principles. If a man won't use strong language in defence of his principles, he is not much of a man. But let two old men, with the Indian summer of recollection around them, talk over their old quarrels with kindly good−will.

That is what the Professor and the Dean did. And the Professor said, “I daresay I am 'Laudator temporis acti,' my dear Dean. But we have not the same stamp of young men up now. I partly attribute it, of course, to the atrocious opinions of you and of your party, and in a still more extreme degree to boat−racing.”

“My opinions are not so *very* atrocious,” said the Dean. “And as for boat−racing, I always hated it. But, it is as you say. I find it at our place. We have a lot of men who call themselves of *your* party at our place now; and we have a lot of men who call themselves of mine. But there is scarcely one of them who understands the questions between us. On both sides shallow verbiage on details. The fight now is not the old grand fight when you and I fought; there are not the men to fight it.”

And the Dean mentioned a string of names which I dare not write down, one of the greatest in our time. Not of one party, but of two great ones, but which were all so familiar to the Dean and the Professor that they called them often by their Christian names. Men who took two sides, yet could love and respect one another. Men, both sides of them “severe,” yet with a liberality which shames that of this day. Is there any one who has not been astonished lately at Keble's opinions on the tests? The two parties in those days were *sure*, and, therefore, bold and magnanimous.

“I wish you would come and dine with me to−night,” said the Dean; “I should like to show you our new tutors of both parties.”

“Thanks, rather not,” said the Professor; “I dislike looking on decadence. We have not had a fine team of boys up for a long time.”

“I beg your pardon,” said the Dean, with animation. “K— sent me up the year before last as fine a team of

boys as I would wish to see."

The Professor looked him full in the face and laughed at him. The Dean could not think why.

"A splendid team of lads. Wild as hawks, fantastic as monkeys, I will allow. But splendid lads. I wish you had known them."

"Roland, Eddy, Jack, Jim, and, to make up a fifth, Maynard. From Shropshire. Quite so." Said the Professor, laughing, again.

"Well, that is true," said the Dean, puzzled. "Could they have come your way? I warned them against you and your evil ways very solemnly on many occasions."

Undergraduates lounging about the High Street were utterly and entirely dumbfounded at the spectacle of the Dean and the Professor, known as deadly enemies, thirsting for one another's blood, standing face to face with one another, laughing heartily. Still more when they saw the Professor slap the Dean on the shoulder and say, "I am a conjuror; I am a conjuror."

"Upon my word I think you are, old friend," said the Dean, merrily.

"What have you done with these boys?" asked the Professor, as they resumed their walk.

"Well," replied the Dean, with a long face, "three are gone to India, one is married, and the other is doing nothing at all."

"A nice mess you have made of it," said the Professor. "I should recommend you to try parish work after this."

"I wish I could get some. I wish I was away from here. I am getting too old to have influence with the young men, for I have not made a name like you."

"But, your turn must have come in for a home."

"I let it pass. It was only 260*l*. a year, and house and glebe."

"It was not enough."

"It was not then; but I would take it now. I am sick of this. I have done no good with my life. I think you have done much evil with yours. On certain points, dear old friend, there must be no compromise between us. I would oppose you in *public* to−morrow, you know."

The only answer was a kindly squeeze of the arm, and a golden silence on both sides. That is the way, as far as I have seen, that good men, deeply in earnest, and in earnest to the death, but on opposite sides, are getting to treat one another.

At a certain garden−door at the end of a college, they parted, and as the Professor opened his garden−door he chuckled, and said, "He will never know of it. He will never dream."

For a somewhat strange thing had happened to the Professor that morning. He had been sitting at his work when his servant brought him a card, whereon was written, "Mr. George Mordaunt." Whereupon he had risen, and gone quickly to greet a stout, square−headed man with grizzled hair, about fifty years old, who to do full honour to his old university, had dressed himself the dress of twenty−five years previously, the time when he been an undergraduate. A blue coat and gilt buttons, buff waistcoat, and drab trousers. And the Professor, beholding him, grasped his hand and said, "My dear Mordaunt! After so many years!"

"The old place is not any stranger than your face, Professor," said our stout good Squire, "though it makes me feel a little old. It is a place that hangs about one's heart—does it not?"

"I don't think I can stand to leave it now, Mordaunt. What have you been doing that you look so young?"

"Shooting, hunting, fishing, farming, managing my estate and the poor souls on it, by God's help: educating my boys; and as far as all other things cultivating an absolute vacuity of thought, as you will find when I come to my business. That is what makes me look so young."

"I have not worn so well as you," said the Professor, smiling.

"You look old enough to be my father," said Squire Mordaunt. "And as my father (though we are of the same age) I have come to consult you: and what is more to *take* your advice."

"Prettily put," said the Professor; "I will try you, old friend."

"But have you time at my disposal?" said Squire Mordaunt.

"It is now ten," said the Professor, "and from this until four in the afternoon I am at your service, for I have no lectures."

"Till four! Bless the man, I shan't be half an hour. Come, hear my confession."

The Professor, folding his arms upon his breast, leant forward with a smile, and George Mordaunt began.

He was longer than half an hour. He told the Professor nearly all I have told you, about his boys and their various relations. About Roland and Ethel, and how he hoped some time or another that such a matter might come to pass. About Jim and his fantastic foolishness; about the good influence that the Evanses had on him, and about the unhappy attachment of the unhappy youth to his friend's wife. Nay, he even went so far as to put him in possession of the comical duello between Sir Jasper Meredith and Mrs. Maynard, of the Barton: the farce of the tale; but when alluding to the differences which had arisen between young Maynard and his wife, by Mrs. Maynard's scheming for Sir Jasper, told him that *that* should be set right by Eleanor Evans in time. “In time, my dear Professor, for it is a most delicate and painful subject, which will bear no handling save by the hand of a woman of genius. And Miss Evans is a woman of genius, if ever one lived.” And so he brought her on the carpet, and told the Professor all about her from beginning to end. And the Professor only nodded his head from time to time, and showed by his eyes that he understood the whole matter from beginning to end.

“She had an attachment once for my brother, now General Mordaunt, in India, but it was not a happy one at all. He admired her, for she was very beautiful, but he was a dandy, and her brusqueries palled on him after a time. The necessary words were never said, and I think happily so, for they would never have done together at all.

“But another man was attached to her also. And she liked and respected him deeply. I think that she hankers for a renewal of her acquaintance with him. They are both too old to marry, that would be absurd, but I think it would please Eleanor to have him near her, not perhaps so much on his own account as on a sentimental ground, which will not seem to you, I am sure, ridiculous.”

The Professor withheld his opinion.

“She is of a very affectionate disposition. She is utterly devoted to two people: firstly, and in a minor degree, to my daughter Ethel; and secondly, to the younger Evans, Edward, the nephew. She has slaved for that boy (she is a farmer, as I told you), she has toiled over fallow and down for him winter and summer. She has laid awake planning for him; and since he has gone to India, she has lain awake weeping for him. I swear to you,” said the Squire, with a terrible thump on the table, “that her love for that pretty lad is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen in my life.”

The Professor said, nodding, “Ay, ay.”

“Now again, leaving alone the personal affection I have for her, she has been the *making* of my daughter Ethel. (The finest girl in all England, sir.) And I want to oblige her. And I am certain that she has a hankering for the society of her old sweetheart.”

The Professor sat up as if he did not exactly follow him. And he followed him still worse, when Mordaunt continued—

“Now old Hesketh has dropped at last, and so Doddington is in my gift, and I think that if the thing were done delicately—say by *your* recommendation—don't you see?”

The Professor began to see once more.

“That it would do—you follow me? I come to consult *you*. I have no son or relation in the Church. What is more natural than that I, living out of the world, should come to you, an old friend I am sure, not actually to ask for a nomination; no, no; but to ask you, is such a man fit for the post?”

“My recommendation would be the very worst thing he could possibly have. It would raise a wasps' nest about your ears.”

Mordaunt sat silent for a minute. His old friend's name certainly *did* suggest polemics.

“Well, I wanted to ask you about another part of the business. I am, I hope, a sound Churchman. This man has been called unsound. I don't go with you, but I respect your judgment. What *is* your opinion of the man?”

“I must how who he is, you know.”

“The Dean of St. Paul's. If you decide against him, I will no further.”

The Professor gave a start. “He and I have had some battles royal.”

“That is one of the reasons why I came to you as a Christian English gentleman to decide for me.”

“Then come in half an hour;” and Mordaunt, nodding, went away.

When the half hour was gone he came back, and got his answer.

“By all means do what you proposed. He is doing himself no good here in any way.” “He is excellent, virtuous, diligent, admirable. He wants family life. He wants human ties. As an adversary, I shall be glad to get rid of him,” he went on, laughing. “As a man and a Christian I shall always respect him. You are lucky to catch

such a man; but are we sure he will come?”

“The living is nearly 800*l*. a year,” said Mordaunt.

“Foolish man,” said the Professor, laughing, “you might in these precious times have got 12,000*l*. for it. Good−by, and God go with you.”

Chapter 43.

I hope my readers will entirely dismiss from their minds the idea that Ethel was in the least degree “fast.” She was only a country young lady who was a consummate horsewoman, and fond of riding long distances very fast.

About this time it “behuved,” as the Scotch say, her father to fall in love with, and buy, a hunter which was not in any way up to his weight, and what was more, ride it, against the advice of his wife, son, and daughter. The horse did the best it could for him, but the illimitable grief to which the Squire and this horse came to “among them,” as the stud−groom put it, was perfectly illimitable. When, however, it came to the Squire's trying the largest water−jump in the country, with the hounds running, and the horse landing on the near side, and the Squire swimming to the opposite one, he, heretofore obstinate, gave it up as a bad job, and said the horse was a worthless beast.

Ethel and John did not think so, however. It was a beautiful large slightish thing, perfectly up to ten stone, though he had triumphantly proved he was not up to thirteen. Young Mordaunt tried it one day with a horse−rug round his knees on a side−saddle, and it went like a lamb. He and Ethel, secretly, one dewy morning at sunrise, had a secret meeting in the stable−yard, and he put Ethel on this horse, and the good brother and sister rode away, talking, as brother and sister should, through the lanes, which grew narrower, wilder, and more grassy as they went on, until at the end of one turf lane, there was a five−barred gate not open. And young Mordaunt put his horse at it and topped it, and Ethel, *she* put her horse at it and topped it like a bird, and they were out on the wild breezy slopes of Longmynd together, talking of Roland and Eddy and Jim, with the lazy valley awakening to its toil in the clearing mist six hundred feet below them.

That horse would do for Ethel. At breakfast they did so din their wonderful ride, and the wonderful performances of that horse, into their father's ears, that he, to save his intellect, as he said, then and there gave it to Ethel, on the sole condition of its never being named to him again.

This was the first good jumping horse that Ethel had ever had. And if he did not improve in that art, it was not from want of practice. Its name was “Cheery Bird.”

“What is the matter with your face, Ethel?” asked the Squire one morning.

“I have scratched it,” said Ethel.

“So I see,” said her father. “Unless some one else scratched it for you.”

“The fact of the matter is that I have been out riding before breakfast,” said Ethel.

“So I should have gathered from the fact that you have come to breakfast in your riding−habit, that your complexion is like a dairymaid's, and that you have apparently combed your hair with a carving−fork.”

“Well, I will tell the truth,” said Ethel. “I went over to see Mary Maynard on Cheery Bird at daybreak; and I knew you like me to be at home by breakfast, and I took a short−cut. And I got pounded, and put Cheery Bird at a hedge which was thicker than I thought, and got my face scratched.”

“Why did you go to the Barton?” asked the Squire, as “black as thunder.”

“To tell them the news from India,” said Ethel, ready to drop into the earth, but incapable of lying.

“Leave *India* alone when you go *there*, Ethel. I expressly desire you to do so. If any of them want to know about India, they can ask your mother.”

The Squire said no more, but he little dreamt how far poor innocent Ethel had carried her indiscretion. That unhappy and infatuated Jim had written *again* to Mildred Maynard, leaving the letter open, and begging his sister to read it. It was all about the Nawab and the moonshee, and Ethel had taken it. Poor lad! he did not like to drop out of *all* communication with her.

But I wonder what Ethel would have said, had she known that Mildred Maynard was lying, a heap of clothes with a moan inside it, while her mother−in−law stood over her with the letter—the letter which Ethel had brought safe in her pocket.

Mrs. Maynard was not an early riser by any means. But she was aroused very early by hearing a horse's hoofs on the gravel, and looking out she saw Ethel dismounting, with a letter in her hand.

She put on her dressing−gown, and going swiftly to her daughter Mary's room, shook her by the shoulder, and said—

“Be ill, lie in bed.” And the girl having realised her orders, turned over and went to sleep again.

Ethel was not long with Mildred, and never dreamt any more than poor Mildred did that “the Cobra “(which was the last flower of speech Miss Evans had invented in favour of Mrs. Maynard) was doing anything else but snoring. “That is the way she ultimately finished and put an end to her husband,” Aunt Eleanor said. “She snored him into a better world. *I've* heard her.”

But Mrs. Maynard was by no means snoring, but was watching, in her dressing−gown, for Ethel to go. The instant Ethel was gone, she had come swiftly into Mildred's dressing−room, snatched the letter from her hand and stood staring at her.

Hence the heap of clothes with the moan inside it, which lay on the floor.

Cheery Bird got quite as much work as he wanted. Take this one day in that devoted and honest horse's existence, for instance. After breakfast he must be saddled again, and away she must go after Miss Evans. Miss Evans was not at home. Aunt Eleanor would have scorned the action at eleven o'clock in the day. She was on the farm, and at the farther end of it, of course. And her farm being of 700 acres or more, with the Grange at one end of it, she was a mile away.

Still Ethel was in no particular hurry; in fact she rather dreaded meeting Miss Evans, and that very keen lady's eye. Yet when she heard that Miss Evans was with the late lambs, in the forty−acre turnip−field, she must needs ride across country, taking fence after fence, though there were plenty of lanes and byways, leaving alone the immortal right of way, which was a Roman road, and as she positively declared, part of Watling Street, which however goes through Lebotwood three miles off. Perhaps it was good health, and good humour. Perhaps it was that Aunt Eleanor's fences, like those of all good farmers, were so very easy; but I regret to say that Ethel, wherever she could find a bit of grass, “larked” from one grass−field to another, until she saw Aunt Eleanor, in a grey habit, on her obstinate cob, standing in the middle of a partly folded turnip−field, scolding her shepherd.

Ethel was just jumping the last fence into the turnip−field when Aunt Eleanor saw her. “Hi!” she cried out, “don't ride through my turnips. You must be out of your mind! Come down under the hedge and over the folded part,” which Ethel did, and met Miss Evans.

“I don't want my farm to be made a steeple−chase course of,” she said, in greeting Ethel. “If you can't ride round by the lanes, you had better stay away. What do you mean by larking over my farm like that?”

“Your fences are so easy, Miss Evans.”

“Ah, I have slashed them down to get rid of the small birds, which are a plague and a curse. They are fifty times worse than the game. The game preservation and the law of trespass preserve more small birds than I want. Look at the sparrows in my rick−yard! Kill caterpillars, fiddle−de−dee; not as long as they can get grain, and very few afterwards. I am Lady Patroness of the Pulverbatch Sparrow Club, and I mean to remain so. What do you want? Why do you come larking over my fences like this?”

“Are you very cross, Miss Evans?”

“Yes, my dear; I don't think I ever was in such an abominable temper in all my life.”

“Can I do anything to remove your ill−temper, Miss Evans?”

“Yes; stay with an old lonely woman and hear it.”

“You are not very old, Miss Evans, and I will stay with you for ever, in good temper and in bad temper, if you will let me.”

Aunt Eleanor gave Ethel a look, which she understood. A look which meant worlds. Those two understood one another.

“Come,” said Ethel, sedately, for she knew her humours, “I will never lark over your fences again if you will tell me what is the matter, and give me some broiled chicken for lunch.”

Aunt Eleanor turned to the shepherd, and said—

“Now, mind, I don't draw back from one word which I have said. Your orders were to shift hurdles *every* day. I don't want this piece of clay pounded as hard as iron, and my wethers half starved, because your daughter is fool enough to marry young Dickson. *You* ought to have shifted the hurdles, or the bridegroom should have come and done it, or the bride should have come and done it in her wedding−dress, so that it was done. Still, at the same time, we did so well with our spring lambs that I can afford to give you two shillings a week extra, making eighteen shillings. And your wife can have the whole of the washing now, which will be from nine shillings to twelve shillings a week, provided she don't send the things home in that state of pig and crock which the poor

woman who is dead now did."

So, scattering blessings with the sound of curses, the reverse of Boileau's bishop, she fared on her quaint way with the beautiful Ethel. And as they rode quietly together Ethel said—

"Please, Miss Evans, why are you so cross?"

"Because people are such fools."

"Who?"

"Everybody I know."

"Am I?" asked Ethel.

"My dear," said Aunt Eleanor, "I gave you my most emphatic opinion on *that* point a long time ago."

"So you did. Have you not changed it?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, never mind me. Who else have been making fools of themselves?"

"Eddy, to begin with."

"Of course," said Ethel.

"I don't see why you should say of course," said Aunt Eleanor. "Eddy is exceptionally clever. I should, for example, rank Eddy's intellect far higher than yours."

"Heaven help me then!" said Ethel. "But what has he done last?"

"Exchanged into the 201st, so as to be with Roland and your brother Jim."

"The best thing the boy ever did. Why, the very grooms say that one boy requires two men to look after him."

"Your brother Jim wants some looking after," said Miss Evans.

"No, he does not," said Ethel, emphatically. "No one knows Jim but I. He comes of wild, fierce, fighting blood; and he will fight when the time comes. God save the man who stops his way! Look here, Miss Evans, you leave Jim alone, and I'll leave Eddy alone."

"Who is losing her temper *now*?" said Miss Evans.

"I suppose I am," said Ethel, bursting into a furious passion of tears, and bending her head down over her horse's neck. "Miss Evans, the wise men say that there is to be wrath and war there soon; wrath and war such as the world has never seen before. And Jim, what can save him? Oh, my brother! Oh, my brother!"

It was well that this happened, for they were soon quiet again, and more friendly than ever. Aunt Eleanor, of course, retained a little causticity just to seem the more natural.

"Who has been making a fool of himself next?" asked Ethel.

"Your father," she replied, with a whimsical smile. "He has gone and given the living of Doddington to the Dean of St. Paul's."

"I know, dear Miss Evans. Are you not glad of it?"

"Oh, yes! I am glad of it. I am very fond of the man; and if I was a hundred years younger, and he asked me, I would marry him. But I am not such a fool as to marry when I am nearly fifty."

"Is he handsome, Miss Evans?"

"No, child; he is very ugly, and wears a wig."

"It would be rather nice if you *were* to marry him," urged Ethel.

"Well, nice or nasty, I am not going to do it, as your father well knows. Therefore, I say, your father has made a fool of himself in bringing the man here."

"Who next?" said Ethel.

"Your brother Jim. He has gone and married a moonshee, as far as I can understand from Eddy's letter. It is possible that it may be the best arrangement under the circumstances, but I hate the kind of thing. Your father's uncle married a quadroon, or a creole, or something or another, and they went down in a gale of wind in the Gulf of Mexico, with all hands, in the hurricane of 1788."

"But, my dear Miss Evans—"

"Oh, you may well say your dear Miss Evans. Of course, you will speak up for your brother. *I* spoke up for *my* brother at one time, and a pretty mess I have made of it. I only know that if comes home with a puce−coloured wife she shall attend church, or I'll know the reason why."

"But, Miss Evans—"

"And then your brother must go horsing the mail−coach, and upsetting it into the graveyard. I *know* he has

been horsing the long stages. I am *assured* of that; he would not be your brother he did not. Very likely with Eddy's money. Think of an officer and a gentleman marrying a moonshee, horsing long stages, driving his own cattle, and upsetting Her Majesty's mail in the churchyard! There is one comfort—the Nabob, or as Eddy foolishly spells it, the Nawab, was on the box−seat, and broke his neck."

It took a long time for Ethel to explain the real state of the case, which the reader is in possession of. All she got, after all, was a loud and incredulous sniff. It was explained to her by Ethel, the Dean, old Mordaunt, and young Mordaunt, that the moonshee was an aged gentleman and scholar of the Brahmin religion. But she nailed her colours to the mast, and kept them there still. She is more than ever persuaded, she says, that mixed marriages and friendships between different races are a mistake. And if pressed she points to the Nawab of Belpore, and requests to know what became of Jim's friendship for *him*.

"Then, there is this *Allan* (she never would say "Evans") coming down here and establishing a conventicle, under the rector's own nose, with the money he has robbed from Roland. He says he must worship according to his own conscience. He has got a fine conscience to take 1000*l*. a year, rent−charge, from Roland. What is good enough for me ought to be good enough for him, one would fancy. Well, I have told him *my* mind pretty often, which is a comfort."

It may have been to her. It was little enough to him, poor young fellow.

"Well, he will die. And what is more, die of heart−disease and over−work amongst Christ's poor; and what is more, go to heaven," resumed Aunt Eleanor. "I wish I didn't dislike him so very, very much. I never could keep my wicked old tongue away from that young man. I have been a most wicked old woman to him."

"He loved Eddy," said Ethel, quietly.

There was a very long pause.

"It was good of you to say that, child. You are a good child. But when I committed the great and irretrievable wickedness of my life, I had not thought of that. I had ruined him before I thought of *that*. Had I thought of it I would have stayed my hand. It is too late now. Good actions, child, live for ever, and bring forth fruit a thousandfold. Evil, thoughtless, spiteful actions, like mine towards him, bring down a heavy retribution even in this world. The Papists say, that they can release you from the consequences of your own actions, by certain formulas. I am sure I wish they could; but then, on the other hand, they can't, don't you see. If I was gaby enough to believe in it, and the Pope of Rome were to send me on a pilgrimage to Mecca—I should say, Compostella, I'd go, to undo the wickedness and wrong I have done to that young man in a moment of folly and spite."

Ethel did not understand her; but she knew her well enough to know that, under her quaint fantastic language, there was a meaning, and a deep one.

"Here has been Sir Jasper Meredith again; a pretty fool he has made of himself. That little heap of bones, to save Roland from ruining his life by marrying Mary Maynard, wrote a letter, proposing to her. And that old *trot*, her mother, is determined to bring him to book, and to make that sleepy ox, young Maynard, bring him to book likewise. *She* knows that he would not stand her in his house long, fool as he is; and so she wants to move to Sir Jasper Meredith's. *She* knows that he would not move in such a matter, unless she had a hold over him, stronger than ever she had before. And what has she done? Made up a case of jealousy between our innocent little Mildred (another fool) and her honest ox−like son. She has done that. I beg your pardon, child, for talking of such things; but the world wags as it wags; and I don't hold with keeping a girl till she is five−and−twenty in a Puritanical fictitious ignorance of evil. Fiddle−de−dee."

"But, Miss Evans, Robert Maynard has no one to be jealous about, I should think."

"Of *course* he has not. But your brother Jim (as I previously remarked) is a fool, and has written her letters. Who has taken them to her I don't know. But old Myrtle knows she has got them, and that her husband has been shown some. And there's a pretty kettle of fish."

She did not notice that poor Ethel gave a low groan, and bent down on her saddle; but she went on.

"That is what reconciles me to this unhappy marriage of Jim's with the moonshee. What place she is moonshee of, I don't know; she seems to take no territorial title. I daresay she will make him a good wife, and she no doubt brings him money. How on earth she is to go in to dinner, or what rank she will take in the county, I can't conceive. Lady Caradoc must go in first, I suppose, unless I send the moonshee in as bride; but that wouldn't do for long, you know, and I don't want to disoblige Lady Caradoc. I want her to buy my clover hay; I could let her have it five shillings a ton cheaper than I could any one else, because I shouldn't have to deliver it."

“Dear Miss Evans," said Ethel, “all this is perfect nonsense.”

“My dear, I assure you that if you bring Lady Caradoc to me to−morrow, she shall have the hay at 3*l*. 15*s*.”

“I do not mean about that. I mean about this moonshee. His moonshee is an old man who teaches him Hindustani.”

“My dear,” said Miss Evans, loftily, “I do not for a moment dispute that you are quite right in believing everything which is told you. But at the same time, I must point out to you that I am much older than you; that *my* brother was more *years* in India than yours has been *months*, and that I frequently heard him mention these very moonshees, as being the most *thundering humbugs going*. That was his expression. He may have been right, or he may have been wrong. He was not, according to my standard, a wise man; but he was not entirely deprived of understanding. I think we had better change the conversation, because really I am certain about nothing, since you have told me that Jim's young wife was an aged Brahmin gentleman of scholastic habits. Live and learn. I am only certain of one thing at this present moment, and that is, that spring lamb does not pay for rearing so far from London. The loss in the transit is too great. And the pretty little beasts do suffer so horribly if they are sent alive. Good−by, child.”

When Ethel got home her father and brother were standing in the porch. Her brother took her in his mighty arms and lifted her off her horse.

He knew her ways. And she said to him, “You must kiss me twice more; for Jim is in India.” And he did so, laughing, and held his arm round her waist the while. For there was between those two the strange unfathomable love of brother and sister. A love which rivals that between mother and son—a love which is mysterious and incalculable; and so we will not say anything more about it.

“Lead her horse away,” said the Squire.

“Yes, sir,” said young Mordaunt, laughing at his father.

“And *keep* away,” said the Squire. Young Mordaunt departed with the horse. And the Squire began on Ethel.

“Coma here, girl.”

“I have come.”

“I was very angry with you this morning.”

“You were.”

“John says that I had no reason to be. I am very sorry for it, and I ask your pardon.”

“You will break my heart among you,” sobbed poor Ethel. “You are all so good to me; and what can I do in return?”

“Why, you can come here,” said the sturdy old Squire, opening his arms; and she went there. And for my part, looking at the matter in a practical way, I think that it was the best place she could go to, seeing that Roland was drumming and trumpeting away at Belpore, making Indian night hideous, and rousing the jackals by this process, which the service calls, I believe, changing guard.

Calculating English and Indian time, the Rajah of Bethoor just then looked out of a window, and he said in Hindustani, “There go the cavalry bugles; Cordery has moved them into the north lines. Hang him! but I will sort him.”

And Squire Mordaunt said to Ethel, “Pretty bird, what has she told you?”

“She has told me everything. And I will do so no more. I did not know, father; indeed I did not know. I carried that letter from Jim this morning in sheer innocence. I knew nothing, father. Our poor Jim! our poor Jim!”

The Rajah of Bethoor said, pretty nearly at the same time, “I hear your bugle, you scamp. Curse you, there you go, with your precious Nawab beside you. Oh! my dear young friends. You James Mordaunt, you have insulted me once, and you are a very dangerous and determined hound. I'll have your life one way or another. You, Nawab, can live.”

Said Squire Mordaunt to his daughter, “There is one thing we have never spoken about, child. Do you love Roland?”

And she said “Yes.”

Said the Rajah of Bethmoor, “There goes the worst and most dangerous man of the whole corps: that Roland Evans. That young wretch has the cunning of a jackal, the courage of a tiger, and the intellect of a Clive. You must die, my dear young man.”

Said Squire Mordaunt to Ethel, “It is very well. He is noble and good. I am glad he has escaped the Maynard entanglement. We shall have him home covered with glory soon. And to keep him in memory of us he has our good Jim, and good little Eddy.”

Drums and fifes now. A sub−division of the 201st infantry stepping quickly on under the Indian moonlight, with their swift inexorable Roman−like march, to pick up stragglers, see all safe, and generally to do the work of a sergeant's guard; for things were getting so wild and dangerous now, that we must have a commissioned officer at this work; a gentleman responsible, by the risk of social ruin, for anything going wrong; which, in a country like ours, is a terribly strong guarantee.

And, by the side of the sub−division, marches our little Eddy going swift and direct, well from the hips, with his sword close up to his side in the swivels, in white trousers, white helmet, and blue tunic. A gallant little officer, as self−possessed as when he used to steer the old four−oar, but liking this work better, seeing, as he said, that it *led* to something.

By a most remarkable circumstance, when he was exactly under that particular window of the Rajah's enormous palace which looked upon the town, and out of which the Rajah himself was stealthily looking, he cried “Halt!” And they halted, and ordered arms according to Eddy's direction.

“You little devil!” said the Rajah to himself, “you know I am here.”

“Sergeant,” said Eddy in his airiest tone.

“Yes, sir.”

“Akers was not come in when we marched?”

“No, sir.”

“I am afraid he is lying drunk in the jungle somewhere. What a pity it is he does such things! I will just go round that bit of jungle before we go to quarters, what do you say?”

“The very best thing possible, sir. There are tigers about.”

“Ball cartridge, load” shouted Eddy, and that having been done, “Quick March!” and this little part of the arrangement called military organisation (which has conquered India, Silesia, Poland, the Southern States, and which is, like brandy or fire, a good servant but a bad master), went swiftly off up the road past the jungle.

The Rajah, who had drawn in his head at the word “Ball cartridge,” put it out again, and looked after Eddy, swinging along in the moonlight beside his men.

“You little devil!” said he, “I will broil you alive on hot coals for this insult, and your beloved James Mordaunt, sahib, shall sit and look on.”

Aunt Eleanor said to a young man who had come down on agricultural business, and who was going over the farm with her, “Tell Mr. Sutton that I shall not preserve my own seed any more. Mine never comes true. I shall buy of you in future. I want to do the best by this farm, because my nephew, Mr. Edward Evans, is coming home from India soon, and he will take the management of it.”

And so the young man departed to Reading, just as the Rajah of Bethoor had settled down, to smoke himself into a state of contemplative ferocity against Eddy, who, as the last, was the most deeply hated of the men who had insulted him.

Do you say that this is fantastic? If you do, I entirely agree with you. Things *were* fantastic at that time. The most fantastic thing I know is Hollar's Dance of Death. I doubt that few know that book. To me it is godless, religionless, hopeless. But it is a great book. Nearly the grimmest of all grim forms of Teutonic thought, which is saying something, comes nowhere near it. In that book, Death is Lord and Master, the beginning and the end.

In this book of Hollar's, Death comes to every one at the finish and end of all things—from the Emperor to the Nun. Hopeless, ghastly, abominable, to one who believes in a future state and the beneficence of God. But fantastic and quaint? undoubtedly so; in these times we might make some fun out of the devils which danced before St. Anthony.

I can make no fun out of it for you. My heart is too sick over it, as the hearts of the best Americans are over *their* war. I only assert that it was fantastic. That two styles of civilisation came in contact, like the two poles of a battery. But fantastic it was. Why our good Nawab loaded his guns with Eddy's empty jam−pots and the brassheaded nails which Aunt Eleanor had sent him to hang up his pictures! *That* is fantastic I fancy.

Was it terrible? Ask the widow with the broad white forehead and the grey hair. She has often told grief to leave that forehead of hers, and not wrinkle it between her eyebrows! but grief sits there on its throne still. Ask

her. She turns her face to the wall, and weeps afresh. Ask the gentle subdued old Colonel, from whose face, by one dim dark week of horror, every expression has been banished, save that of an illimitable capacity of undergoing suffering.

It is bright English sunshine, in a beautiful old English garden, and all the county is here, shooting bow−arrow, and playing croquet. That is young Lord Thingaby, who is wearing shoes one remarks, and one thinks of shoes one−self, for one likes to look nice. The Poet is here, in his best of humours, and the Beauty lights us all up like a torch, for folks stop conversation to look and admire. That very tall gentleman is Lord Whosee (I notice that his lordship's stature is not mentioned either in Debrett's, Burke's, or Walford's Peerages, an omission which I hope will be immediately remedied). In these days of Athletics it is not much to ask; we really ought to have the height, weight, and pace per mile, of every member of the British Peerage, or we shall drift into anarchy. Turn to the name “Jersey” for instance. I have not, because I don't happen to see the books, but I will bet a halfpenny that you get no information on the subject.

There is the Beauty going into the kitchen garden, to show Lord Bobalink (who married Miss Whippoorwill, second cousin, as you will remember, doubtless, to Miss Bluebird, in America) the peaches. Lord Bobalink is a rising man, and a good statesman. Lord Bobalink generally knows which way the cat will jump, though he invariably jumps the other way. He might do wonders if he would be dishonest. So one goes into the kitchen garden, to see Lord Bobalink, under the peaches on the south wall. But between us and Lord Bobalink, I meet an old man. A man with a smitten face, as if destiny herself had smote him, and it puts Lord Bobalink out of my head. “Colonel,” I say, “I want to have a long talk with you about the Indian Mutiny.”

“Any other subject,” says the bowed−down old Colonel; “you are young and happy, I am old and broken. I will speak to you on any other subject but that. Did you not know my two girls before I sent for them?”

I had forgotten that unutterable horror for one instant. One does forget. But the bright English summer day was turned into dark night, as I walked along behind the Colonel's elbow. The southern sun was shining on the peaches, and threw our shadow on them. And as he gave me details, leaving out his own family, our shadow fell upon them and seemed as though it would blight them.

“Fantastic?” Yes. Horrible? Yes. But the Colonel was very quiet over it. “It was dacoitee on our part, you know. We had not any business there by the law of nations. Yet if it had not been for sheer dacoitee, where would have been the English, French, Prussian, Austrian, or American nation now?”

I couldn't answer the Colonel, and what is more, I cannot now. Dacoitee is indefinable. The removing of the Choctaws from Florida to Dacotah would be considered a pretty strong example of dacoitee, by some folks, if it had not been done by a Nation of Angels, whose founder, George Washington, was a slave−owner, and whose Poet−Laureate takes every opportunity of snubbing us on such points, the removal of the Acadians for instance. *N'importe*. My say is only this, that the Indian Mutiny, bringing together, as it did, two very different civilisations, was a very fantastic business.

Chapter 44.

It so happened, in the course of accidents, that Squire Mordaunt should be riding along a Shropshire lane, abutting on his own property, and thinking; a not very improbable incident. It moreover happened that it was Thursday afternoon, which, again, on the face of it, is not absolutely impossible. Furthermore, he was thinking whether it would not be better for him to give up the home farm, which, considering he was losing a cool 500*l*. a year on it, is not one of those incidents in fiction which, all things considered, can be classed as sensational.

He was aroused from his reverie, the result of which was that he wondered how old Eleanor did it, by hearing a hymn sung by a few women; and finding himself in front of a red brick Dissenting chapel, he with a bull−dog promptitude, which was part of his nature, drew up, and said, “Oh, *here* you are!”

There was a stony−looking, hammer−headed cob, of a colour so quaint that it would take fifty Burne Joneses to reproduce it, tied to the rails—a cob as utterly unlike the article known at Aldridge's as a bishop's cob as it was possible to conceive. Any bishop who had been seen riding on such a hammer−headed, straight−shouldered, low−fetlocked, low−crested beast, would have had a brotherly admonition from certainly the late Archbishop of York, who knew a cob when he saw one, and who knew how to do his Christian work among the Yorkshire welds on one also.

Squire Mordaunt got off and tied his horse to the rails of the Dissenting Chapel, as far from this fearful dun−grey coloured “pony" (as he called it) as possible. Then with his whip behind his back, he stood and looked at him for a few minutes, and at the end said,

“You are a ramshackle brute. But you have a kindly eye, and get through, I don't doubt, a deal of work. I am going to hear your master.”

The horse made no remark whatever.

Big, burly Squire Mordaunt, dressed in grey, with breeches and gaiters, a sturdy inexorable figure, stepped into the door, and stood beside an old woman. There were only a few old men, nearly past work, and labourers' wives in there. His old trained eye told him why. A mere Popish priest in a hard−worked neighbourhood will tell you why labouring *men* are so difficult to get to church.

The hymn was not half over, and the Squire nudging the old woman next him, took a half of her trembling hymn−book, and what is more, sang out lustily, like a good old Briton as he was. The old woman owed him thirteen weeks' rent, and he told her that he would turn her out if she didn't come to church. Now he found her here, and she trembled in her shoes. And she and the Squire finished the hymn together.

Talking in places of public worship is most objectionable. But when the Squire and this old woman sat down after the hymn, they began to talk; let us hope it will be forgiven them.

The Squire said, in a whisper behind his hand, “I am glad to see you here. I thought you went nowhere.”

She whispered, “I am two miles from church, and look at my shoes.” And she pulled up her old petticoats to show them.

The Squire whispered, “All right. Never mind about the rent, *I* don't want it. And come up to Macdingaway, he shall give you your seed potatoes. You shall have York regents, old girl. Don't cut them, plant 'em whole.”

This scandalous and indecent conversation was brought to a stop by a dead silence on the part of the whole congregation. Squire Mordaunt scarcely improved his scandalous position by saying, in a loud voice, to the officiating minister

“I beg pardon, sir. Pray go on.”

The officiating minister went on. It was Allan Gray, looking more like a bloodhound than ever, with the deep loving eyes, yet with the potential ferocity of the bloodhound also. He began his sermon. And from the first moment he began, Squire Mordaunt began to listen.

His text was, “I have other sheep not of this fold.” And he began to handle *that*. Did it mean the Seven Churches? It appeared to mean more than that to him. And while he was on the subject of the Seven Churches, he took the opportunity to go in for a furious, wild attack on the Church of Thyatira, which he said had never existed until fifty years after Saint John's death.

Whereupon the Squire said to *himself* “You are cutting your Scriptures to pieces, are you. Young man, did you

ever hear of such a place as Rome? With your craving for dogmatism, and your distrust of revelation, you'll be a Papist in two years, if you don't mind."

He was not a Papist at present, however. He enlarged on his theme. Other sheep. Which? Dissenters of all kinds, doubtless. Men who, like Professor X and Professor Y, were trying to find out God by their own lights. Doubtless these also. Inhabitants of other planets? There was little doubt, but that they were meant by the sheep of the other fold. The moon, as had been so well proved by the late Mr. Copeland, now dead thirty years, but uncontradicted, was the Hell, Hell, the concealed place, the place of departed spirits, before their final judgment—

"Purgatory," growled the Squire.

He could not agree with the late Mr. Copeland, advocate, that the sun was the place of eternal torture for 729,000,000, out of 800,000,000, on the face of the globe. He was, however, perfectly certain that the 120,000,000 of Papists and Anglicans who imitated Rome, would be either in the sun or farther, very soon.

This was a hit out at Squire Mordaunt, who had given his living to a well−known Broad Churchman. Who had furthermore increased his sins by having (as churchwarden) encouraged decorations in the church. The Dean of St. Paul's was well known as a learned man, of lax views, in one point declaring that *he* in *his* way believed in the Real Presence, with a strong tendency to ceremonialism. The women and the old men did not understand it at all. It was Greek to them.

"That man will be at Rome in a year. He is unable to see the points of the question. I wonder what the effect on the estate would be if I sent him to Rome. I have a good mind to send for old Father Jones. That man is hungering after dogmas. Upon my word and honour I have a good mind to do it."

But at this time the sermon was concluded, and the old woman to whom Mordaunt had forgiven her rent, woke up and dropped her reticule, her pattens, and her umbrella. "After all," said Squire Mordaunt, "we are both of us only talking to old women." Which was, in one sense, certainly true.

The service was over, and the Squire went out, waiting for the man we will call Allan Gray. He joined the Squire in the road. And the Squire said, "South−east?"

Allan Gray said, "Why, my good sir?"

"Rome?" said the Squire.

"No," said Allan, so quietly and good−naturedly, that the Squire was disarmed at once. "I do not think it will come to that. I see that you understand me, but it will not come to that. I grope in the dark. You are wise there, Mr. Mordaunt, but it will never come to that with me. I have a guider who never errs."

"His name?" said Squire Mordaunt.

"Love," said Allan. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

This was rather Greek to the good Squire, shrewd as he was. He said, "Do you mean—?"

"I mean Eddy Evans, my half−brother. In all history, I think there was never any one like him. I am bound to believe in original sin, but that boy never committed it. That is the question between myself and God. That boy Eddy has to suffer for original sin, in everlasting torment, but he never committed it."

"My good young man," said Squire Mordaunt, "do go to Rome. Their formulas are far less horrible than yours. I can't understand why the deuce you fellows *don't* go to Rome."

Allan treated the square Squire with lofty scorn. He did not take up the argument. He continued:

"These attorneys, these Somes, have arranged all the details of the compromise between myself and my father's estate. I mention this fact to you as my father's trustee. They will pay me money in two months' time. That will enable me to sail by the *Burrumpooter*. May I ask, as a special favour, that you will receive me whilst I am here?"

"Receive you? Certainly. You are a good young man. Sail by the *Burrumpooter*. What do you mean?"

"I am going to India in two months, sir. Eddy Evans wants guidance, and there is much to do there. Eddy Evans, whom I now know as my brother, I always wondered why I loved him so well, has been through many religious experiences with me. I am going after him."

"Well, don't turn him Papist, young man," said the Squire, "because that is the way you are going just now."

Chapter 45.

Miss Evans had, indeed, done far more than she ever meant by her one act of thoughtless spite. Poor Allan Gray was terribly smitten with our good friend Ethel; and at the same time, being neither wanting in brains nor fine feeling, he was aware that it was in the highest degree improbable that he would ever make the least impression upon her.

They were so utterly different in ways of life and in ways of thought. She a lady of an old house, he not used to the rank of life in which she had always lived; she a Churchwoman of the highest, he a Dissenter of the lowest; she trained in all field exercises, he a thorough Cockney as ever was bred, considering foxhunting and horseracing sinful. He was perfectly determined never to palter with any one of his principles, but to remain exactly as he was then. He knew, therefore, that he had no hope of Ethel.

Yet he met her very often indeed, and talked very much with her. He was so very respectful, and so very distant, that she never guessed the state of the poor youth's heart, and by degrees got to like him.

How came they to be thrown together? One of the first people who took up Allan with the greatest *empressement* was Mrs. Maynard. She begged him to come to see them, and he did so.

She was as sharp and as keen a woman as any in broad Shropshire. She had not seen Ethel and Allan together twice, before she knew his secret.

Such an opportunity of annoying Miss Evans, and possibly of getting Miss Ethel well talked about, was not to be lost for a moment. She acted perfectly; begging Ethel to come as often as she could, and sit with Mildred, who was now getting very ailing indeed. Ethel could not have helped it even had she wanted; but indeed she liked very much to have pretty little Mildred with her, and see her brighten up while she prattled by the hour about Roland, a theme on which poor Ethel never tired. So it came that Allan and Ethel saw a great deal of one another, and that Miss Evans knew nothing about it, as she avoided Mrs. Maynard like poison, and left her to accumulate more atrocities for the day of reckoning, which Miss Evans dimly saw would come between her and “that woman” some time or another.

The household there seemed outwardly happy, but there was still a sad cloud between Mildred and her good−natured husband. He was devotedly kind to her—kinder than ever now that she was getting near to be a mother. Besides, before Ethel or Allan, it was quite impossible to hint at any domestic trouble. The household was a very pleasant one to Allan, and, you may depend upon it, Mrs. Maynard was civil enough. Allan thought her the nicest lady he had ever known, and showed it so very plainly, that Mrs. Maynard once, for a single instant, thought whether she had not been rather precipitate in shelving herself as an old widow, and whether it would still be worth while to get converted by Allan, with a view to matrimony. He was six−and−twenty to thirty, and she was forty to five−and−forty, without a grey hair in her head. It was in her mind and out of it again, and although she never exactly acted on it, she became extremely Low Church and started a Mary Stuart cap, which, as being the cap which has played more mischief in the minds of men in all history, than another cap, she argued, was the proper thing under the circumstances. She might as well have worn Elizabeth's best ruff, for all the effect she was likely to produce at present. At the same time, her John Knox might meet with a heart accident, and might want consoling some day, and that would be easier done in the Mary Stuart cap after all.

All hints and allusions of any tenderness between Roland and Ethel, she, of course, very carefully suppressed. Miss Evans she kept at a safe distance by continually sending her fulsomely loving and flattering messages. She well knew that good lady's humour. “I don't mind her so much when she shows fight,” said Aunt Eleanor; “but when she takes to soft−soaping, I cannot bear the sight of her,” which Mrs. Maynard unhappily well knew.

I said Ethel got to like him. She did so very much, and found him a most intelligent and agreeable companion. His settled intention of going to India, so frequently expressed, combined with her perfect unconsciousness, and his almost haughtily careful reserve towards her, enabled her to be very good friends with him, without her even suspecting how he felt towards her. And when all was said and done, was he not Roland's elder brother?

She praised very highly his project of going to India, and sketched for him her brother Jim's character, in which he was represented as being as brave as Picton, and as good as Collingwood. Allan promised to cultivate that gentleman's acquaintance, but said nothing whatever about the extremely unfavourable opinion he had

conceived of him on board the transport ship and elsewhere.

Mrs. Maynard's other great scheme did not seem to prosper at all. Sir Jasper Meredith having taken counsel with young Somes, proceeded immediately to the second Cataract of the River Nile, and would probably have pushed up as far as Debonos, or even Kamrasis, had not the management of his affairs imperatively called him back to England. Considerable additional wealth had fallen to him by the death of a very largely dowered aunt, and he had not been at Lawley a week before Mrs. Maynard was upon him.

He was utterly alone, and unprotected. Even the elder Mordaunt must be at Shrewsbury races. She came over in her son's carriage, and when the door was opened she merely walked in, and, with her pocket−handkerchief in her hand, requested to see Sir Jasper Meredith.

“How d'ye do, my dear Jasper?” she began. “We have been nearly out of our senses with worry and anxiety about you. Never to write one word! I tell you the truth, I gave you up for lost. I said, 'He is drowned.' Those where my very words, 'He is drowned.' Poor Mary instantly fainted away, and then I had seen what a foolish thing I had done in yielding to my convictions, and breaking them to her without preparation.”

“I am sorry Miss Maynard was so very much upset,” croaked Sir Jasper, in his most raven−like tone.

“Ah! You don't know what that child's feelings are. She will give you a deal of trouble if you don't mind.”

“Confound her, she is doing it already,” thought Sir Jasper. “How the deuce am I to get out of this? We had a very pleasant tour, Mrs. Maynard. I am sorry I was not longer, but the river got low, and I came into Pleachmore and Spinsterwood, and I came home by Paris. I spent some money there.”

“Ah, you young men! You young men! You will be gay. Yes! Yes!”

Sir Jasper caught her eye, and looked down on his withered, wasted, ruined body with an indignation akin to fury, but well concealed. She saw she had gone too far.

“I was not very gay,” he said. “A miserable heap of ruined hopes like myself, much better dead, is not likely to be gay. I spent some money in some jewels which I fancied, and I thought—“He rang the bell, and gave his servant a key and a direction, and the man, opening a bureau, took out a large morocco case, and went away.

“I rather thought that they would suit your complexion, my dear madam. Pray try them, and if they suit you, keep them.”

Oh, she *was* so delighted. It was so *kind*, so *thoughtful*, so *good*, to think of the poor old woman. She thought of gushingly kissing him, but he looked so exceedingly dangerous, and shortly afterwards took her leave, insisting that she could not give him one day more without coming to see Mary.

She opened her jewel−case in the carriage once more. “If you are going to pay this price every time you wish to avoid a disagreeable conversation, my little friend, I shall not trouble you much for a very long time. I will work you, my friend.”

And the moment she was gone, young Somes, the lawyer, came into the room, and said—“Did she take the jewels, Sir Jasper?”

“Like a trout takes a May−fly.”

“That is well. We have a hold on her now. She will deny the bribe now. I am afraid they were real.”

“Four thousand francs worth.”

“Hang it,” said Somes, “I wish you had got Palais Royal. She'd never have known it. One hundred and sixty pounds on her. Never mind. We are all right. We have bribed her far enough if she gives us trouble to tell her son. Here is my father with the leases.” And in toddled old Mr. Somes, the attorney, with the leases.

“Leases; you may well say leases, you two,” said the gentle old man. “You have been 'leasing,' I doubt. My boy, Sir Jasper,” continued the old attorney, looking affectionately at his son, “would not have his health if he did not keep business out of his father's office. I might have made 6000*l*. or 8000*l*. out of the Evans' succession business, but he stopped it. And now he is doing his best to put an end to the best breach of promise case I have seen for years.”

“I have a good mind to marry the girl,” said Sir Jasper. “I can't live long, and, to tell the truth, don't want to. She is a fool, and I don't like her; but if her being my nominal wife, with a large settlement, would get her out the hands of that woman, I am not at all sure that it would not be right to do so. She would expand and develop into something better and nobler if she was rich and free; and she is good−looking, and good−natured.”

But the Somes would not hear of that for a moment, and hoisted up the poor little anatomy to sign his leases, Somes the elder suggesting to him that one way out of the business would be to marry the mother, which made Sir

Jasper laugh till all his bones ached worse than usual.

“After all,” he said, “seriously, between us all, is it not shameful and ghastly beyond measure, for that woman to propose to sell her daughter to such an awful object as myself?”

“Shameful!” said young Somes, sitting down suddenly beside him, putting his arm round his neck, and stroking his hair. “Yet if women were all they pretended to be, I can conceive of a certain kind of woman being as happy as the day is long as Jasper Meredith's wife.”

“Ah!” said Sir Jasper Meredith, with a deep sigh and a catch in his breath; “I would make a good woman *so* happy.”

Chapter 46.

The elder Somes was seized with an irritation of the mucous membrane which required him to blow his nose, but he was quite up to the occasion. “Ah!” he said, “you have lost a good chance, Sir Jasper. There is a lady riding up the avenue now who would have had you if you had thrown into her settlements the pasture on Lawley hill. Miss Evans. But you are out of the market there, sir; here is the late Dean of St. Paul's, our new Rector, your old master, riding with her. She seems to be blowing him up, which with her means a dangerous degree of affection. When she gets cool to you, you may always know that you are on her bad books.”

“Lift me up and let me see them,” said Sir Jasper, eagerly. “I wish she had come when Mrs. Maynard was here. What fun it would have been.”

“We shall oblige her, before you are out of this scrape,” said young Somes. “Here she comes.”

In front of the terrace at Lawley there was an iron gate, and as no servant happened to be looking out of the window at that moment, none of the men went down to open it.

Our three friends who were looking out of window were considerably amused. The Dean (as we will still call him) came forward to open it as a matter of course, but Aunt Eleanor waved him back, saying that she made a point of opening gates for herself, which, in a way, she did. She was on the cob which during seven years had never allowed her to open one single gate from his back, but she recommenced the seven years' war without one moment's hesitation. The iron gate was Silesia and she was Marie Thérese. She went into the seventh year of the war without an instant's hesitation, and hooked at the latch with the hooked end of her riding whip. As soon as she had got tight hold of it, the cob (representing, let us say, the King of Prussia) backed across the grass to the left (into Saxony, shall we say?) and it became evident that she must either be pulled off her horse, or let go her whip. She did the latter alternative, and as usual, dismounted, opened the gate and let her cob through.

But the gate went to right against the nose of the Dean's horse (who may be said with somewhat singular felicity to have represented the nation of France, so admirably represented in all its aspirations, as it turned out a few years after, by Louis XV.). However, the Dean's cob, being an ecclesiastical cob, used to the buffetings of this wicked world, took no exception to having three hundred−weight of iron sent slam against his nose, and allowed the Dean to open the gate. In a very short time Miss Evans and the Dean were shown into Sir Jasper Meredith's library.

“How d'ye do, Jasper?” she said. “My dear child, you don't look a bit better for your Nile trip. You look as if you had been half swallowed by a crocodile. I will tell you what I shall have to do with you, young man. I shall have to take you over to Pulverbatch and nurse you up. I shall also have to look after your property for you; if you go on trusting to the advice of these two Somes, they will rob you to that extent that you will die miserable out−lawed old exile at Boulogne. How are you two?”

They said, smiling, that they were quite well.

“That's a comfort,” said Aunt Eleanor. “I am glad that some people are flourishing; you never come near me. If I was dirt under your feet you couldn't treat me worse than you do. Why you, Somes the elder, you are as old as I am.”

“I am old enough to be your grandfather, Miss Evans,” said the old man.

“That only makes it worse,” said Aunt Eleanor. “You, old Somes, respected and loved in the valley so many years: the father of the valley, the healer of dissensions when you might make money by them; a man I have known all my life, never come near me now. Don't you know that when there is not welcome for you at Pulverbatch, I wish that Pulverbatch may come down and crush me. As for you, young sir, I don't understand you. You have let your whiskers grow long, and turned barrister. However, you come of a good stock, and we will try to hope for the best.”

The Dean remarked that he was at a loss to conceive what on earth Mr. Somes's whiskers had to do with the argument in hand; and that the talking of sheer nonsense “was like the letting out of waters.”

Aunt Eleanor stopped directly, with a glance at him. His pertinent caustic impertinence (impertinence in the second intention *he* chose to call it) had pulled her up in her most fantastic moods more than once since they had been together. She instantly ranged into a subject which she conceived foreign to him.

“I came here on rather an unpleasant errand to−day, Jasper,” she said. “Your bailiff offered me two hundred and fifty bushels of fluke kidney potatoes, and one half of them are York regents.”

“I'll hang him on the day after to−morrow,” said Sir Jasper.

“Thanks very much,” said Aunt Eleanor. “I will ride over and see the execution. Send over the fresh two hundred and fifty bushels to night, and I will not prosecute you for swindling. As a matter of course I am letting you down easy, and shall pay you nothing. Now, Rector, if you will get my horse I will go.”

The Dean and she rode away, and the three looked at them out of window.

“Why did she come here?” said old Somes.

“She had something to say, Sir Jasper, which she wouldn't say before us,” said young Somes.

“I wonder what it was?” said old Somes.

“I don't,” said young Somes. “It is about Maynard and his wife and young James Mordaunt. That old woman Maynard ought to be put a stop to. She has been making mischief there, to keep a hold in the house. I never heard of such a persistent evil as that old woman exhibits. Evil speaking, lying, and slandering. There is no good about her at all.”

They stood watching Aunt Eleanor down the avenue beside the late Dean of St. Paul's.

“Will those two make a match of it?” remarked old Somes.

“You are a better judge than I,” said young Somes. “They are very old, but I don't see why they should not.”

“They quarrel a deal,” said old Somes.

“No, father, they don't. She is dead afraid of him. He lets her talk her nonsense to a certain point, and then he drops in and shuts her up. She has met her master.”

“That,” said Sir Jasper, moving himself, “is very singular. The Dean of St. Paul's is a man of the cloister, of the lecture room, of the common room. He can know nothing of women.”

“He has been used to manage boys of from eighteen to twenty, however,” replied young Somes, “and they are pretty much like average women.”

“But Miss Evans is not an average woman,” said Sir Jasper. “She is wiser than most men. Wiser than the Dean in the ways of the world.”

“Possibly,” said young Somes. “But then, don't you see, the Dean has learnt logic and she hasn't. So he can leave her to make a fool of herself and then pick her up sharp and sudden, and that so to speak flabbergasts her. Besides, he is a strong man on all points. He is master: and if she marries him, she will find it out. He will be master. Tongue is not strength. See what a fool that woman makes of herself about young Eddy Evans. And then, again, see what a fool she makes of herself about Ethel Mordaunt. If Miss Mordaunt were to cry for anything to−morrow, she would sell a hundred acres to give it to her. That woman is not a strong woman, her heart is too good.”

“Is Mrs. Maynard a 'strong' woman?” asked Sir Jasper, laughing. “I mean stronger than Miss Evans.”

“The Maynard has the most brains. But she is a coward and a liar,” replied young Somes.

Chapter 47.

So Allan spent the two months with Ethel. Mrs. Maynard growing more and more certain every day that he was going to make a fool of himself, and Allan getting more and more certain that he was not.

I doubt whether a man of good disposition and high character like Allan Gray, is very unhappy under a hopeless passion. Men with a craze in their brain will go as far as to hang themselves, but in those cases I doubt the man's being in love at all in the sense I speak of. Such admiration is more physical than mental, I suspect. I have heard of more than one Colonel Dobbin.

Allan had never been on such good terms with a highly educated, high−spirited lady before, and he found it, like the rest of the world, extremely charming. Thrown together more and more by Mrs. Maynard's plotting, and their growing liking for one another, they became very fast friends, and very confidential indeed, save on two points; Ethel seldom named Roland, and Allan never for an instant, by word or look, let Ethel think that he admired her.

Miss Evans's dislike for this young man was so well known to Ethel, that she scarcely ever mentioned his name. And consequently their intimacy was quite unknown.

Ethel talked much with him about his plan of going to India. He was connected it seemed with some missionary society, whose speciality was India—I believe a German Society. He had offered to go out and see how they were doing, but he did not conceal from her that now it was definitely allowed, and he had settled in his mind that Eddy was his brother, he had felt an absolute craving to see more of him. He told her that he never could conceive what attracted him so much towards that young man.

“You had not the same feeling towards his brother, had you?” said Ethel.

He was thoughtful for a time. “Why, no, I cannot say that I had. I cannot tell in the least degree why. He is, I believe, everything which is noble, but he is so very—I don't know—handsome, elegant, accomplished, successful.”

“Are those faults?”

“They jar upon me. It is a fault in my nature, I know, but they *do* jar upon me. It is painful for a man of somewhat high aspirations to feel his inferiority. Just think too how my brother Roland is employed. It is terrible to think of talents and gifts so wasted.”

“Civilising India; stopping suttee and other abominations; training himself to be a governor of men, a satrap of the greatest power on earth; defending the outposts of advancing railways and canals, making tanks and other low dirty work of the kind. Yes, miserable work indeed.”

This was rather sharp, but there was a good deal of truth in it after all said and done. One of the finest things done in the Indian mutiny, was that fight which Mr. G. O. Trevelyan tells us of. *On a railway embankment*.

Ethel having got her advantage, pursued it for her own low ends. “Dear Mr. Evans,” she said, “I want to ask one thing of you as a *very great* favour.”

“Anything in reason, Miss Mordaunt.”

“Don't on my account use your influence to induce Edward to leave the army. It would give fatal offence to every one.”

“I never dreamt of doing such a thing for an instant,” said Allan. “Many godly men have carried arms before now.”

Ethel ran over a few, beginning with the Centurion, and ending with Cromwell, and then pursuing her advantage, got him to promise that he would be gentle and friendly with all three, and not obtrude his opinions on them too strongly. On behalf of her brother, she made a special appeal.

“If you knew what a noble creature he was,” she said, “you would love him as I do: you will not suit one another, I fear. But, dear Mr. Evans, for *my* sake be kind and gentle to him; he is wild and fantastic, but try to bear with that; and above all, do not interfere in his friendship with Eddy; it is the thing which keeps him from evil more than any other. I pray you, as the last prayer I shall make you, not to come between those two.”

Allan said not one word, but he took her hand and kissed it; one of the deepest and best kept vows ever registered, was sworn by Allan Evans at that instant.

Not another word was said between them. Ethel tried to speak, but broke down, and he went away, for it was to be their last meeting. And he went at noon the next day.

As he passed through the ball, Mrs. Maynard slipped out, and said, “You look low; you have surely not been asking a question and had a refusal. Surely—”

“No,” said Allan.

“Give my love to Roland,” she said, “and tell him that his love is true and constant.”

“Who is his true love?” said Allan.

“Did you not know he was engaged to be married to Ethel Mordaunt, and that she worships the ground he treads on? Good−by. Dear me. Good−by.”

Chapter 48.

Allan having long known that it was not himself, was not very terribly put out of the way when he found who it was; never having had a thought for himself, but having merely fallen in love haphazard, he could not in the least degree see why he, so utterly unsuited for her, should take her from Roland, who seemed to him exactly suited for her. But he was desperately in love with her nevertheless.

He was to go to Shrewsbury by the twelve o'clock train, and he had got a cart to take his luggage for him, and would himself walk. He was on the road, with Caradoc, Lawley, and Longmynd getting dim behind him, when he was aware of a young lady scouring swiftly on horseback across a grass field towards him. This young lady looked for a gap in the hedge (there *was* one, it being off Aunt Eleanor's farm), but she did not see it, and leaning back, topped her horse across it on to the footpath, about forty yards before him. Then she dismounted and waited for him, and when he came up, she said, “I have caught you.”

“I am so glad to see you once more, Miss Mordaunt,” he said, “so very, very glad. You are the last made of all my friends, and really I think the dearest.”

“I am so glad of that. I was in hopes you would like me. See here—see how I am going to trust you,” and she looped up her habit under her arm and walked beside him, leading her horse.

“I want you to give this letter into my brother Jim's own hand. It is heavy, you see,” she said, looking at him. “There is another letter inside. You will give it him safe, will you not?

“Through fire and water. Through hell and beyond,” was the singular, quiet reply.

“My dear sir, what are you saying?” said Ethel, startled.

“I beg your pardon. I mope too much, I doubt, and forget the value of words. Those words had meaning to me.”

Ethel said good−by! and he said good−by, and taking the letter, walked away down the bright white road, leaving Ethel standing on the path holding her horse, and looking after him.

He turned once and looked back, waving his hand. She stood there still like a statue, and waved her hand to him; then a turn in the road hid him from her, and he was gone.

This happened to be a difficult day with Aunt Eleanor. She was making up her accounts, which always exasperated her, and the Dean had not come, as he said he would. The figures refused point−blank to add up, or multiply, or do anything else; except exhibit new properties in numbers utterly unknown to those effete sciolists at Cambridge. She was very cross, and had inked her nose. She had foolishly sold her mangold, tempted by very high prices that year, but the season had been so bad that prices had risen, and she had to buy for her own beasts at a loss. Meanwhile, the original man who had bought the mangold had never paid her. And she wanted her money without selling out of the funds, for every sixpence she made, not sent to Eddy, was bought in at any price. She wanted that sixty−eight pounds because she had got it into her head—goodness knows how—that Eddy ought to give Jim's friend the Nawab a present of jewellery (he could have fitted out Mr. Harry Emmanuel). “Those heathens love that kind of thing,” was all the explanation she chose to give to the Dean.

She was looking out of window with an inky nose, when she saw Ethel come up to the door leading her horse by the bridle. She rang the bell three times for her groom, and ran to the door herself.

“What is the matter, child? has he been down with you? Are you hurt?”

“No,” she said, “but I did not think of getting on him. I quite forgot him.” And she followed Aunt Eleanor into the sitting−room, and casting herself down on the sofa, hid her face.

Aunt Eleanor went on with her accounts with a scared face.

Two and two had persistently made five before, but now they made $x + 5^{nth}$. There was an unknown quantity in the room certainly. Ethel looked old and harried; she looked pale, wan, wild, and—come, out with the word—fierce. She looked like her brother Jim at his worst; and if ever sheer absolute terror was in the heart of an honest, brave old woman, it was in the heart of Aunt Eleanor at that time.

“Ethel!”

“Leave me alone! Leave me alone!”

“But Ethel dear!”

“Why do I not die? Why did God gift me with this splendid beauty, of which I am so perfectly conscious, that I might only work misery? Let me alone?”

There was a very short pause, after which Aunt Eleanor rose, and, in a loud voice, said—

“Ethel, you must speak. If you and I lived alone together, we should madden one another with our reticence. We have both the same horrible habit. In Heaven's name, girl, tell me what is the matter. I will confess my sin to you, and you shall make me kiss the floor for it.”

“I have no charge against you, Miss Evans,” said Ethel. “You have always been my best and most dearly loved friend. My story is soon told. I have won the heart of a noble man, and I have broken his.”

“Whose?”

“Allan Evans's.”

“Has he spoken to you?” said Miss Evans, almost in a whisper.

“No; he is too leal, too loyal, too noble, too gallant for that,” replied Ethel. “He was gentleman enough to see that I gave him no reason to speak to me; but when he left me this morning, I saw it all.”

“How did you see it?”

“By an expression in his face, only for one instant. You, with your beauty, must have seen that more than once; and an expression in his mouth so unlike his usual religiousness that I rebuked him for it.”

“Go on,” said Aunt Eleanor.

Ethel sat up, pale and wild, on the sofa.

“I will tell you everything. Don't desert me. I know that Roland loves me; but he has not written to me anything more than formalities. He thinks that his change from elder to younger son should make a difference. And I wrote him a letter, containing a great deal more than mere formalities. And I gave it to Allan Evans to take to him. And he knew what he was doing. Allan looked me in the face, and showed me that he knew for whom the letter was. But he will deliver it. If all the banded fiends which you make me read about in Milton were to oppose him, he would carry that letter safe through. He promised in words strange to him.”

“What were his words?”

“I cannot repeat them.”

“Will you write them down?”

“I dare do as much as that for you; but you must leave me alone afterwards.”

Aunt Eleanor took the sheet of note−paper which Ethel gave her, and read—

“Through fire and water; through hell and beyond it.”

She was very serious and deeply grieved. She never thought it would have gone as far as this. She said to Ethel—

“Sit here, my dear, comfortable and quiet. I am going out on the farm.”

Now this was a statement which, had it been uttered by Mrs. Maynard, Aunt Eleanor would have called “another of them,” meaning another outrageous story; for she was not going on the farm at all, but just rode over to tell the whole story to the Dean of St. Paul's, the Rector.

He merely nodded his head until he came to the fact that she had introduced Allan and Ethel to one another, with a distinct view of plaguing Allan. Then he rose and gave it to her.

“You must have been out of your mind. That is one of the wickedest things I ever heard of in my life. You ought to be entirely and utterly ashamed of yourself. If a man were to do such a thing, he would be chased from society.”

“I have confessed my sin.”

“What is the use of confessing your particular sin, after doing your best to ruin two lives, and having succeeded in ruining one? Why did you do so?”

“It pleased me,” said Aunt Eleanor, sulkily.

“Yes; I have pricked your conscience too deep, and you retire on your womanhood. Go home and look after that girl; the boy is past looking after.”

The agricultural labourers said that “The new Rector were a−courtin' Miss Evans, and they would soon make a match of it.”

Squire Mordaunt said that “the new Rector and old Eleanor had had such a violent squabble, that be expected the announcement of their wedding would come off in a fortnight.”

The Rajah of Bethoor said, “Curse the young fools! they never sleep. But, sleep or wake, I am a match for them. I will have the two Evanses and that Mordaunt.”

And our Nawab said, “He has no real claim against you; he was but an adopted Mameluke. Jim, my dear, why did you prevent my cutting his throat when I had the chance? Never mind, child, we will have a fight together before we die.”

And the Dean wrote a sixty−guinea article in the great half−yearly review, giving a history of the settlement of India by the English, and wound up by pointing out that in the remotest end of further contingencies, it was possible that the conquered race might attempt to assert their superiority.

And keen−eyed little Eddy noted all things. And one night, there being many native attendants about, he took it into his head to raise his brother's mosquito curtains, and slip into bed beside Roland. And Roland heard many things, in a night's whispering, which he had never heard before, gotten from the Nawab to Jim, and from Jim to Eddy.

Chapter 49.

The arrival of our young friend, Edward, did not make much difference at the station at Belpore. Roland's men had seen him at Chatham, and he was welcomed by them as a great accession. Add to this, that everything was perfectly quiet again. There had been dreadful jangling at one time among the native troops about the cartridges, but Colonel Cordery had got together the havildars of the free native regiments, both Mussulman and Brahmin, and had had a great talk with them. He pointed out to them that he was not in command, and that this was entirely an unofficial meeting. He would give them his word of honour, as an English gentleman, that there was nothing worse than bees'−wax on the cartridges, and that the idea that the English wished to insult the Mussulmans, and degrade the caste of the Brahmins, by making them bite cartridges greased with pork fat or beef fat, was the wildest moonshine which ever entered into the mind of man. The Brigadier Sahib had told them so, but they would not believe him. He appealed to all our former policy in India, and begged them not to make fools of themselves.

When Colonel Cordery had done speaking, a tall man who had been leaning over his chair as he sat, began to speak. It was the Nawab.

“Listen to me,” he said. “Am I a high−class Brahmin? Have I in any way ever broken my caste?”

There were salaams, and a universal murmur of assent and admiration from the havildars, for our Nawab was known not only for his strict religion, but also for his vast charity and good nature.

“Here is one of those very cartridges. Look at me. I believe as you do: is there one who dares say I do not?” and he put the cartridge in his mouth.

It seems to us now a slight act. It was a very important one, however. The Mussulmans thought they were being insulted, and the Brahmins thought they were incurring everlasting damnation, by biting these cartridges. Here was a well−known Brahmin staking, as the Brahmins thought, his soul by biting one. They were satisfied for the time.

Was it midsummer madness? Undoubtedly so. But have not nations more often maddened themselves on the subject of religion than on any other? Sheer folly! Why no. A nation, or a portion of a people, who will fight for their faith, say in effect, “We believe in a future state, under conditions, and our life here is not half so valuable as our life there. Consequently, we prefer to die, sooner than forego certain conditions, which we believe to be necessary to the life everlasting.” Jews have said so; witness Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Papists have said so; witness Capuchins and Jesuits, innumerable. Anglicans have said so; witness the little cross on the pavement before Balliol College, where Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer were burnt. Ultra−Protestants have said so; what Claverhouse saw and heard when he came crushing through the heather under Wardlaw will tell you that. Yes! a people, a section of which will not die for their faith, are but dead dogs, and should die as such.

It is a matter very dim and very hard to get at, this feeling of the *Brahmins* towards us. Liars were abroad, like the Rajah of Bethoor, who told them that these cartridges were purposely invented to make them lose caste and incur damnation. It was a lie, an outrageous and wicked lie, but they believed it. Conceive any *man*, confessing any form of Christianity, being asked to insult the sacred elements to save his life. Yet it came to that with them.

I find none like my Shakespeare. He makes Nym (Nehmen, the man who *takes*) steal everything he can lay his hands upon, until at last he rises to the summit and head of stealing, by taking what?—a pyx. He could not even keep his hands off *that*, and was hung. These men believed, through such rascals as Nana Sahib, that we had stolen *their* pyx, and they desired to hang us. Now that blood is cool, one dares say so much.

But the effect of the Nawab's biting the cartridge was very great. Such perfect peace and harmony was restored that all went merry as a marriage bell, until Allan Gray's—I beg his pardon, Allan Evans's—arrival. There was a great lull. The men were reassured, and the best of them contrasted the lives of the Brigadier Sahib and the Nawab with that of the Rajah, not by any means to the Rajah's advantage.

The Major, extremely Low Church, continued his Bible classes and his churches among the Pariahs, and those whom he could influence, and the Roman Catholic missionary and the German−Lutheran missionary worked away with a will. The Major told the Nawab, the Havildars, the Subadhars, the Brigadier, Colonel Cordery of Her Majesty's army, Jim Mordaunt, Eddy Evans, the Roman Catholic missionary, in fact every one who would listen

to him, that they were all in a fair way for eternal destruction, particularly Eddy, who had fallen asleep in church, dropped his sword with a rattle, and, on awakening, had exclaimed in a loud voice, “Right half−face. March!”

Not a soul minded the good Major, his denunciations were too general, and every one saw that he was doing good, and raising the tone of all. The native Hindoos had heard what he had said about *caste*.

“Caste! Who wants to meddle with their caste? I want them to read this book; there is no loss of caste in *that*. Let any touch *my* caste. Let any man try to take this Bible, God's own book, from *me*. But let him make his peace with his Maker first, for his wife will be a widow.”

So spoke our stout old Major, and all went pleasantly, for Meerut was not as yet, nor had Allan come to the confusion of counsel.

But there was a great change now in the pleasant little garrison. Lord Canning sent orders for the whole of the 201st to be withdrawn from Belpore except one company, and for the whole of the cavalry to be withdrawn except one troop. On which Colonel Cordery, Brigadier Sahib, and the Major had a consultation.

The Brigadier was not by any means what Colonel Cordery considered a wise man; but he found himself surprised on this occasion, as most men do, who fancy that silent men are necessarily fools.

“We are to leave a company and a troop,” said the Colonel. “Which shall we leave? there is no roster. You can do exactly as you like, you know.”

“Lord bless you!” said the Brigadier, “as if there was any hesitation. Leave the young 'uns.”

“Which young ones?” asked the Colonel.

“Why *the* three. Leave Roland Evans, for that fellow has a prime minister's head on his shoulders. Leave James Mordaunt (they are in the same troop), for he is a tom−cat that fellow; and we shall want tom−cats in what is coming, as you know as well as I, old man. And leave little Evans, for he is a little devil; leave his company.”

“You are master here,” said Colonel Cordery; “but come, I never gave you credit for such sagacity.”

Said the Major, suddenly, “A man who has made so many messes of it as Brigadier Hancock is the very man I could trust.”

“Now don't begin chaff, you two,” said the Brigadier. “I know you can beat me at that; I ain't clever.”

“You are *wise*,” said the Major.

“Thanks, old Truepenny. But look here. How could we do better than leave these three boys here? They are only lieutenant, cornet, and ensign, but look at them, could we do better?”

“Certainly not,” said the Colonel.

“Look,” said the Brigadier, “at what would come in case of a row−royal (which is coming). Why, the Nawab can't exist without Jim Mordaunt, and Roland Evans and Edward manage Jim Mordaunt, and Jim Mordaunt can manage the Nawab. Bless you, politically speaking, it is the very best thing we could do.”

“You know India, old man,” said Colonel Cordery.

“Should do,” said the Brigadier. “I have wasted the best part of my life here.”

“Not wasted,” said the Major.

“You mean that I have earned a good pension, and shall be able to live at Cheltenham. That is wasting your life, is it not? But if it is any satisfaction to you, I beg to state that I am *not* going to live at Cheltenham among broken−down collectors. I am going to see my time out here; and Lord help Rajah or Nawab who meddles with me. I would like to go to England and see cowslips and trout, but I don't see Cheltenham. You mind what I say, and keep those three boys here.”

So there were no Europeans left at Belpore, except one company of the 201st, and one troop of the cavalry regiment in which Roland and Jim were. The troops marched off down the river, by the patch of jungle where Jim's moonshee was murdered; and the company and troop marched with them to that point, and then halted.

“Good−by, you two, Evans and Mordaunt,” said the Colonel.

“Good−by for ever,” said that dreadful Major.

“Remember that your cause is the right one, and that God will back you,” said that irrepressible Major.

And so they were gone, with the drums and trumpets, and the colours, and our three fellows were left alone, with 160 men all told, on the dusty road, opposite the place where the moonshee had been murdered.

Roland, it so happened, in consequence of invalids, young as he was, was actually in command of the cavalry. The infantry had a captain left them; a solemn young man, with a wall−sided head, who had two desires in life, to educate himself decently, and to do his duty. He had left Harrow five years now, but he had got on badly with his

education. He was naturally heavy−headed and stupid, and he had consulted in succession Jim (who confessed himself an ass), Roland, and Eddy, as to the means by which fellows got to be clever. He used to sit with them and listen to them talk, apparently under the impression that cleverness was catching, like measles. But he found that it was not. His name was Captain Claverhouse, and on the way back to the now lonely station, dominated by the great white palace of the Rajah, he ranged alongside of Roland, and said—

"What a quaint selection the Brigadier and the Colonel have made! I expected they would leave me, for I am notoriously wooden−headed, though a good fighter; but it seems so strange to leave you and your brother, and Mordaunt. You fellows would do better alive than dead, one would fancy."

"Than dead, Claverhouse! I do not understand you," said Roland.

"Do you not know," said Captain Claverhouse, "that we are left behind here to die; do you not know that we were carefully selected as men who could die best, and leave the deepest mark behind us?"

"No! is that the case? Ethel! Ethel!"

"You may well say 'Ethel!' I say Emily."

"Shall we hose India?" asked Roland, suddenly.

"No; but over our graves will rush a wave of re−conquest, nobler in its aim, greater in its results, than the first one. We shall hear their footsteps as they pass over us, and—

'Our hearts would bear them and beat,
Though we lay for a century dead.'

as your brother sung last night. I thought you knew this."

Roland rode silent for a little time, thinking deeply. At the end of that time he bent from his horse, laid his hand on his commanding officer's shoulder, and said—

"My friend! the thing you speak of *shall not be*."

"Who will prevent it?" said Captain Claverhouse, sadly. "Evans, I have so much to live for that I am loath to die. If you knew Emily, you would understand me. I could die, or you could die, but to leave Emily all alone—her aunt is not kind to her, sir, she wanted her to marry another man instead of me. But she will marry no one but myself. And to leave her all alone!—Evans, God has given you brains, can you help me with them?"

"I will do my best, Claverhouse. See you here, we must concentrate in the Nawab's palace, that is certain."

"Can we trust the Nawab?"

"Can I trust my brother, Eddy?" said Roland. "The Nawab is one of us. I would go to the deuce for the Nawab now. I know him. What a pity it is that Jim's moonshee was murdered, he would have been worth 100,000 *l*. I say, Claverhouse, all orders must come from you."

"Yes, but give me the office."

"Give the order for infantry to follow cavalry, and see where I will lead you."

"Where?"

"Through the natives lines," said Roland. "What are the odds against us?"

"Two thousand to one hundred, as far as I can make out," said Captain Claverhouse. "Better not, had you?"

"Cornet Mordaunt!" shouted Roland, and up came our old Jim, jingle−jangle, who saluted.

"I say, Jimmit, old boy—hang it! I beg your pardon, Cornet Mordaunt, we are going to march through the native lines."

"All right, Roley Poley—I beg your pardon, Lieutenant Evans," replied Jim.

"I wish, sir, that you would be more respectful."

"That is the great fault in my character, you know," said Jim.

"But, Jim, I am going to take the men through the lines and if you see any signs of insubordination, report it to me."

And so they marched. The native lines seemed quiet. These petted subsidiaries were at their usual avocations, lying in the shade and watching their wives cook their dinners. Our little band passed through them with a dead silence on the part of the Sepoys, till they were nearly at the end of the lines. At that point Sepoy ferocity expressed itself, as did likewise old Shrewsbury training.

A young man, dressed only in dhoties, got himself incensed by the appearance of Jim (who really *had* an exasperating look); he rose from his dinner and confronted Jim.

"Puckah, Budah, Pudwallah," said that misguided young man to Jim, of all people. Jim, in spite of his old

moonshee's lessons, was bad at Hindustani, but he understood that. He put spurs to his horse, and drawing his sabre, chased that young Sepoy into the desert, hunting him and turning him as a grey−hound does a hare, and spanking him with the flat of his sword. The other Sepoys looked on, and made the nearest approach to laughing which they ever do. And if it had not been for Allan Evans, it is extremely possible that Belpore would not have seen what Belpore did see.

"I say," said Jim, riding up and ramming his sword home, "I am not much of a politician myself, having had my brains addled at an early age by strong alternate doses of cricket, football, and Buttman's Greek Grammar, but I should like to know which party is going to begin."

"What do you mean?" said Roland.

"I mean which side is going to have the drop kick. We are in for a scrimmage, let us have it over. There lies the ball."

"We may avoid the scrimmage after all," said Captain Claverhouse.

"The Nawab does not think so," said Jim; "the odds are long against us, two thousand to one hundred all told. We are now utterly isolated from Europe, selected to die. Why should not we kick the ball? We can die game, of course. For me I have nothing left to live for. A man, I take it, only lives for a woman, and some one else has married the woman I wanted. Die game−yes, rats can do that. Give us the word, Claverhouse, or Roland, and we will kick the ball so far towards the goal that our name will never be lost."

"What do you propose?" said Claverhouse.

"Going now, one hundred and sixty strong, to the Rajah's palace, cutting his d—d throat, and burning his palace down. You will have to do it sooner or later, why not now?"

"We have no authority."

"*Make* it. India was not conquered by authority, was it? and won't be saved by it. Clive is dead, it seems."

"By his own hand," said Roland.

"There you go, with your Frenchism," said Jim. "But epigram is not argument, old man," and Jim rather sulkily dropped back to the rear.

"That young 'un seems to me to have brains," said Claverhouse.

"He is not clever," said Roland, "but he is thoroughly honest. His advice is sensible enough, but you see that we could not act on it. We should not be backed up. I suppose we had better send our magnificent army to their quarters, and go about among our people to warn them—that will be the best thing, will it not?"

"If you think so."

Roland, from this moment, naturally took the command. How fit for it he was, we shall see soon. Good Claverhouse always spoke of him as his brains. Action was not yet in activity, but it was beginning. Through everything which came, Captain Claverhouse, who gave the orders, was followed by Roland like a shadow; the defence of Belpore was Roland's.

This was the first night on which they had realised their danger and isolation. The first thing which Roland did, when the troops were dispersed, was to send Jim with a particular letter to the Nawab, begging him to come to him at once.

Jim was as free at the Nawab's palace as any Pariah, a section of the Indian population very dear to this radical Nawab. "For God," he said to Jim, "exalts some, like the Rajah of Bethoor, and keeps down others. But not for their sins, friend. For my part, I look with respect on a man whom the good God has taken the trouble to smite." Jim ran in through court after court, and found the Nawab making a kite very diligently.

"I am making a fine kite," said the Nawab. "Come and help me. It is a Franklin kite, with a wire in the string. And, oh, my dear, we shall fly it in the next thunderstorm, and we shall have the lightning in our own hands. And we shall have shocks, so that our elbows shall go together, or we shall be kill, like Oersted, but we shall have games and fun."

"Come down to European head−quarters, old boy," said Jim, "and never mind your kite."

"Oh, never mind his kite, his Franklin kite, his electrical kite. Jim, my dear, let us go, we two, and fly it; and hang the string to the Rajah's palace, and make lightning dawk into that hell, and blast it off the face of the earth."

"What! you are savage, too, are you, boy?" said Jim. "So am I. But I *want* you. Will you come with me?"

The Nawab rose at once and said, "Do you think that I would not go to the devil with you? Shall we fly our kite together? Oh, yes. Shall we bring lightning dawk into Gomorrah? Oh, sir! where is my jockey?"

Little Wilson soon appeared. “If you will have the goodness,” said the Nawab, “to order my stud−groom, to order my pad−groom, to order my head syce to say to some of my people in general, that if my cob is not round in ten minutes, I will at once have the whole of them broiled with cayenne pepper on a slow fire, I should feel obliged to you,” and so the little fellow departed to do his errand.

The Nawab's “cob,” which he prided himself on, as being an episcopal and entirely orthodox cob, was a blaze−faced chestnut of fifteen hands, from Australia, by Romeo out of Wimmera (she by Macknight's Premier out of Mitchel's Avoca). He showed his breeding in the most unmistakable way. He was by no means light in his heels like his mother, but he had to a slight extent learnt the art of bucking. The Nawab's syces were not in the least degree afraid of getting behind him, though not one of them dare get on his back.

In about three−quarters of an hour the Nawab appeared, dressed on this occasion in the dress of his Mahratta forefathers, with a spear in his hand; and an uncommonly fine gentleman he looked too, all in white, bare−legged from the knee, with a white turban and plume. He looked paler and more serious than he looked three−quarters of an hour before, altogether a different man; he caught the reins from little Wilson, and vaulted into the saddle, disdaining the stirrups, but sitting back and letting his legs hang.

The Romeo colt began bucking at once, and the Nawab sat back in his saddle until it really looked as if he would be thrown. But Jim and little Wilson saw him shortening the boar−spear in his hand, and after the horse had bucked about three times, the battle between man and beast began.

The Nawab, sitting easily with dangling stirrups, with the shortened end of his boar−spear began beating the horse over the head and ears; not one blow, or two, but an immense number, given right and left with the rapidity of lightning. The unhappy horse, stunned and dazed with the blows, kept under his rider with a terrible bit, succumbed very soon, bent his knees and lay on his side, the Nawab alighting on his feet.

Little Wilson was going to the Nawab's assistance, but Jim said, “Leave him alone, you fool, unless you want to be raddled about the ears with the butt−end of a boar−spear. This is *good*. I have got his monkey up.”

“By golly you have,” said the Newmarket man.

The Nawab kicked the horse up and vaulted on his back again, taking three or four turns round the square of the palace, with the boar−spear down between the Australian horse's ears. The fight was over, the man had won; then he rode up to Jim, put his feet in the stirrups, and said, “Now I am ready.”

He was perfectly cool and calm, but very pale. Jim said, laughing, “I did not think that Master Slender had been a man of this mettle.”

“Did you not?” said the Nawab. “I suppose you never heard of the Mahratta cavalry?”

Jim was obliged to confess that he had.

“Gar! I am a Mahratta, and so is that dog−devil the Rajah. I am devilish. Made lazy, idle, useless, by your British rule, in which you have only employed our lower classes in your wars, I had get sleepy. What was it you told me about these men from the land of ice, who stripped themselves naked, and smote and slew?”

“The Berserkers.”

“I am a Berserker, I am a Mahratta Berserker. I will come and do all that you wish me; but let me ride and cool myself.”

Jim assisted.

“We are alone and unarmed. What say you to riding quietly through the native lines, and then up to the Rajah's palace, insulting him, and then going down to Queen's head−quarters to make arrangement?”

Jim was perfectly agreeable. “*It will do all the good in the world*,” he said. And so it did.

Jim and the Nawab set off at full speed, and were seen in the native lines; the Nawab only with his boar−spear, Jim only with a sword. When they reached the lines Jim found his sword troublesome, it seemed, for he called up a grass−cutter, and unhooking it from the scabbard, gave it to the man to carry up to his quarters, wrangling with the man whether he should give him two pice or three. He called upon some of the sulking Sepoys about, and bade them say what was fair for carrying an officer's sword up to the Queen's head−quarters. They decided three pice. So Jim, with the vexed air of a man who has had a verdict given against him, gave the grass−cutter two rupees, a thing not noticed by the Sepoys. After this the Nawab and Jim traversed the lines in the most careless manner, leading their horses, perfectly unarmed.

At one point a little brown child, perfectly naked, was lying in front of a hut, with its stomach in the sand right in front of Jim's horse. Jim took it up, kissed it, and set on his saddle; the child laughed and crowed, and Jim

laughed again, for he was very fond of children. But the child's father, a havildar Mussulman, came swiftly from his hut and tore the child away; while an ominous growl arose from both the Brahmin and Mussulman Sepoys around.

"You must be out of your mind," said the Nawab.

"What have I done?" said Jim. "I only wanted to be kind to the poor little beggar."

"You have done a thing which you had better have cut your throat than do," replied the Nawab. "You have put that child on a pigskin saddle, and insulted every Mussulman in the lines, that is all."

"Have I made the child lose caste?"

"Caste! He has nothing to do with caste; you have merely insulted the Mussulmans."

"I am merely a clumsy beggar," said Jini, "but I did not mean any harm. Now for the Rajah."

They rode swiftly into the Rajah's courtyard—very swiftly indeed—and dismounted, watering their thirsty horses at one of his fountains; then they came slowly out again, leading their horses by the bridle, talking in English, and laughing very loudly. Of all the means which they could have conceived for insulting the Rajah, this was the most contemptuous. After having done this, they rode down to the head−quarters of the Queen's troops, and joined in a council of war which was going on there.

There was, in addition to the military, the judge, the magistrate, the collector, the doctor, the joint magistrate, the parson. The parson was speaking as they came in.

"What I have always tried to avoid," said the Padre, "is insulting them on the score of caste. It is perfectly untrue to say that I have ever done so."

"No one ever said you had," said the judge, laughing. "*You* have been easy enough with them. The question is this. Which is the safest place for us in case of a row (which is coming). Hah! here come the Nawab and Cornet Mordaunt. Gentlemen, there is thunder in the air, and we wish to put up a lightning conductor; where have you been?"

"Cornet Mordaunt," replied the Nawab, "has been amusing himself by insulting the Mussulmans. I, on my part, have amused myself by insulting the Rajah."

"Reckless! reckless!" said the doctor.

"You think so, do you?" said the Nawab, carelessly lolling into an empty chair. "I can't say I agree with you. We are ready, and they are not. Cornet Mordaunt here has done a silly thing in placing a naked Mussulman child on a pig−skin saddle, but that only affects the Mussulmans. I called him a fool for doing it at the time, but I have thought over it since, and I am not sure that he has not been rather lucky."

Roland asked why.

"Because, Lieutenant, he has made a very distinct quarrel with the Mussulmans in *my* presence. He has spread dissension among their ranks. The Mussulmans will be at present for cutting his throat and mine. Now, on the other hand, I am a most excellent Brahmin, well known and well liked, and the Brahmins will not have my throat cut if they can help it. I tell you, gentlemen, that if we can keep, even at this time, from insulting the castes of the Brahmins we may get through. It all depends on that.

"The quarrel," he continued, "between myself and the Rajah is nothing at all. We always squabbled from the time we were boys. I have always insulted him, because it is my habit to insult those I hate. He is an ill−born, ill−bred, ill−educated, ill−living, ill−looking, ill−speaking, ill−thinking son of a female Pariah dog. But it makes nothing, our quarrels. Mordaunt has saved his life from my knife once, and if the dog felt gratitude, he would feel it for that. But he knows nothing but evil, and he will ruin us if he has a chance. For the men in these regiments, as many would be for me as for him, providing their caste is not insulted. I have never broken my caste, and they know it, and can trust me. Bah! the dog would cut pork to−morrow, if he liked it."

"I had cold pork for tiffin, Nawab," said the Doctor.

"What a nasty beast you must be," said the Nawab, with perfect good humour. "Bah! and in this climate, too. You will want something stronger than taraxacum for your *own* liver, if you don't mind. You have tinkered up so many livers that I dare say you understand me."

"We shall want 'Dent de lien' here soon," remarked Eddy.

"I wouldn't waste my time in making silly puns, if I were in your place," said Jim. "You may think it fine, but we don't. No one laughed."

“Now, gentlemen,” said the Nawab, “I think we may assume this: that these men will not rise, or will, at the worst, rise some for me and some for the Rajah, if their case is let alone. Padre Sahib, who is of high caste, has told me that his brother Padres have been found willing to be burnt alive sooner than lose caste. The place, I think, he mentioned, was Smithfieldpoor.”

Assent from the Padre. The Nawab had now gathered his legs under him in his chair, and had broken his boar−spear, first into two, then into four lengths, across his knee. But he was quite quiet.

“Then it all comes to the same thing, gentlemen. It all comes inexorably, and quite eternally, and never−ending fortuitously, to the same exactly devilish thing: all fiends in the seventhsdepth of Hell, gnawing at his bones with red−hot iron teeth. It all comes to this, gentlemen. We shall pull through if we keep these men's caste respected. That last wife of mine—my only wife now, Padre—I got her and saved her from him; and he hates me for it. And curse him, by all gods ever invented, let him come after her. Let him come after her, with ten thousand flaming devils. Let him bring the Sheitan himself. Let him—I want his heart's blood, and I will have it,” and he leaped on his legs, and rammed the head of his boar−spear deep into the table.

“I say, draw it mild, old chap,” said Jim, quietly. “You are cutting it a deal too fat, you know.”

“I ask pardon,” said the Nawab. “I forgot myself.”

“You did, *rather*,” said Jim. “Cutting a man's throat is one thing, but caterwauling about it beforehand is another. I am ashamed of you. Look at the pains I have taken with your education, and see my return.”

“I beg a hundred pardons; I forgot myself. Jim, my dear soul, pull that boar−spear out of the table.”

It is a singular thing, but this lazy Hindoo, in his intense fury, had struck the clumsy spike so deep into the table that no one could move it. The Nawab laughed: “An emblem of my determination. When a child of a year old can pull that spear−head from the table, I will desert you, and those I have got to love among you,—Jim, and one whom he forbids me to name, and Roland, and Ethel, and Miss Eleanor Evans (I wish we had her here), and Squire Mordaunt, and John Mordaunt, and Eddy, and his Allan Gray. I am sorry that I was devilish, but it is in our blood. You understand me about the caste: it must not be interfered with. Now, again, dear Judge, should you not shift to my quarters?”

“Not at once, surely,” said the Judge. “Let us keep the white feather in our pockets.”

“Yes, you are right,” said the Nawab, “but let it be understood that if these fellows go mad, your home is with me.”

“That was well said,” said Captain Claverhouse.

“I love the English rule,” said the Nawab. “It has debarred me from military exercise, which was perhaps wise, because I might have been an infernal devil, like—”

“Leave it alone, old man—stow it,” said Jim.

“But I can strike a blow. I am a Mahratta, and I will strike it for you. Bless your hearts, all of you, we shall be perfectly safe there for six months. These fellows have no leaders. Where is John Lawrence?”

“In the Punjab,” said Roland.

“I know *that*—but where?”

Roland did not know.

“It does not matter much. We can hold out in case of the worst. The Chupatties are round, but I can make a stalemate of it with the Rajah, if you don't make the men jealous. On our next meeting we will decide about the retreat to my palace in case of a crush. Roland Evans, Edward Evans, and James Mordaunt, would you come home with me?”

Chapter 50.

Roland, Jim, and Eddy went home with the Nawab, and he told them why he wanted them. “I made a fool of myself to−day,” he said, “and I wanted you to see why. I want you to see my wife.”

It was such a strangely difficult subject that Roland himself would not tackle it. Eddy did. “I thought you had many wives, sir—as many as the Jewish patriarchs?”

“I have but one now, sir,” said the Nawab.

“I should think you must be glad of that,” said Eddy. “If I was going to marry anybody I should die of fright the day before the ceremony. One would be enough to frighten me to death. Solomon apparently retained his intellect to the last with over six hundred.”

“Lor,” said Jim, “if I was ever to marry anybody, I would have it all my own way for six months, about which time she would get the upper hand.”

So they laughed off a very delicate subject, and went along to the heavy gate of the Nawab's palace, which was slowly swung open to admit them. Roland now, for the first time, saw the Nawab's plan of fortification. There was no show of guns from the outside walls; they could easily have been battered into ruin by artillery, though that would have taken some time. But the inside wall, built recently, was fit to defy almost any artillery likely to be brought against it. It was a zigzag wall, of very heavy construction, mounted in casemates, or the best imitation of them that Jim, the Nawab, and a tipsy discharged artilleryman could make. The plan of these two bright young men was this, to put the outer wall, built by the Nawab's father in the good old times, between themselves and the new wall, and to arm that so well that, even supposing it half−destroyed, human existence would become impossible between the two walls, and an assault would be impossible. The palace itself, and the grounds around it, were on an impregnable cliff, on three sides, and the Nawab pointed out with great glee that he commanded from his highest point the palace of the Rajah. “Let him misbehave, my dears, and we will have his pretty house about his ears in a very short time.”

“I see no protection from vertical fire,” said Roland at once.

“Even if they tried it,” said the Nawab, dismounting, “we have casemates. Please come with me, and, in the name of British rule, never say what you have seen this day.”

He led Roland through many courts, which got more and more solitary as they went on. Then he unlocked a door in a high white wall with a key; he locked it after him, and began descending many steps into what had once been a garden, but which was now tangled and wild, and seemed to have been so for many years. At the end of this way a sculptured rock, into which went a deep, black archway, sculptured with the images of devils, as it seemed to Roland— of gods, as it seemed to the Nawab.

They passed into the silence and gloom, monstrous figures loomed all around them, and the light was dim. “Take my hand,” said the Nawab; and Roland took it, and spoke in a whisper.

“I never heard of these caves.”

“Of course you did not,” said the Nawab; “I should be very much surprised if you had. My people are not talkative. These are the temples of Belpore, the existence of which the Judge stoutly denied in a learned antiquarian pamphlet, when Haussmann, the German archaeologist, asserted their existence, and got leave from Government to examine them. Haussmann may rummage in Indian manuscripts, and may find out their existence but there is nothing to prevent my entirely denying their existence. Haussmann may come to me and say, 'Show me the temples of Belpore, Herr Nawab;' and there is nothing to prevent my saying, 'Herr Haussmann, I see what you have been reading. You have been reading the words of Naraballah. What does that word mean in Hindustani, Herr Antiquarian?'“

“'Well, it certainly does not mean anything at all,'“ says the German.

“'Why,' I say, 'you with your learning— you to be so grossly deceived by a book like that! The names mean nothing, the book means nothing but “Gulliver's Voyages.” My father pulled down the temples.' And I got Haussmann up an old moonshee, and the moonshee confirmed me, for my father has pulled down one pagoda which his uncle built, out of spite.

“That moonshee was put up to lie, but he lie too well. Haussmann says, 'What was the date of the pagoda

pulled down by the lath Nawab?' And he reply, 'Twenty−five years; I saw him build.' 'But how old are you?' says Haussmann. 'Four hundred years,' says the moonshee. And the lie counteracted the truth, and I got the Judge to put down the impudent German in a conclusive pamphlet, where he prove they were not temples at all; and here we are in them, you and I."

"But does the Rajah know of them?"

"Not he. What does he know about devilry? There are but three or four whe do know. The secret has been an heirloom to us. Our old enemies found out that this was an ugly place to attack. The power which these caves give me is enormous. You have doubtless seen Pelissier, Marshal of France?"

Roland said, laughing, that he had heard of him.

"Did he find that caves and Arabs would be too much for him? Did he build them up with the Arabs inside? Was he a good general? Hah! We know the value of well−provisioned caves; so we will call them, in future, casemates. Will you see them for curiosity?"

They were curious enough, without doubt; but Roland cared little about them. The Nawab led him on through arcade after arcade, until a glimmer of light was before them.

It was a little slit in the limestone rock, covered on the outside with creeping shrubs. Peeping out he saw the whole town of Belpore laid out below him, and the native lines about four hundred yards away at their feet.

He did what he very seldom did; he uttered a loud oath. "Why," Roland said, "you might make the lines and the town impossible of occupation here by one solitary gun."

Nawab was amused immensely. "Were my forefathers," he said, "or did they build Attock? Did they give you trouble in your conquest of India? I think they gave you some. Your life is utterly in my hands at this moment, Roland Evans. Here is a loaded revolver, and I could shoot you down like a dog. I could leave your body here, and by a word have your brother and your friend murdered, and the whole game begun with an immense chance of success. I could outbid the Rajah, or make friends with him, leaving the responsibility on *him*, and securing myself a freedom in case of failure. Why do I not do it?"

"Ah, why?" said Roland; "your reason?"

"Because I am with you— because I am with you, body and soul. Why did you and the Colonel speak of me as you did when your brother began to make friends with me? Treat us like gentlemen; we are, in our way, as fine gentlemen as you are."

"Well, there has been a great mistake about that," said Roland; "but at the present moment I beg to remark that Dean and Adams' revolvers, used theatrically for oratorical purposes, are uncommonly likely to go off; so if you will be kind enough to hand me that one, I shall be much obliged."

The Nawab laughed again, and by passage after passage they came to the upper air, in another little garden, an alumbagh, and the Nawab, turning to Roland, said, "What do you think of me now?" meaning with regard to his defences.

Roland understood him to mean, what did he think of him personally, and he answered, "I think you a very good fellow, but weak in your intellect."

"That certainly," said the Nawab, with ready good−nature. "If we had not been weak in our intellects, you never would have had India. We fight as well as you do, or nearly as well; but we have no brains. Yet you are our lords and masters. And to tell you the truth, I wish you to continue so. Now come on and see my wife."

"Is she Hindoo?" asked Roland.

"No, she is French—Christian— Papists, I think you call her sect. From Algeria. She has been trying to point out to me the differences between your sect of Christianity and hers. But being, as you just said, as one deprived of understanding, I have not made it out at all. If we both live to the age of Fatoor (who, you will remember, was the Fakir of Dinosapore, and who lived to the age of 840 years, and is, consequently, confounded with the Jew's Methuselah), she may possibly make me understand the differences between the Christian sects; for the present I am in the dark. I sit and make electrical kites while she explains."

"You are a quaint fellow, Nawab," said Roland, laughing.

"Not so quaint as you, though," said the Nawab. "You are what my wife would call 'Devil's−own−quaint.' You English, she says, are all mad, and there's no doubt about it."

"Why are we mad?"

"Why are you here? Could you not let us go to the devil our own way? What brought you here? You are all

mad, and I am the maddest of all madmen because I love you. Depart, you English, and leave me and the Rajah to settle scores. I will found a dynasty which shall last my lifetime, and I will build a city and a tower whose top shall reach to heaven." And then he made a low and vulgar remark about a great living potentate, which any gentleman would die sooner than repeat.

"Never mind *him*, or the Tower of Babel, or the confusion of tongues. You leave French politics alone. The French Emperor will not trouble *you*. If he discounts his bills at a high premium, and leaves his son to pay the principal, it is no business of ours. What I want to know is this— have you lost caste in any way by marrying this French lady?"

"Not a bit," said the Nawab. "Not in the slightest degree. I will tell you the truth. This lady was courted, spoken to, what you call it, by the Rajah, and she hates the Rajah. I, loving European manners, fall in love with her, and propose. She insists at once that all the other ladies be banished. I consent at once. I say to her, 'Madame, you are worth all the women in all the world; I want a trusted friend, in you I found her;' and she consents, but the priest of her faith could not marry her to me.

"I represent to him that he should. That Madame (a religious woman) desires it. I tell you, my dear Roland, that he would not have one word to say to us. He says I must be baptize, I dare him to attempt it. I am not Christian, my Roland, though I love Christians. She rebel and I rebel, and she quotes the example of Ajuk Khan married to a Nubian Christian, which marriage was allowed by the Pope's emissaries. Of that of course you know. [Roland did not.] So in the end my wife had in a German Lutheran missionary, 'for he is a Christian,' she said, and we were marry. And she what you call Papist, insisted on what she the Anglican ritual, for he would not use the Papist, and he said in his ritual, 'For richer, for poorer, till God does us part.' And I thought that good. And it shall be so between me and my wife. The poor girls are provided for. It is past. It is gone. There is no more of them. I have a wife now, 'For richer, for poorer, till death does us part.' You fools, you English, you have abolished the suttee of the wife for the husband, you have only introduced the suttee of the husband for the wife. You have given us a great gift, my friend."

Roland bowed his head. Singularly enough, he of all people broke down and got hysterical. Climate one will suppose. He "God knows I am doing suttee now."

"I know," said the Nawab. "But tell us, is it Mary Maynard Ethel?"

"Why how could you doubt?" said Roland. "How did you know?"

"Never mind," said the Nawab; "is it Ethel?"

"Of course it is," said Roland. "But— "

"Never mind that little word," said the Nawab. "She is Jim Sahib's sister. I said so. See here. My wife reads the Hebrew Scriptures, and she reads of a love surpassing that woman. That love I have for James Mordaunt. And all this Indian hell shall rise from its depths against us; but if you will be my friend, we will beat it. And you shall have the honour. And you shall go home to Jim's sister, and say, 'Jim is kill, and Eddy is kill, and the poor silly Nawab is kill, but I am come home with my glory to marry Ethel;' you shall see all that. But you must be secret. Now we will come and visit my wife."

Mrs. Nawab, as Eddy and Jim persisted in calling her, was a nice, quiet, clever little Frenchwoman. She declined to sit cross−legged, but sat on a rocking−chair. I beg to remark that I am back in my narrative, and at the point where we take her up she was merely gossiping with Eddy and Jim Mordaunt, while Roland and the Nawab were in the caverns.

She could talk English, this Mrs. Nawab; talk it a little too plainly, not measuring the value of her words.

"I am glad to receive you two Englishmen. Mr. Evans [to Eddy], you are very ugly, but your face is good. Mr. Mordaunt, you are very handsome, but you look cruel. Did you ever murder anyone, for example?"

"Heaps and heaps," said Jim, "in imagination."

And so they talked, laughing at the mistakes in one another's language for an hour or two in the cool white piazza, and they had coffee, which Madame herself brewed, and they had pipes, and enjoyed themse1ves immensely, and were very innocent, amusing, and talkative indeed.

Now, be it remembered, that I am not in any way defending these good people's doings. I am only trying to say how things went. Among his Anglicanisms, the Nawab had started a low, disreputable, long, English clay pipe, such as you see laid in heaps on the table in the smoking−room of English pot−houses, what we used to call, as young men, a long churchwarden. This he had smoked so long that he had coloured the bowl all up one side; and

it now occurred to Madame, who was an old Algerian campaigner, that she must put aside her own hookah, and smoke her husband's pipe.

He objected, but she pleaded for it, and so prettily that they all laughed, and at last he gave way. He filled it for her, and she lit it and smoked, while the others smoked cheroots, and they all sat cross−legged, chatting.

Allan Gray, arriving at the Captain's compound and asking for Eddy, was directed that Sahib Edward Evans was at that same time of speaking in the palace of the Nawab of Belpore. Pursuing him to that abode of heathenesse, and finding his way through nearly innumerable servants, he discovered his pet sitting cross−legged in a row with a heathen gentleman. Rather objectionable Roland, intensely objectionable Jim, and a French lady, sitting cross−legged on a carpet on the ground, smoking away at a long churchwarden pipe.

He was so unutterably horrified that he was stricken dumb. He could say nothing at all. He was received with a very noisy hail, and every symptom of welcome; as for Eddy, he fairly ran into his arms, and was rather surprised at the coldness of his reception. James and Roland were also most friendly.

As for the Nawab, there was nothing he would not have done for him; but Allan was like a dog at a fair. Being for the first time in his life brought face to face with a real heathen, and finding him a most affectionate gentleman, he was exceedingly gawky and lost. Madame tried a little badinage on him, and would have had him take her pipe: but she only horrified him the more.

He seemed at last to have got into a land utterly forgotten of God, and given over to the devil—a land which seemed to him to have corrupted, lowered, nay, even blackguardised, such very pure and kindly people as Roland and Eddy. It was an intolerable matter.

To find an intolerable thing, with Allan, was the very same thing as setting to work to mend it. The odds were enormous against him. He could not speak the language, but his duty was to him singularly clear. He must preach the Gospel in this land in *any* language. Through want of faith we had lost the gift of tongues; through faith we might regain it. He would preach the pure Gospel in English, be the consequences what they may.

Alas, poor lad! There are various ways of doing God's work, and yours was one. Some cursed you for their ruin, and curse you yet. You yourself thought that you had failed. Yet as my brother says,

“Not all who seem to fail, have failed indeed,
What though the seed be east by the wayside,
And the birds take it—Yet the birds are fed.”

Perhaps there is a Pariah or two at Belpore who remembers the kindly, gentle, young enthusiast. At any rate he brought on the cataclysm, which was well avenged, that any one may preach the Gospel now at Belpore.

Chapter 51.

There was perfect silence still, and the dawk came most regularly. The Parsees had gone round to every one instantly, after the departure of the European troops, and persuaded them to make their wills, and send them to Europe; and no one laughed at them. A Calcutta paper, however, got hold of the fact, and wrote a screaming leader on it, a real slasher, the sort of thing which would make you split your sides with laughing. Everything was quite quiet; there was no danger at all.

Allan seemed to speak very little to any of his compatriots except Eddy. With the others it was merely good−day, and good−by. To Eddy he talked a good deal, and they cross−examined Eddy, but Eddy said that Allan only talked to him about his soul, so they forebore. And in reality Eddy spoke merely the plain truth. Allan merely talked to him about the state of his soul, which he thought immensely unsatisfactory. He was perfectly silent to every one about his great scheme. He had got a rascally old Brahmin for a moonshee, and he was learning all about caste. Eddy's soul could wait until he had done his best to blow the British Empire to pieces.

Our friends had their little mess still, and talked over their neighbours.

“That is a queer fellow, that half−brother of yours,” said the Doctor. “Does he drink?”

“Drink!” said Roland, “he is a teetotaller!”

“The pupil of his eye is very much enlarged,” said the Doctor. “Did you ever hear of a place called Hanwell?”

Roland had heard of it.

“Ah!” said the Doctor, “it is a nice easy distance from London, and extremely well−conducted. Claverhouse, the claret is with you.”

“Why did he come here?” asked Claverhouse, pointedly to Eddy.

Eddy blushed scarlet, and said that he did not know. Whereas he knew perfectly well, for Allan had told him that very morning something which gave him the clue to Allan's behaviour. Allan, in his self−justifying way, had put all sorts of reasons before Eddy for his extraordinary expedition to India. The state of the Hindoos, the state of Eddy's soul, tanks, railways, everything. But at last he had let out the very real truth that he did not care for life without Ethel, and that he had discovered that Ethel did not care for life without Roland.

The little fellow dared not speak. There was danger and wrath abroad, and anything might happen. Roland and Allan were rivals. It was terrible. But a curious thing is that the honest little lad trusted Allan as well as he did Roland, only he dared not speak.

“I wish,” said the Judge, “that he had gone anywhere else. You will forgive me saying, my dear Evans, that the man is a dreadful bore.”

“He cannot have bored you much, Judge,” said Eddy.

“Child! Child!” said the Judge, “he has shortened my very worthless life. What have I done that he should look up all my decisions in important cases, and tell me that I am an unjust judge? I am nothing of the kind. He says to me also, that the conquest of India was the grossest act of piracy ever committed, and that if I loved myself so far as to partake of the spoils, I might at least give just judgments. I always thought I was so very just.”

“He has been at me too,” said Captain Claverhouse. “He said that we had no right whatever to annex this territory. The only object of war, he argued, was to spread Christianity. Whereupon I referred him to the history of Japan, where a few ships would have saved the missionaries. He shifted then, for he has no education or little, and said that he meant Protestant Christianity; the Protestants were never aggressive. I mentioned Silesia to him, and with most singular honesty he confessed that he knew nothing of that small piece of annexation. He is a good fellow, but he wants grinding.”

“But he is a sort of turnip−ghost at a christening,” argued the Doctor. “Why did he come here? He will play the deuce with us before he has done with us. Of all times in all creation, for such a dissociated radical to appear. Never mind, my dears, I have seen death too often to fear him.”

“Now look you here, Doctor,” said the Captain, “we shall pull through this, only it is a great pity that there is not one with influence over this turnip−ghost missionary of a man, to restrain him.”

At this moment the Nawab, who was sitting at the lower end of the table, broke out into a roar of laughter. Jim had been telling the Nawab, in a stifled whisper, how they had beaten the London Rowing Club at Shrewsbury

regatta; and the joke hit the Nawab. It was impossible, of course, for Captain Claverhouse to be angry with a royal prince who had all their lives in his hand, still he might scold Jim.

“Mr. Mordaunt, I wish you would not make the Nawab laugh just as I was speaking—I really——” but he said no more, for Roland's white hand was laid suddenly on his chest, meaning “silence,” and Roland walked softly down the room, and sitting beside the Nawab, put his arm affectionately over his shoulder, in schoolboy fashion.

As for Captain Claverhouse, he was so paralysed by what he saw at the door immediately behind the Nawab, that I go at once to other authors to say how scared he was. But I have no author who will help me in any way. For extreme fantasticisms the best authorities I know are Rabelais and the late Artemus Ward. But Rabelais can seldom be quoted (having lived before the time when men found out that you could have humour without dirt—that is to say, 300 years before Dickens and Thackeray), and Artemus Ward is at times feeble and inconsecutive. Artemus Ward may talk of sky−blue fits (which, by the way, is Dickens'), but he could not rise to the level of the American Revolution, any more than Dampmartin could rise to the level of the French. Captain Claverhouse, had he found his tongue, would have scolded like Dampmartin. But he was simply stunned and held his peace. While Roland kept his strong arm tightly round the Nawab's neck.

This was the eve of the Indian mutiny. The most reckless, causeless, stupidest revolution ever planned. Like all ill−considered and causeless revolutions, it failed. It was evil against good, and good won. Think, sir, what India would be now, had the revolution succeeded. Come, sir, think of that.

In revolutions—I am young, but I have watched many—you raise the devil. For example, June, 1848. The devil was raised here at Belpore in 1857. The devil was the Rajah of Bethoor. The man who raised him was the young religionist, Allan Evans.

Chapter 52.

For behind the back of the unconscious Nawab, who had Roland's strong arm round his shoulder, stood the Rajah himself, and Allan Gray behind him.

The astonishment of the whole room was expressed by a profound silence. No one was in the least degree up to the occasion, or able in any way to form an idea of what had happened. The Nawab was the last to see him, and only saw him after he heard his voice, and then he rose and confronted him.

The Rajah and the Nawab were both fine and handsome men, though the Rajah was puffy with vice and high−feeding: had there been one of those sudden and swift Asiatic encounters, either man might have gone down in an instant. James Mordaunt was standing partly between them, with a view of stopping hostilities, when the Doctor pulled him by the sleeve, and whispered, “You are hampering your man;” on which Jim removed.

In reality, the Doctor saw most plainly that, in case of a *fracas* between the two Indians, the Rajah would most certainly put his sword through James's body, and apologise for it afterwards. But it was not to the Nawab that the Rajah spoke, he addressed the whole company:—

“Gentlemen, there seems to be some misunderstanding and mistrust about me. I have come quietly, an Indian gentleman among English gentlemen, to give explanations, to remove all doubts and difficulties, and to reassure myself about our friendly relations. This gentleman has consulted much with me, and we have exchanged opinions, and are agreed. Gentlemen, you are in danger here.”

“We are perfectly aware of it, Rajah,” said Captain Claverhouse. “Who is that behind you? not Mr. Evans, whom God seems to have misguided, but that attendant of yours, who has sat down in that chair by the door. Mordaunt, go and collar that fellow, and kick him out. What the devil does the fellow mean by sitting down in the presence of' a British officer without leave? Are you come here to insult us, Rajah?”

Jim proceeded on his errand instantly, but the young man had vanished. The Rajah, turning to see the result, only saw Jim, coolly standing with his back against the door, and he turned very pale, but retained his self−possession entirely. His race knows no fear of death. He thought that his time was come, and, beast, liar, treacherous, cruel hound as he was, he knew from the traditions of his forefathers how to die. We, of all people, should allow that to the Brahmins.

He looked quietly at Claverhouse and Roland, and laid his hand quickly upon his sword—a pretty, dangerous, little Liege toy. Roland understood him at once. “You are as safe as if you were in your own zenana, sir. James, come away from that door.”

He knew that he was safe now. “By” (some of his gods), he thought, “these fools! If I had one of them up at my palace, he should not get off like this. Let me try them on their own ground.”

“You teach us Asiatics a good lesson,” he said boldly. “We are enemies. If at this moment, I had one of you in my palace, he should never leave it alive. You are pirates, dacoits, and villains. You had no right in India. Your wrongs and your robberies here would make hell move. Your Hastings was a robber, whom you acquitted; your Clive was a robber, who, utterly unable to bear the burden of his sins, killed himself. I am your bitter enemy, but I am safe, because I am among English gentlemen. I am in your power! will any one raise a hand against me? Not one. *I* know you.

“I have trusted myself among you, because I wish to make friends with you, and to save you. I desire my rights, which are entirely incontestable, no more. I have explained my case to this English gentleman, and he agrees with me.”

Eddy ran quickly up to Allan Gray, and caught his hand. “Allan! Allan!” he said, “you have not been listening to this man?”

“You are a fool,” said Allan. “He is prepared to hear the truths of Christianity; what is more, allow them to be preached, in a bold and free manner, as they should have been preached before.”

The Padre bounced up, and cried out, “Have you been preaching against caste in the native lines, under the protection of this man?”

“I have, sir,” said Allan; “and I glory in it.”

“Then may the good God forgive you our blood. I am an old man, and it does not matter. But these bonny,

innocent boys! Well, well. I stayed here and lost my wife, and I said to myself, 'I will make rupees for the little ones'; but *they* all died; and I said, 'I will stay on here, and do what I can among these heathen, for Christ's sake, that I may meet my wife and my little ones in heaven.' A selfish motive. Has any poor native wanted a rupee while I had one? Am I not poor? Have I not tried to rival the Jews and Parsees in their charities without their means? Am I not a broken old man? Have not Hemmetz, the Lutheran, Faoli, the Papist, and I, worked together here for years, trying to bring them to the dogmas of Christianity by the example of our lives? Have we not agreed to leave caste alone? and now here is a new−corner, who has brought the house of so many years' building about our ears!"

"Don't preach, Padre," said the Doctor, quietly. "Mr. Allan Evans, have you any idea of what you have been doing?"

"Yes, sir. I have been carrying Christ's banner into quarters where it should have been carried before."

"You have been carrying the devil's banner, sir. That man has instigated you to do the only one thing you should have left alone. He has fooled you to the top of your bent, sir. He has advised you to do what he wants done. Our blood is on your head. You had better never have been born than have come here."

"What did I tell you?" said the Rajah.

"You were right, sir," said Allan. "We will come away."

And they turned away.

"One moment, Allan," cried Eddy. "Do not go with that man. I beg of you, by your old love for me, do not go with that man."

"I came here for love, and I find a brothel. Those I loved and trusted gone from their faith, their purity, their religion. Ministers ashamed of the Gospel they vowed to preach; men educated as Roland and you have been, sitting with heathens and Papist women, with the surroundings of a low English pot−house. [Alas, for Madame Nawab's pipe!] I have done with my countrymen, my relations, and life. I shall die, but I shall die preaching God's own Gospel. Good−by, for ever, Eddy."

That leal little fellow, whom Ethel would never appreciate, was not going to let him go like this. He dashed at him, and cried, "Allan, you are utterly deluded," and cast himself between Allan and the door.

Not one of the others moved. Eddy got his back against the door, but Allan scornfully moved towards it, and laid his hand on Eddy's shoulder.

"Allan, by the old Shrewsbury days, by our old Field Lane days, by every pleasant hour we have had together, stay with your countrymen in this dark hour. Let race prevail with you, Allan; let blood prevail with you. Do not leave our brother *now*. You are misguided; you are mad. That man is a dog and a villain. Ask Roland—"

Ask Roland! the favoured lover of Ethel. Oh, Eddy! what evil spirit caused you to raise the devil into that powerful, uplooking, bloodhound face, and those bloodhound eyes?

The dykes which Allan had raised round the furious tide of passion which was in him, by religion, by order, by rule, broke down here at once. The man was never a *sound* man. There had always been depths of potential ferocity in him, deeper and fiercer than ever were in Jim Mordaunt; and he had had wit enough to know it, and like a fine and wise fellow as he was he had kept them in order. But at this moment, at Eddy's unhappy allusion to Roland, added to the excitement of the situation and climate, his habits of life broke down suddenly. He seized Eddy, and with the strength of a lion cast him against the Rajah, uttering a loud and furious curse against Roland.

If Aunt Eleanor could have seen her work now, she would be inclined to drown herself. Her one folly, that of throwing Allan against Ethel to plague him, caused this. That Allan, at the mere mention of Roland's name, had gone mad, and had cast poor Eddy against the Rajah. "Be sure thy sin will find thee out." Poor lady, she had to dree *her* weird.

Eddy was sent staggering against the Rajah, and the Rajah was sent staggering against the stone door−post, against which he fell, cutting his forehead deeply. The last seen by any European eye, save two, of that Rajah was seen now. A tall, very handsome man, in green velvet and gold, with white trousers. Deadly pale, with the blood dripping over his face, which he wiped with a French cambric pocket−handkerchief, bordered with lace. Before he followed out Allan Gray, he turned to the party, and said, very quietly—

"I am sorry that this interview, meant so well on my part, should have terminated so abruptly. It was entirely my clumsiness. I hope that Ensign Evans has not been hurt. You know as well as I do that a struggle is coming, and you know on which side I am. My claim to be Jaghire of Bethoor has been refused by your parliament, and I

am going to test the power of the British empire. I am the guest of Englishmen, and I am safe. I therefore warn you that the lines will be fired to−morrow night."

So, with the bloody cambric handkerchief in his hand, he bowed himself out into the dark Indian night, never to be seen again by any European eye, save Allan Gray's, and another.

Eddy was standing against the door, in blue and gold, and white trousers, with his sword−belt looped up, ready for evening parade. The others had risen, and were looking at the doorway, but they could not see Eddy. The image left on their eye was that of a tall man, in green and gold, who had passed out at the door, waving a bloody cambric handkerchief behind him.

Dramatic and fantastic. Well, as I said before, if the Indian Mutiny was not *that*, it was nothing.

Chapter 53.

The Rajah was gone. “Shut the door, Eddy, and come here,” said Roland, sharply. “Claverhouse, here is the devil to pay sooner than I thought. Do you really believe that that rascal has egged my unhappily ignorant brother on to preach against caste?”

“Of *course* he has,” said the Padre. “How can you, so clever, ask such a question?”

“Will they be up to−morrow night, then?” said Roland.

“No, they won't be up to−morrow night,” said Captain Claverhouse. “Were you ass enough to believe that that fellow would give us warning? They will be up *to−night*, man. The moon will be up in two hours; they will therefore move in one hour and a half.”

“Why not before?” asked Roland.

“Because they will want to distinguish Indians from Europeans; and the lines will not burn brightly for above half an hour.”

“What are we to do, sir?” said Roland.

“I will give you my experience now, if you will give me your brains afterwards. Your troopers are in bed by now, for it has been hot. Go down, Mordaunt and you, to quarters and awaken them silently in the dark.”

“Yes, sir, but the native servants?”

“Ah, that is a bother. Sham drunk and sing a loud song. Make believe that you are drunk, and are going to—(a part of the English establishment in India which I will call 999, Queer−street), and sing * * *”

“I am afraid we could not do that, sir,” said Roland.

“Law, I thought that you University fellows were up to anything,” said Captain Claverhouse.

“Jim and I, sir,” said Roland, “are two of Doctor K—'s boys, and I don't think we could do that. The Doctor might hear of it. We will sham drunk and be noisy, if you please.”

“Well, that will do. Tell the men to be ready to saddle at a moment's notice. Our object is to get the English officers to the Nawab's palace in time. Your duty in future will be to give me your brains, of which I have few. At present it is to protect the Europeans to the Nawab's palace. You and Mordaunt go to the men in their beds, and get them ready. I trust nearly all to you, for cavalry in the dark is what no man dare face.”

“What will be the signal, sir?”

“Oh, our bugles. We shall be down amongst you directly. But we must clear the bungalows of the women and children. Your troop must protect our rear. How soon can you get your men in the saddle?”

“In three or four minutes, I think,” said Roland. “It is a great pity that the command of the troop has fallen on such a subaltern as myself.”

“It is a piece of God's good mercy,” said Claverhouse, “that Lummers and Rounders fell sick. Why I would go to the devil after you. You come of the breed which conquered India. Now Mordaunt and you go to your sleeping troopers, and wake them in this way. Put your hand on their foreheads, and they will awaken silently. If you shake them by the shoulder, some one of them will cry out. Go off, you two boys, and do as I tell you.”

“Where *did* you learn these details?” said Roland.

“In the Khyber Pass.”

“But you could not have been in the army then.”

“As a drummer I was. Never mind my antecedents. I rose from the ranks. This is not a time for long stories. Cut away. At the sound of our fifes and drums look after our rear. Cut away, Mordaunt. God go with you.” And so they went to the dark night's work.

“You are quite ready for us, Nasvab?” said Claverhouse.

“I have been ready 250,000 years,” said the Nawab.

“Then would you mind going home?”

No. It appeared that the Nawab emphatically declined to do anything of the kind. “He be devil, they all be devil; by devil I shall not go home. I have provide everything, and I have no fight. I want fight, and I shall not go home, by damn.”

Chapter 54.

Measures well taken, but too late for some. Eddy, Claverhouse, and two other officers were just following Roland out of the door, to get their men hurriedly together, and get their women and children out of the bungalows, when a Company's officer, a young man of great promise—just married—ran into them, and hurriedly asked for a pistol.

“Are they up so soon?” said Claverhouse.

“Yes, yes; lend me your revolver.”

Claverhouse did so. The young officer put it to his own ear, fired it off, and fell dead across the mess−table.

Eddy drew back shuddering and deadly white, but Claverhouse said loud and firmly to him, “Evans! Steady!” and Eddy was perfectly steady at once.

“Why has he done that?” whispered Eddy, aghast.

“I suspect they have murdered his bride while he was away from her on duty,” said Claverhouse. “Blow up, bugles! a hundred and sixty Englishmen against all hell!”

The bugles woke the strange, ominous stillness of the night, with the assembly. Roland's trumpet was heard in reply, a sheet of flame shot up from the native lines, and nearly the most ghastly and fearful thing in the history of our empire was begun.

Roland and Jim had got their men together and mounted, and went at a sling trot down the long dusty road, past the piece of jungle where the moonshee was murdered. The fire before them blazed brighter and brighter, lighting up the road clearly. The moon was down as yet, but there was light enough for them.

Roland was particularly anxious not to get this jungle in his rear without support. He halted there for one instant, and but for one, for he heard Claverhouse's jolly roar behind him, “Go on, Evans, we are here.”

They slung on again, it was light enough now, but they went cautiously. The first person they met was an English lady, hurrying on a child by the hand, and carrying another. She stopped for a moment and explained hurriedly to Roland that the child she carried was dead, but that the Sikhs had saved the one she was leading, and that the Sikhs were close behind her. She was barefooted, simply clothed in a long white night−dress, spotted with the blood of the dead child, and she had thrown round her neck, in her unutterable confusion and horror, the strap of an old Scotch fishing−creel, which bumped against her shoulders as she ran barefooted along the sandy road.

Next they met three officers' wives coming as fast as they could, two were leading a third along. One of the leaders was Peggy O'Dowd, the other Mrs. Kirk. The young woman they led was the bride of the man who had shot himself on the mess−table. And she was laughing, and singing her part in Acis and Galatea, which she had learnt two years before in the Philharmonic Society of Dublin.

They had met a little child in its bedgown, all alone. And it said that the men had beaten its ayah, but that the havildar Ben Allar had sent it down the road to ask its way to the house of the Nawab. He told Roland also, that he had lost his puppy, and would doubtless have entered into other details, but Roland had the opportunity of giving him into the hands of two native women flying along the road, who brought him to the Nawab's.

You may thus, if you are a man with the ordinary feelings of an Englishman, guess what was the temper of Roland as he approached the lines of those pampered mercenaries. But before he got dangerously near them, he found a little army approaching him, and he halted and challenged.

A cheery English voice cried out, “Don't charge, Evans, if that is you, we are the Sikhs, Christians, Eurasians, and Europeans. We have all the women and children which we can get.”

It was a captain of a Native regiment who spoke.

“My dear soul,” said Roland, “we left you there too long.”

“Well,” said Captain Morton, “we could not have come away before,” which may sound prosaic, but which was perfectly true.

“Are there any left we can rescue?” asked Roland.

“I think not,” said the E.I.C.S. Captain. “We were not prepared for this business to−night; we were very carefully put off our guard. All we can save I believe we have got here. Can we pass them on to your infantry?”

“We can escort them back,” said Roland. “I suppose it is no use going on.”

"Well," said Morton, "it is no *use* certainly, our officers are all killed. But yet, but still—"

"I do not understand you," said Roland.

"Well, we shall all be dead soon, and a week or two sooner or later does not much matter. Could not you detach a King's officer to convoy these people to the rear, to your head−quarters, or even to the infantry, which you say is in your rear? I have twenty Sikhs who will follow me to the devil, and that, with your men, will make up eighty. We *may* die now; on the other hand, we may not. But it seems to me that we cavalry shall be of small use in the defence of the Nawab's palace. Is not now the time to sacrifice ourselves?"

"Would you explain further?" said Roland.

"Certainly," said Morton. "I have been long in India, and I think this is the beginning of a great crisis. Now is the time for a lesson to them. The odds against us are not great. We are eighty men to their two thousand. Come, sir, I tell you plainly, it rests in your hands to assist in the saving of India, or to assist in sending back her history for a hundred years."

"I quite think so," said Roland, quietly. "But I wish to know our chances of administering chastisement."

"Bring your troop and the Sikhs round this bit of jungle in the darkness, fall on them, and then ride home."

"But," said Roland, "I am bound to take care of these poor lads who follow me. We must pass this piece of jungle again, and we can be cut to pieces by a flank fire of musketry. Any officer could point *that* out."

"Yes," said Morton, "but can't you see that the Sepoys have cut all their officers' throats, and that they have not got any officers? It is to my mind extremely possible that we shall live through it. And just think of the lesson."

"You speak wisely," said Roland. "I will do it. You can depend on your Sikhs."

"They have eaten our salt," said Morton, proudly. "Remember Chillianwallah."

Yes, it was all well enough, Ethel would love him better than ever now. She would tear her hair a little perhaps, and she would be cross to Aunt Eleanor, and time would go on, but she would know that he loved her, and that he died worthy of her. Morton was right. This was the beginning, and a lesson was wanted. One thing he could do: he could save her brother. All hopes of getting alive out of the hell before him were dead. Yet Jim might be saved.

"Cornet Mordaunt."

Jim came up and saluted.

"Cornet Mordaunt, the troop is about to advance rapidly to the front, into the native lines. You are ordered to escort the stragglers back to the rear of the infantry, and put yourself under the orders of the Captain commanding."

To which Jim, God bless him, poor fellow, said, "I will see you — first."

"This is flat insubordination, sir, in the face of a mutiny about to grow to a revolution."

"Never mind those long words," said Jim. "Come, Roley, don't be a fool. Think of the old four−oar, the Unconquerables. What would the Doctor say, what would Aunt Eleanor say, if after so long I left you now? Roley, don't be a fool. Do you mean to say that you propose to send back to Ethel a disgraced and dishonoured brother? Why, my good Roley, I would sooner die than face Ethel, Meredith, and my brother, if I went back. Come, sharp is the word, old fellow. They will see us directly. Cut away."

Roland gave the word of command, and they rode away round the jungle in fours. Roland and Morton heading the troop, and Jim riding on the flank, between the junction of our men and the Sikhs. They went off at a sling trot, and they never altered their pace till the end.

What those unutterable devils, our pampered mercenaries, had been doing that night under the advice and guidance of the Rajah, is not to be told here. Causeless, aimless, brutish, shameless. They thought they had won. The bungalows were sacked, the fire of the lines was dying out, the late waning moon was rising over the town as if to see the end of it all; when in the ears of the brutalised and drunken revellers there arose the sound of the clanking of the British cavalry.

In the midst of the sin, and the smoke, and the din, came Roland, riding calmly, with sixty young Englishmen behind him, and twenty good Sikhs behind them.

Roland gauged the power of the Indian mutiny from this moment. He saw that they had no leader. He had conceived that it was death to come here. So it would have been had there been one solitary Orsini among them. In the midst of all their amorphous fury and wickedness, the sight of the old scarlet, gold and red, was enough to paralyse them. A more desperate deed of valour than Roland's was seldom done. He had eighty men, and he rode

deliberately into the midst of two thousand infuriated mercenary mutineers, and not one man of them dared show his musket.

"Don't stop," said Morton, eagerly. "We shall get out of this without bloodshed. Who would have thought it!"

"I think I will stop once," said Roland. "The fellows would not miss their lesson."

"I beg you not, Evans. I beg and pray you not. I urged you to come here to−night because I thought that the end would be death. I never dreamt, with all my experience, that the day would be so demoralised. Man, man, at this very moment you are half way between heaven and hell. Heaven! look at that. I thought they would not let us go. Charge at the gallop, man!"

"We shall do it very well at the trot," said Roland. "It is only a rallying square, and the men are not loaded—they are only loading now."

They trotted steadily up to the square, and, as Roland said, the men were not loaded; but these few fought, and fought well, but were ridden down. Morton's horse was killed under him by a bayonet thrust, but Morton himself was uninjured, and hung on to Roland's right stirrup while Roland cut at the bayonets with his sword. The few men who had formed the rallying square had done their work, however, and dispersed.

The troop wore trotting, and the men were thrown into confusion by this very slight opposition. The Sikhs got mixed with the Europeans, and though perfectly brave, were very glad to get out of a dangerous embroglio.

"Well," said Roland, when they were opposite the patch of jungle where Jim's moonshee was killed, "who ever would have believed that? I never thought to have got out of that alive. I say, Jim. Where is Jim Mordaunt? Jim! Jim!"

He might have Jim−Jimmed till he was hoarse. The troop were all right, the Sikhs were all right; but there was no Jim.

And between Roland and Jim had arisen suddenly a barricade of half−burned rafters, with two thousand men behind it, impassable for cavalry. And the Rajah, in green, gold, and white, stood at the top of it for a moment, and saluted Roland courteously.

But Roland Evans was on one side of the barricade and Ethel's brother Jim on the other.

Chapter 55.

"Well done, Evans!" cried Claverhouse, running up. "Splendidly done, sir. The very thing to have done under any circumstances. You are a hero!"

"The idea was not mine, and it has been carried out so ill that I have lost my right arm. I have lost James Mordaunt."

There was dead silence. No one knew what to say. It was a supreme time.

"This is a very sad mishap. Can we do anything?"

"Dare you attack the lines with the infantry?" asked Roland.

Claverhouse said emphatically, "No!" and Morton said emphatically, "No!"

"Then," said Roland, "I suppose we had better move back on the palace, and prepare for defence." So they formed the infantry, and Eddy and the Nawab were quietly told of what had happened. Neither of them said one word.

Nothing further occurred worthy of remark that night; but when the Europeans were collected in the palace and were counted, thirty−four were missing, men, women, and children all told, and among them were James Mordaunt and Allan Evans.

The great outer gates were shut, and so began the siege of Belpore, now, with a dozen others, a matter of history. Our very first duty, however, is to follow James Mordaunt, who is in harder case than any of the others.

He had been looking quite carelessly, amused by the whole scene of the sulky rebels, when suddenly he saw a European face beside him, and saw that it was Allan Evans.

Jim was now only parallel with the advanced four of the Sikhs, and at a trot the slightest halt throws one behind. "Take my stirrup leather, Gray," he whispered to Allan, pausing for an instant. "Not like that, man; behind my knee, not before—so! I will get you out of the mess you have got us all into. Run, man, and never leave go of me."

"Run as quick as you can," whispered Jim. "We must catch up the Sikhs. By golly, we are too late! Good−by, Allan Gray. All is forgiven between us, but hold on like grim death, old boy. I won't leave you."

The Sepoys were between them and the Sikhs fifty deep, with bayonets in their hands. Jim, crying out once more, "Hold on, old boy, and let us go at them," put spurs to his horse, and Allan, quite unused to such rough play, let go and was swept down in the rush against them. Jim saw what had happened, and, after a glance behind, felt that he could do no more for poor Allan.

"So this is death," he said. "But they will be very sorry at Stretton for a time," and he rode straight and hard at the crowd before him.

His maddened horse, a furious young Romeo Australian colt, took him fairly and bravely into the mêlée. Bayonet squares have been broken certainly once or twice; notably at Herat the year before this; but in two seconds poor Jim's horse was dead with bayonet thrusts, never to see the long grey plains of Australia any more, and poor Jim was down, overpowered, but quite unwounded, never apparently to see the long brown sheets of heather on Longmynd any more.

His arms were tightly bound behind his back, and he had fought with such terrible ferocity that it was some time before he got breath to speak. When he had regained it, he saw a halvidar before him, and he said, "Halvidar, have my poor horse buried."

The halvidar only bowed his head, but Jim saw that it would be done. And catching the halvidar's eye for an infinitesimal part of a second, from that moment he began to think that there were certain men in the mutiny who were not there of their own accord. In another minute he was led bound before the Rajah.

Jim began the conversation instantly. "I beg, sir, that our interview may be private. I have something very particular to say to you. See, I am bound hand and foot, and I know that I must die. I am not going to upbraid or insult you in any way, as I have done before. Your revenge is perfectly complete. I submit. I only ask one favour as a dying man."

"If you can tell me how, in asking it, I can make your end more bitter, you will do me such a favour, that I will have you shot, instead of burning you alive," said the Rajah.

“What is the good of talking tiger like that?” said Jim. “You would not go so far as that. I know I must die, and if you burn me (which will be a bad precedent) I pray that I may be burnt without being stripped. Will you grant that?

The Rajah, curling his moustache, said, after nearly a minute, “Yes.”

“And if you shoot me, which, as a gentleman, you ought to do, you know, I hope that you will bury me at once, just as I stand.”

The Rajah demurred at this, and began to ask why.

“Because I have letters on me—letters which will make wrath with people who have never offended you.”

“Let me see them,” said the Rajah.

“Dare you come near a bound and disarmed man?” said James. “If so, come and open my tunic, and look at them. You can read English enough to know that they are not political; but only compromise a woman. The mere postmarks will show you that.”

The Rajah undid Jim's tunic, and then his shirt, disclosing his brave white breast. Round his neck hung a slight chain, and on it were two letters, the first postmark of which was “Church Stretton.”

He put them back again. I cannot say that I know enough of the Indian mind to say why he did so; but he looked at him steadily for a few moments, and then Jim said—

“If I pledge you my honour that those letters only compromise a woman you never heard of, will you let them die with me?”

“Yes,” said the Rajah; “you people of proper forms of civilisation have not learnt the great art of lying yet. Some are getting to understand its value. Yes, I will believe you.”

“And you will have me shot, old fellow, won't you? Don't burn me. It is so exceedingly nasty.”

“You shall be shot, assuredly,” said the Rajah. And Jim said—

“Thankee. You are a better fellow than I took you for. I say—”

The Rajah turned.

“Allan Evans, whom you have in your hands, I want to speak about him. Don't hurt him—he is mad. I say, sir, every nation spares mad people.”

“I will not hurt a hair of his head,” said the Rajah.

“I say, Rajah,” bawled Jim, “when am I to be worked off?”

“To−morrow morning,” said the Rajah, waving his hand. “I have no priest for you. Stay, is not Allan a priest?”

“Yes, he will do,” said Jim. “Send him to me. Good−by!” And the Rajah was gone. And Jim was put on horseback, and led off, and found himself soon in a dungeon of the Rajah's palace, thinking of his mother entirely now, and not of Mildred, and wondering very much whether the Doctor would be sorry, and thinking very deeply of all that he had heard in lecture about the necessity of Communion for sinners, and wishing very deeply that he could communicate now. We must leave our Jim in ill case, only to find him in worse.

The Rajah walked away with the halvidar who had looked on Jim. And the Rajah said to the halvidar, who was one of his nearly innumerable brothers, but the favourite, “I hope we shall not make a bad business of this. Why did not the men close on those cavalry to−night?”

“Because they were afraid.”

“Why were they afraid?”

“Because their officers were not with them.”

“Did you give the word of command?”

“Yes, and was laughed at in the face of the conquerors of India.”

“Why will they not follow native officers as well as these cursed English?”

“Because we have no native officers who are capable of handling even a battalion with decency. Instruct native officers in European tactics required for moving large bodies of men, and India would be lost to them in two years.”

“I wish they would do it,” said the Rajah.

“They are not such fools,” said the halvidar.

“Suppose we make a mess of it, after all?” said the Rajah.

“We shall certainly do so,” said the halvidar. “I told you so from the first.”

“But we are safe in the rear,” said the Rajah.

“With Lawrence, and 80,000 to 180,000 Sikhs ready for a burst on Bengal. Oh, yes, doubtless.”

“They will not fight for them,” said the Rajah.

“They held pretty close to them to−night,” said the halvidar.

“What would you do?” said the Rajah.

“Blow my brains out with a pistol,” said the halvidar.

“I suppose it will come to that; but I will have the lives of the Nawab and those English first. If the worst comes to the worst, you and I can get northward, into Nepaul, with the jewels. On our own bodies we can easily carry forty lacs. The sapphire and the emerald are worth forty lacs.”

“And where is the market?” said the halvidar.

“Oh, with the Russians,” said the Rajah. “They will buy *anything*. Alexandrofski would give double its price for the emerald, if he could only have the pleasure of saying at St. Petersburg that it had been bought from a Rajah, a rebel against the English, who had sent it through the hostile territory of Bokhara; which, by the way, I don't mean to do, because, if he buys it, he must send the money for it, and take it away on his own responsibility. I am not going to trust my jewels with either Khan or Ameer. You and I have a strong share of Mogul blood in us, you know, and that is what makes us such thundering thieves.”

“What shall we do to−morrow morning, your highness?” said the halvidar.

“I thought you said we were to blow our brains out.”

“I have altered my opinion.”

“Well, then, if I might hazard a remark, I should say, attack the Nawab at day−dawn. I am sick of affairs, and shall go to bed. I doubt we have made a mess of it.”

Chapter 56.

He most certainly had.

I must explain once more that the Nawab's palace was built on the farther side of a tall rock, overgrown with creepers and tropical vegetation, entirely obscured from the Rajah's palace, but communicating in every direction with the great caves of Belpore, forgotten by all but moonshees. There was, if you remember, one opening out of these caves towards the palace of the Rajah, the one which Roland had seen with the Nawab. The Rajah knew that the rock dominated his palace, but with that sleepy stupidity and ignorance of tactics which beat the mutineers, he had cared nothing for it.

He approached his palace at the head of a long cavalcade of torch−bearers, well watched, though he little dreamt it. As the blazing procession neared the palace−gate, there was a flash and a report about six hundred yards away, and looking up, a moving circle of light was seen to pause in the sky overhead, the corona round some saint's head, and then to drop rapidly on to the very roof of his palace. He had scarcely time to scream out an oath, when there was the roar of an explosion inside, mixed with the crash of broken glass, and the yells of wounded or terrified servants. They were shelling his palace from the temples of Belpore. From the sacred strongholds of the gods which he had worshipped so truly and so well, they were destroying the home of his delight, and the gods themselves sat, with their hands upon their knees, looking down upon the beauty and fury of Roland, and spake not one word, though he cried aloud to them, and cursed them and flattered them alternately.

One more shell, then another before day−dawn; they had guessed the angle well in the bright moon, and a hundred English hands were hard at work making new embrasures, which would be through the rock by morning. He could hear a blast go as he sat there dumbfounded. His palace was ruined. From this moment pity left the man's heart. From that moment he was a madman. He knew that in a few hours his palace would for the most part be untenable, unless he could storm the Nawab. He determined to begin the counter−siege the very next day.

They were not very long in their preparations. It would seem that they must win. There was nothing between two thousand good Indian soldiers with ten guns, and the British garrison, with the assistance of four hundred and fifty faithful native men, but the old high wall of the Nawab's palace. Even with eighteen−pounders they could make a breach in that, for there was not a gun mounted on it; they were fools, these English. They might shell our palace, but we would batter theirs.

Some said that there were earthworks inside the wall, which would have to be carried afterwards. There was a council of war over this matter, which came roughly to this. Who had seen them? Nobody of any consequence, it would seem. It now turned out that not one soul, as far as could be ascertained, of the general population, had been admitted within the back−gates for above six months. Certain Nautch−girls deposed and made oath, that a certain Jew, their impressario, had told them, when in good humour, that there was an earthwork inside there as big as the railway embankment at Belasapore. But their words seemed as idle tales. And even if there were?

They skirmished up to the old wall and tempted the besieged. Result, the silence of death in a lone place. The silence of the Australian desert round the solitary Wills was not deeper than the silence about that deep−arched teak−gate, when the bugle sounded the two long−drawn breves “Cease firing.”

It was ghastly. There was some devilish scheme in the minds of these English—*they* had ceased firing till then. But now once more, bang; crash the well−elevated mortars went on hurling the live vertical shells into that unutterable abomination, the palace of all delights of the Rajah; and it stands a draught−house to this day, with the cobra basking where the Nautch−girl had slept.

They maddened once more at the sound, and brought up their guns, mostly eighteen−pounders as it happened, and concentrated them on the gate. The roar and din of their own guns prevented them from hearing the other party firing, and when the gate was destroyed, after three hours, and they heard the guns of the besieged going still, they took heart, and fancied they dare not face them here, but would make their stand in an inner court.

There was a sudden, furious, and tumultuous rush through the gateway, their folly in attacking which ruined them more effectually than they would have been ruined otherwise. They poured in pell−mell and broke to right and left against an inner line of gabions and fascines, eight feet high, and perpendicular.

A few in the front saw what had happened, and cried out that they must retreat. The crowd of disorganised

Sepoys poured in still, a scarlet flood, through the black arch, spreading themselves right and left, and filling the space between the old wall and the earthworks. Native officers began to make it understood that they were in a trap, but it was utterly too late. Some few in the front, in sheer desperation, tried to get up the earthwork before them—did so, and fell dead by well−directed revolver shots.

On this little space, between the two lines, Roland and the Nawab had trained five nine−pounders in embrasure. It had been done some time now, but the Nawab had managed so well that no one had known it. At the very height of all the confusion Eddy stood on the top of the battery, and looking down on the struggling mass of men, the front of whom saw the danger, and the rear of which kept pushing on, he east his shako down amongst them, crying out, “Now, gentlemen, if you are ready, we are going to begin.”

Of the ghastly slaughter which followed it would be ill to speak. The guns immediately in front of the mutineers were loaded with nails and fragments of horse−shoes, made handily into cartridges and served rapidly. Those two which enfiladed the crowded mass of men were served with grape, and crossed fire with the others. Existence became impossible, and retreat nearly so; for forty picked marksmen with Enfields (dear old arm! how well we have loved thee), shattered in on the confused crowd thronging the gateway in the almost hopeless effort to escape.

It was a ghastly business. Above fifty were smothered, as people are smothered in the rush out of a burning theatre, in their attempt to escape by the gate. Three hundred others lay about; two hundred and eighty dead in the narrow space between them and the old wall. About eighty were groaning and screaming horribly. A rapid council of war was held.

Claverhouse said, “In God's name, Roland, let the men fire on them, and put them out of their misery.”

Roland said, “The men would not do it, mad as they are. I could not stand *that*. It would not do to tell in Europe.”

“Well, it is not La Guerre,” said Claverhouse, “but what *can* we do?”

Eddy had taken a man's ramrod, and carefully tied a white pocket−handkerchief on to it. He now waved it about between Roland and Claverhouse.

“The boy is right,” said Claverhouse; “but who is to carry it among these treacherous devils?”

“Why I, of course,” said Eddy.

“Dare you?” said Claverhouse.

“Dare I?” said Eddy. “Come, you shall give no word of command. Ensign Evans absent without leave. That is your report to the Horse Guards. It is all right, I tell you.”

Without waiting for another word, Eddy slipped down the bastion, and ran towards the now deserted gate.

They watched him go, a bright, pretty figure; blue, gold, and in white trousers, with his sword girt close up at his side; bareheaded, for he had thrown away his shako. He stepped lightly over dying and dead, and passed fearlessly out of the black gateway into the sunlight beyond for the *first* time.

“He is fearfully incautious,” said Roland, emphatically.

“He is all right,” said Claverhouse; “they won't harm him.”

It would seem as if Claverhouse was right. Eddy returned in a few minutes, with the Rajah beside him, followed by a crowd of unarmed natives, who began to remove not only the wounded, but the dead. The Rajah had also an improvised white flag, a puggery tied on a cane covered with beads, and they stood as representatives while the work went on.

Eddy bowed and scraped, with the pocket−handkerchief on his ramrod. The Rajah salaamed, and was very polite. Claverhouse and Roland watched him.

He counted the dead and the wounded until the very last of the wounded; then, as this man was being carried out, he spoke a few words to Eddy, and Eddy followed him to the gate. The Rajah uncovered the face of the dying man, and looked at it; and in the next instant a dozen men had overpowered Eddy, and carried him, struggling, out into the sunlight, beyond the gate for the *second* time.

There was no time to *think* even. Eddy was gone, and gone behind eight hundred ranged muskets. Double fortifications may tell in two ways.

Chapter 57.

Stretton was not the less beautiful and quiet, however, than heretofore. Not the less quiet, until one week when two catastrophes came together. Monday morning and Saturday night were between them, but the Mordaunts and Evanses always speak of them now as happening on the same day.

While the Nawab and Roland were shelling the Rajah's palace, and while the Rajah was doing the best he could, certain things had happened in Shropshire worthy of remark.

The Dean had proposed to Aunt Eleanor, on the grounds that they were very fond of one another, and that if they did not marry now they would soon be too old. And I regret to say that Aunt Eleanor returned for answer that “she had seen enough of that kind of thing, and was not going to make a fool of herself at her time of life.”

After this Ethel had a very hard time of it with her. Of course she could not know what had happened; but even Deacon Macdingaway told her, in confidence, that she had been to him about some geranium cuttings, and that she so sniffed and squiffed at him that he was certain something had gone wrong between her and the Dean.

Sunday morning, however, they all went to church to hear the Dean preach, even Deacon Macdingaway. For it got about that the native troops in Bengal were up and murdering their officers. And the Dean preached on it, and preached well. He thought, in conclusion, that it was the duty of every person capable of thinking, to consider whether or no we had done our duty by India. That it was our duty to pray for the widows and orphans of British officers and soldiers, and so on. A sermon of good common−places, excellent in their way. In the end of his sermon the man broke out, and he left some of his congregation sobbing.

“In the very depth of the darkness of this furious imbroglio, the extent of which no man can measure, the end of which no man can see, I, who preach to you, have three boys, more deeply dear to me than my own life. They were committed to me by a man I respect and reverence beyond most men, and I did my best by them. Clever, petulant, furious, fantastic, you know them; you can all say that of them. Innocent, kindly, brave; you can all say *that* of them. The dark cloud which has been hanging over India for so long has settled down now, and in the deepest, blackest night of it are Roland and Edward Evans and James Mordaunt.

“There is a dark night of deep, dim darkness which is coming in this land. A night in which a man shall feel for his fellow, and say, 'Where is he?' Our boys are in the midnight of it. I cannot ask you to pray for their souls, but I ask you to pray that their hands may be strengthened, and that they may die so that the heathen may say, 'Behold how these Christians love one another!'“

There are landowners and landowners. For centuries these Evanses and Mordaunts had been living among their people and doing their duty. One house was Whig and the other Tory; but they had minded the poor and done their duty by the land so long that the very cadets of the two houses were to them as their own flesh and blood. I express no opinions, but facts. It was so, and what is more, for good or for evil, it is so. You must make the best of it.

I never in my life heard any expression of opinion in an English church. There was one on this occasion in the churchyard, however. The Dean was mobbed for information; he had none. There were the great facts—that the Bengal Sepoys had risen, and that the garrison of India consisted of two cavalry and eighteen infantry regiments of Europeans, among a population of 180,000,000, and that these three boys, Roland, Jim, and Eddy, were in the thickest of the whole business.

It would have been ill for the Rajah had he been in the quiet English churchyard that evening, among the graves of the men of Trafalgar and Waterloo, of Seringapatam, Laswaree, and Sobraon. Give a people a history, O statesmen, and they are unconquerable for three generations. A “cry” is what one wants to keep a nation alive. As a political cry, “Reform” means just nothing. As a war−cry, “Eylau,” “Waterloo,” or “Island No. 10,” means less. Yet many things have been put through by the power of those cries.

We put through the Indian mutiny with no definite cry at all. It was amorphous, hideous, fantastic, not reducible to words. The poor folks in the Shropshire churchyard only swarmed after the Rector, and getting what information they could, waved their hands wildly, and wished they had been there. For not only Roland, Eddy, and Jim were there, but Bill, and Tom, and Harry, and the young man, whose name was disputed, who had married Stokes's girl Jane, and left her in the family−way.

But the Rajah of Bethoor did not know of all this. He had got Jim and Eddy, and his jewels, and in addition, a most tremendous licking. But the Rector and Aunt Eleanor could not know of this.

They separated from the villagers as soon as they could. Ethel and John Mordaunt were following them, but Aunt Eleanor turned to them and said—

"Go home, you two."

She said nothing but that; but they went.

When they were alone, she said—

"Why don't you put your whole heart into your sermon? You are as bald as can possibly be for twenty minutes, and then you burst out and speak like a man."

"One must spin it out in these country places," said the Dean (Rector).

"I don't see that," said Aunt Eleanor. "I hope, however, talking of spinning things out, that you have duly considered the foolish nonsense you spoke to me last week."

"Why?"

"Because if you were to repeat it, you would have a different answer."

"Eleanor, will you have me?"

"Yes, my beloved; my only hope; so dearly loved, and truly, for so many years. We have lost most of our lives, dear, yet some remains. Take me to thee, good kind heart, and we will weep for Eddy together. Oh, my darling Eddy! oh, my pretty boy! I have none left but you now, dear. Don't leave a poor old woman like me."

So, after so many years, these two hearty souls drew together over what they thought was the grave of a boy they had both loved well.

Chapter 58.

Aunt Eleanor, I fear, lay awake weeping the most of that night. She was like the—

"Old yew that graspeth at the stones
That name the underlying dead;"

the fibres of her heart were coarse, but they were very strong, and they had wrapped themselves round Eddy as they had never wrapped themselves about any one before, and she must entirely believe that Eddy was dead. She called herself an old fool, but that was not much good; and on the Monday morning something occurred so very terrible that she scarcely thought, more than eight hours a day, of Eddy at all.

Mildred Maynard had been confined, and her mother−in−law had been very tender with her, and had nursed her well. Not one word had been said for weeks about the old letters of poor Jim, or about Jasper Meredith. Her schemes were quite in abeyance, but ready for new motion. But if the girl, in the terror of her first confinement, was glad to receive the attentions of Mrs. Maynard, it was most undoubted that when she had nearly recovered, and had her baby by her side, those attentions got more and more repugnant day by day.

They grew at last perfectly unbearable. Mrs. Maynard's very way of coming in and out of the room was perfectly unbearable to Mildred. Women have some very strange instincts. I know a man, a hard−working man, a very good man, a man whom *I* do not mind and I know also three refined ladies who hate his presence in the room where they are. And I do not know why, and never *shall* know. Mildred's instincts against Mrs. Maynard had been pretty strong before her boy was born, but then she had been a silly puling coward. Since this young gentleman had begun to study the great arts of kicking and yelling, Mrs. Maynard the younger was quite a different person, to Mrs. Maynard the elder's great astonishment.

Mrs. Maynard the elder had felt the storgè herself, but like a fool as she was, had never calculated upon its appearing in her daughter−in−law. She was very fond of fowls, and would kick a *laying* hen any day, but was too wise, wearing dainty silk stockings, to kick a hen with chickens. She knew from experience that she would be pecked. She never had brains enough to think that Mildred Evans, the sister of Roland and Edward, worth ten of her, would dare to peck her now she had a boy: she all the time having those letters in her possession. She never thought of that.

Mildred lay and thought of it in her bed, however, with her baby beside her. She of course would have liked to consult Aunt Eleanor, but Eleanor, dearly as she loved her, was a terror to her. She had come to see her once or twice, and the only effect which it had on her nerves was the same as if a barrel of gunpowder was in the room and Aunt Eleanor was sitting on it smoking a short pipe, her hatred for Mrs. Maynard was so great. Ethel of course could not be consulted, and so Mildred, like a true and worthy Evans, thought out the matter for herself and consulted her baby: who apparently agreed.

Her husband, good old Maynard of the four−oar, used to come and sit with her many times a day. And he was very kind, and good, and gentle, and most enormously delighted with her baby; and one day, when he and Mildred were playing with the baby, she got the baby to sleep between them and said, "Husband dear, lay your head on the pillow beside me. I am going to speak in whispers to you."

"Why so?" said Maynard.

"Because your mother is listening at the door," she said, with a smile.

Maynard walked swiftly to the door, and Mrs. Maynard was not nimble enough to get way before he saw her. Even bulls get ill−tempered at times, and he said—

"Mother, mind your own business."

He was still cross when he went back to his wife, but she positively refused to speak to him while he had a cloud between his eyebrows. His brow was soon clear, and she began.

"Dear husband, I have to talk to you about one thing very particularly. Jim Mordaunt, dear, good, innocent Jim Mordaunt, loved me better than a brother loves his sister, and he has behaved so well about it."

"Yes, I knew he loved you," said her husband, in a whisper. "I have had deep grief over it, wife."

"What need? Except that I was a silly coward and your mother was wicked, what need? We were brought up boy and girl together, and I thought he loved me only as a sister: but I found it was otherwise, and he went."

“But Jim must have been untrue to me for you to find it out, my love, my darling.”

“Never!—never for one instant by look or word. James Mordaunt is a gentleman, and he loves you.”

“But do you love him, wife?” said Mordaunt.

“Love him! Love poor wild Jim! Of course I do. Is there any one who knows his true worth who does not? If my tongue refused to say that I loved Jim, I hope it may drop out of my head. But not as I do you. There is no one like you in the whole world, dear.”

“God bless you, sweetheart,” said Maynard.

“Now,” said Mildred, “Jim has written to me three times. I have concealed this fact from you, not because I distrusted your noble nature, but because since we were married I have been nervous and hysterical. I am so no longer. This little fellow has cured me of nervousness: and a wife who could not trust a man like you may drown herself in the Severn for me. I cannot show you my letters to poor Jim; you must trust me for them. But with regard to Jim's letters to me I require you to read them.”

“Why should I?”

“To prove how innocent he is.”

“I do not care to read them,” said Maynard.

“Ay, but I insist that you should,” she replied.

“Where are they?”

“Your mother has got them. She has taken them from me, and during my nervous time has been holding them over me in terror.—Don't swear, dear—don't swear. Be quiet with her and request her to show them to you. I will give you from memory, if you care, my letters to Jim. I have told him I loved him, you know, and so do you. Go to your mother and fetch those letters.”

He left her with a kiss. He was not very long gone: and he came back with the letters in his hand. The whole trouble was over and done now, and the verdict pronounced.

“Poor old Jim!”

There was peace and entire reconciliation. Till they be under the grass together there will be no difference between those two any more.

What passed between Maynard and his mother no man knows exactly. He told Roland that he gently and kindly asked her for those letters of Jim's, and that she at once gave them to him.

And then he says that she began to gibber and fume at him, as he thought, angrily. That is all he knows. The Dean is of opinion that she was trying to say something to him, but that her tongue refused its office. Whether it was anger, scorn, or forgiveness none can say, for he had scarcely been with his wife and baby again five minutes, laughing over poor Jim's letters, when a scared maid came in, and called him out. “His mother was ill,” she said. She was not only ill but dead.

Now, it so happened that at this very time Aunt Eleanor was determined to go over and face “that woman,” and on the Monday morning Ethel came to her and said—

“Miss Evans, you are not going to the Barton to−day?”

“Of course I am, child. I am going to have it out with that woman. She is making mischief between husband and wife; and if the husband was a chimney−sweep and the wife a ballet−dancer, any one who made mischief between them ought to be hung, and I am going over to tell her that *she* ought to be hung.”

“My dear Miss Evans, one moment,” said Ethel, kneeling down; “you must *not* go.”

“Why not? That woman, indeed! Why not?”

“Because she is dead,” said Ethel.

“What did she die of?” said Aunt Eleanor, puzzled and scared.

“I don't know,” said Ethel.

“I don't believe that the woman knows herself what she did die of,” said Aunt Eleanor. “If she did, she would say it was something else.”

“But she is dead, Miss Evans.”

“Fiddle−de−dee,” said Aunt Eleanor. “You take my cob. He will let you open the gates, you know, and ride across the country to Shrewsbury, and get Watson. The woman is in a fit. I will go over and nurse her.”

But, in spite of Aunt Eleanor's unbelief, Ethel succeeded in showing her that Mrs. Maynard, of Maynard's Barton, was dead. And Miss Evans walked up and down the room, rubbing her nose.

Not for long. She sat down and began to cry.

"She was a very good woman, my dear," she said to Ethel, through her tears. "I should have liked to have given her a piece of my mind before she went, but it is too late now. I know that she said I was a grumpy old toad—Myrtle and Gray told me that. But it is all forgiven *now*. Think of the things I have said of her, my dear."

And, indeed, they were many; and the week went on.

She talked every day to the Dean, her old lover, soon to be her husband. She talked very pleasantly. "Sir, we are too old to be married. They will laugh at us. But I love you, my dear, very much indeed, in spite of your wig, which must have grey let into it until it matches my hair. Grey as I am, I am not going to the altar with a man in a chestnut wig. Have you any objection to Eddy as your son and heir? If he comes home—if he comes home."

"The boy will come home right enough," said the Dean, "and he shall be our son and heir."

And so the week went on. Mrs. Maynard was buried on Saturday, and the Dean read the service. *That* was over. And he came over to tea with Miss Evans and Ethel at the Grange, and on the table lay a newspaper—the *Shropshire Chronicle*.

They had no daily newspaper. The *Shropshire Chronicle* gave them their latest news, and all three tried to get hold of it, but the Dean got it, and read it. He turned ghastly pale and looked at the two women.

"Eleanor," he said, "sit there; and Ethel, you sit there, and do not move one inch."

"Is there disaster?" said Ethel.

"Yes," said the Dean. "Sit still, and listen, without cries and without tears. O Lord, if I were there!" and he began to read:—

"'Belpore is utterly lost, following Delhi and Meerut. A young moonshee has arrived at Barrackpore, who tells us that the native troops rose on the night of the 14th, and murdered most of their officers, and many of the English ladies. The rest of our fellow−countrymen, including the judge, collector, assistant−magistrate, and about 160 European troops, with such of the women and children not brutally murdered, have taken refuge in the Palace of the Nawab of Belpore. He spells badly the names of the officers actually murdered in the first onslaught, but we make them to be Rossiter, Street, Murray, Jones, and Towsey. An attack on the native lines was made that evening by Captain Claverhouse and Lieutenant Evans, which seemed to have been perfectly successful.' Ethel, sit still. Do not make my task too bitter."

"I only crushed my hands together."

"Listen, and be quiet," said the Dean.

"'We regret to say, however, that in this demonstration of the native line Cornet Mordaunt got separated from his troop, and was cut to pieces.'"

Ethel rose with a wild moan which would have broken your heart, but the Dean was before her, with his hands spread out, as though he were going to mesmerise her.

"Ethel! Ethel! I want every nerve in your body. There is a grief greater than yours. Sit down." And she sat down, rocking herself to and fro, and saying, "Jim! Jim! Jim!"

"Now go on," said Aunt Eleanor, "and let us have it over. How did my boy die? That is what I want to know."

The Dean read out from the paper: "'An attack was made in the morning on the Palace of the Nawab. It was repulsed with triumphant success. But we are sorry to say that Ensign Evans, another of our bonny Shropshire boys, coxswain of the Shropshire crew, who beat the London Rowing Club, was seized by the Rajah of Bethoor, and murdered while he was carrying a flag of truce to make arrangements for the rebel wounded.'"

"If that is true, as no doubt it is," said Aunt Eleanor, sharply, "it is just as I wished it. I knew my boy would die game. Just read out that passage again, will you, my good soul?"

He did so.

"Carried a flag of truce to remove the rebel wounded. Yes, just like him. Now if Ethel and you will go and behowl yourselves, I will do it alone. Go."

Chapter 59.

At Belpore men were mad, as men are in revolutions. As mad as they were when they shot my hero, the Archbishop of Paris, on the barricades. If St. Paul himself had stood between the British and the Rajah's people, St. Paul would have been shot down.

Little brown youths, nearly naked, lest any trace of Europeanism should be found about them, were sent out as scouts and spies, to find some intelligence of Jim, Eddy, and Allan. Not one was unfaithful, for they were relations of the Nawab; but only one came back.

He reported that he could find out nothing more than this: Jim and Eddy were both alive, and Allan was apparently at liberty, though not allowed to join the European garrison. *Jim* was in the Rajah's dungeon; there was no doubt about *that*. Where Eddy was he could not in any way tell.

Roland, the Nawab, and Claverhouse cross−questioned him on the subject, but the young man stuck to his text. He was perfectly and absolutely certain that Eddy was not killed. They had to be contented with it. They gave this young man ghee, rice, fresh−killed chicken, and all kinds of nasty things, in which his soul delighted.

Meanwhile, the Nawab had a job in hand to which he took more kindly than the making of kites on the Franklin plan, kites with a wire in the string. He had flown those kites several times in dangerous weather, and neglecting the necessity of communication with the earth, had twice been knocked head over heels which will ultimately be the fate of Pepper with his mammoth Saxton battery. His new employment was making embrasures in a rock, and dropping live shells on to the top of his beloved Rajah's palace.

He was intensely delighted with this amusement. His French wife said that he had acquired a nouvelle jeunesse since he had taken to this amusement. She brought her work down into the cave, and superintended.

When they let off one of their mortars, she said “Piff,” and putting down her work, looked where it dropped, and would occasionally say “Bon!” but only occasionally; you must remember that her nation had burnt more gunpowder than any nation in the world ever did. And moreover, when the Americans talk about *their* war being the most tremendous ever seen on the face of the earth, they are talking terrible balderdash; which, however, is no business of mine.

Madame Nawab brought her work down into the caves and superintended. Her father had been an officer of artillery.

Roland came upon her with her eye to the sight of a newly−trained mortar, and her needlework in her hand.

“Crac flan,” said Madame. “Fire hims off, Roland. Crève−coeur, make to tell them to fire hims off. We shall now see explosions in his palace.”

Bang went the gun, and certainly the French lady was right. In the confused mass of buildings there was a sudden light, and the roar of the explosion reached them half a minute afterwards.

“Why did you call me Crève−coeur, Madame?” asked Roland.

“Broke heart. Why did I call you so? If you have heart, is it not broke? She you love be gone for all, lost for ever, for you shall never see her no more. Her brother lost and left for torture, you shall never see him no more; and your own brother Edie gone to torture, him whom you was to love so well. Ask me why I call you Crève−coeur!”

“Madame,” said Roland, “you cannot possibly conceive that I do not feel the dreadful position of my dearest friends.”

“That is what I say,” said Madame. “You have heart enough to have it broken. Next to the French there are none like the English. But you suppress your fury; we demonstrate it, as you know.”

And Madame went on with her needlework, looking out from time to time to see if the shells dropped well.

And Roland went for a walk round to look at things, and the result of his thoughts was—

“Fancy there being only eighteen miles of salt water between the two nations, and not one thought in common. Even in sentiment, for which her nation is so famous, she misses her point with me, a typical Englishman. We must go beyond France for all true allies. I would that the good God had sent me Hans and Gottfried here. It is all very well to argue and jaw, but if any man doubts that the next row−royal will not be between the Teutonics (with the Slavonics) against the Latins (with some of the Celts), he had better take his needlework down and sit beside

Madame.”

That is what Roland thought. I am never answerable for my characters.

Chapter 60.

Jim was an affectionate fellow, who could love more than most men; but, on the other hand, he never throughout his life got on ten minutes without an enemy. He never had more than one enemy at a time certainly, but that enemy was, for that time, an enemy with a vengeance. His enemy just now was the Rajah; and the Rajah was perfectly aware of the fact, and kept away from him. He did not know exactly what that young man might do. He had all the intelligence of an Asiatic.

Jim was tightly ironed, hand and foot, with a kind of iron or “darby,” introduced into the station by his friend the assistant−magistrate, and at once adopted by the Rajah. He was in utter and complete darkness, and knew that he could only see the light to die. So he said his prayers four times over; and every time he thought of Mildred, he prayed to God to forgive him. And at last he never thought of her at all.

How time went in this utter darkness he could not make out. He got hungry, and reached about in the darkness to find food, and he found rice, ghee, and water, and when he had eaten he fell asleep and dreamt of the old four−oar, and the Greek prose lecture, and the Dean, and the Doctor, indiscriminately.

He awoke, and he lay awake in the darkness for a long time. The boy's faith was simple and pure—not a bad one to face death with. The Doctor was to him the incarnation of human wisdom, and the Doctor had always impressed on them, that those who believed in the great sacrifice, and repented them truly of their sins, and *were in charity with all men*, would be after death received into and educated for higher things than they could possibly be educated for here. Consequently, this young man, having learnt logic, came to the conclusion that he must forgive the Rajah, who was going to shoot him.

And he did it. The process of mind which he crawled through in doing it, was crab−like, wild, and fantastic beyond measure—yet he did it. His ultimate result was that when all was said and done, the Rajah had not behaved much worse to him than he had to Eddy at school in old times. That if he had been in the Rajah's place, he would have done much as the Rajah had, and that the Rajah having him shot and buried at once, with the letters upon him, and not burnt, was decidedly gentlemanly on the part of the Rajah.

So the Rajah was forgiven, and Jim was ready to die. He would have liked to communicate before death—only once—but it was not to be. That was a little hard to the poor lad. It was Sunday, if he could calculate, and when at this moment the boys might be kneeling at the altar−rails, and the Doctor and the second master coming solemnly round and giving them that to eat and drink, which he should eat and drink no more, save with his Father in the kingdom of Heaven. The thought of the old chapel broke the boy down, He moaned “Oro, ploro, adoro,” and felt in the hideous black night for the wall that he might turn his face to it. The Rajah was safe enough with him now.

Through the dim arches of the great dungeon in which he lay bound there came a light, two natives bearing torches, the Rajah following them, and Allan with his hand on the Rajah's shoulder. They did not come near him, but passed on in close conversation, and the light died out again.

“By Jove,” said Jim, “what a clever fellow that is! I see what he is at. He is deluding the Rajah, and keeping his life in his hand to save the British. What a fool the Rajah must be to play at chess with *him*! Eddy says he has the head of a prime minister.”

Three hours before, Jim would have taken a very different view of Allan's conduct—called him thief, dog, renegade, everything that was bad. But now that he had said to his God the three great words, he only saw in the darkness the handkerchief of St. Veronica, and in front the figure of the Doctor, in simple white surplice, preaching with uplifted hand the sermon which made them so silent. “Speak not evil one of another.”

He was right. After an hour's sleep he was awakened by a candle−light upon his eyes. He looked up and saw Allan, dressed like a native Indian, all in white, who laughed at him, and said—

“Get up and let me undo your irons. Be quick, silent, and swift. Eddy's life depends on your doing exactly as I tell you. He risked his life once for you when you were bathing at Gloucester; if you are a man born of woman, risk yours for him now. I say nothing of the saving of your own life, for you come of a family not accustomed to fear. Now your irons are off, strip quickly, and put on my clothes.”

Jim obeyed once more. “What am I to do?”

“Get down to the nullah in these clothes; I have been seen in them, and they will not know you from me. I am

in the Rajah's confidence; I have turned him round my finger. Go straight down to the old moonshee's house, and you will find Eddy there, his son−in−law is protecting him. Don't try to get to the Nawab's, but try to get to the river. Brown yourselves, your moonshee's son−in−law will show you how, and go in dhoties, as nearly bare as possible, for you may have to swim. Scarcely any of the native troops know the person of any king's officer. I have everything perfectly arranged; pray be quick."

"But you?" said Jim.

"Oh, I am perfectly comfortable. I shall sit here till you are safe, and then I shall go to him and tell him what I have done. He will be cross, I know, but he loves a joke."

"I say, old man," said Jim, standing with his trousers off, "just think twice about this job. Is there no danger in it. You are fitter to die than me, being a religious fellow, given to all kinds of good works, and I am only a worthless bullying ass. In the eternal fitness of things, if there is any danger, I ought to incur it, not you."

"I am perfectly safe," said Allan, quietly going on with his toilet. "By−the−bye, I made the acquaintance of your sister (Miss Mordaunt) in Shropshire the other day; if you are at Stretton before me, would you kindly take a message?"

"With all pleasure."

"Tell her that I did the very best I could for *her*, and tell her to tell Miss Evans that I did the best I possibly could for Eddy. You will give that message. Go—hurry—time is very short,"

Stupid dear old Jim did not see that Allan was *dying* for him because he was Ethel's brother.

"Are you quite sure that you will not come to grief for this matter?" said he.

"Perfectly sure," said Allan, smilingly; "the Rock of Ages was not cleft in vain. Go, hurry. This is the first time I have worn the dress you have on now. The password to−night is 'Vishnu.' I kept a handkerchief over my face as I came, keep one over yours as you go. Go straight to the old moonshee's house, and the love which you gave there once shall be returned seven−fold."

"You are a thundering brick," said Jim; and he went.

No European eye ever saw Allan again. The last ever heard of him was this. Of course those who told it knew more, but being concerned in the crime, the tellers said as little as they could.

The palace of the Rajah had now been diligently shelled for two days, and was scarcely habitable. The native troops had departed for the main wasps' nest at Delhi; the Rajah felt the ground slipping under his feet, for, like the unmistakable hum of the earthquake before it heaves and shatters, there had come to him the news that the Sikhs were true to their salt, and he heard the tramp of 120,000 of them, heavy as the moan of distant thunder, precise and terrifying as the death−watch. The man saw his game was lost, went mad, and knew no pity.

It is perfect folly, in times of peace and security, to judge people's actions in times of danger and ferocity. Breaking the ice by cannon−shot under the feet of the camp−followers at the passage of the Beresina, seems to us now a horrible thing; but let us not be too sure that any one of us would not have done it under the circumstances. If your soldiery are not ferocious and determined to put the thing through, you had better cash up, and remain at peace. Ferocity is necessary in the field. Certain matters, however, which had happened that night at Belpore cannot be called war in any way.

Hanging rebels is a very old institution. If I was a rebel and was unsuccessful, the last words I should write would be to tell my wife instantly to prosecute the Westminster Insurance Office if they hesitated for an instant to pay up. Poor Maximilian knew his chances and took them. If a revolutionist will not carry his heart in his hand, he had better stay at home.

But things were done with women and children that night at Belpore, of which there is no need to speak. If there were, one would speak. The Indians have learnt their lesson, and we can leave them alone until they misbehave again.

And the Rajah had been seeing to it all. And he had a *bonne bouche* left for the end. Eddy had escaped. But there was Jim.

The man never touched stimulants from one year's end to another, any more than does the goat, the ram, the bull, or the tiger. Yet for lust or ferocity he would have matched the worst man in any of our great towns.

He had the lust of blood on him to−night. Matters which shall be nameless had gone on. He must fly that very night; and there was none left but Jim Mordaunt. The shells so diligently plied by Roland and the Nawab were shattering his palace of delight to pieces, and he must go that night. He and his brother the havildar had the jewels

sewn safe, and the horses ready. There was only Jim Mordaunt.

Sitting there drinking coffee and smoking, with his brother leaning against him, came the figure of a British officer, hurriedly attired, with his tunic unbuttoned and his white breast bare. He started up and was utterly astonished to find that it was Allan.

In Jim's clothes. “Where is Mordaunt?” asked the Rajah, “have you prepared him for death?”

“No, for life,” cried Allan. “He was the brother of her I loved beyond all the world; and I have given my life for his. He is beyond your power now. Dog, villain, pirate, hound, thief, I have given him my life. Take it. You think that you will have vengeance. Idiot, ass, Ethel will know that I died for her brother, and that is enough for me.”

One dare go no further. Some say that his body was the last thrown into the well. Some say that his body was never thrown in at all, but that he underwent a very different fate. However, no one ever saw him any more.

But that night the Rajah set fire to his palace and rode away, carrying, with the assistance of his brother, 200,000*l*. worth of jewellery. Some say he is in Cabool, some in Nepaul, but no man knows where he is. He cast the dice, and they went wrong.

The die rang sideway as it fell,
Rang sharp and keen,
Like a man's laughter heard in hell,
Far down Faustine.

Chapter 61.

The main body of the mutineers had gone to Delhi, but quite enough were left to keep our little garrison on the alert. A sortie was quite impossible, and Claverhouse and Roland gave up Jim and Eddy as lost boys.

After the burning of the Rajah's palace (which they believe to this day they did themselves), they tried a sortie or two, but it was no good whatever. The rebels had been reinforced by others, and were in a strong position on the river, between them and Delhi.

Meanwhile the Sikhs were coming, though they knew nothing of that, and Cordery had so far misrepresented matters, as to persuade the General that it would be better to put a European regiment between Delhi and the rebel regiments at Belpore. There was not the least necessity for it, but Cordery got his way, and got leave to advance with one troop of his own regiment, four companies of the 201st, a company of native artillery, in the direction of Belpore, to see if the garrison were alive.

Of course it was very wrong of Cordery, he has been often told so. He however had such a strong feeling for our Shrewsbury boys, that he could not help it. Our fellows advanced to the river, through the jungle, and on showing themselves had fire opened on them by the rebels.

Upon which Roland and Claverhouse, now silent for a long time, sent a shell, bang into the air, which came down, whiz, into the middle of the river, and on bursting, sent up a column of water six feet high.

“Signal + 2° to him,” said Jones, R.E. “He has his elevation too low. He will be dropping his shells among us directly. What a pity it is that cavalry officers should be trusted with mortars.”

The next shell went better, and dropped on the right side of the river. Still it did no harm.

The rebels were laughing at both parties. The newly arrived Europeans seemed to decline to fire, and as for the shells from the palace, if they got troublesome, they could shift. They were rather astonished, however, after an hour, by the newly arrived Europeans opening on them with a fury and ferocity which made them move with a vengeance.

Every man among the newly arrived Europeans was loading and firing at them as fast as it was possible. The guns were being served with parade rapidity; in one moment, this apparently causeless din began. In one minute they saw the cause of it, and as well as they could opened fire; but not on the European troops—on Jim and on Eddy, swimming across the river, as they had swum together at Gloucester, in the old times.

The Europeans maddened. From their naked bodies they could see that the two swimmers were British, they plied their work fast and furiously; still the river was two hundred yards across, and the water was dashed into little jets of foam by the rebel bullets.

The wrath, rage, and noise of that three minutes was forgotten by none who saw it. At last, just as the two swimmers were nearing the shore, Jim sailing in Eddy's wake like a convoy, a bullet hit something else than the water, and Eddy put up his two hands and cried out, “Jim! Jim! I am wounded.”

The bullet had gone into the boy's shoulder−blade, but Jim had his left arm round him in one instant, and swimming with his right, brought him ashore. The old bathing catastrophe was well avenged now.

Chapter 62.

The siege of Belpore got more and more in favour of the besieged as time went on. The flight of the Rajah was enormously in their favour. The fire upon them, slight and ineffectual as it always had been, now ceased entirely. Madame Nawab, who had seen, during her Algerian campaigns, pretty nearly as much of this sort of work as any one, announced her intention of going to church the very next Sunday but four, down past the lines, and, indeed, she accomplished that feat successfully, without the slightest danger. While troop−ship after troop−ship was crowding sail and steam from England, the back of the thing was nearly broken.

The besieged at Belpore heard, for a time, hot and fierce firing across the river, and guessed rightly that the 201st had come after them. One glorious day, towards evening, they heard the British bugles under their walls, and knew that they were free. The rebels, finding themselves in a perfectly untenable position, had retreated. The 201st, having searched their position with shell, now cautiously crossed the river, and marched in under the old gateway, in front of the new earthworks, which had saved the Nawab's palace, Eddy and Jim leading the way.

To say what extreme extravagances were committed, would take a volume. The Nawab executed a solemn dance composed for the occasion. His wife never rebuked him at all, but sat on the top of a gabion, and stitched away. “He has the Orleans Anglo−mania,” she said. “It affects some minds. For me, I am Tricoteuse. It arrives to me to knit and stitch through revolutions. Twice in Algeria, February in Paris, June in Paris, and now once more, regard you, in India. Tiens! perhaps I shall sit and sew in Paris when the devil comes for that dog.” For Madame was of the Democratic.

The end came soon after; there is but little to tell of it but what you know. Enough to say that the 201st were behind Peel in the attack on Delhi, and that Roland volunteered and took part in some of the most terrible street−fighting ever seen.

But as ship−load after ship−load of the maimed came back; as ships came back not bringing wounded men, but news of dead, we began, if you remember, to calm down. It had been our greatest and most fearful disaster, and we all looked a little older and more worn.

There had scarcely been a family not in mourning over our quarrel with the Russians. But in front of these glorious Russians, who are doing well by the world, we had been loyally backed by the French; the war had been a man's war, and we had lost only men. But here we had lost women and children. Few nations have ever gone through a darker hour than the earlier part of 1858.

I hear the ringing words in my ears now, given by a pilot from a leaping whale−boat, just as the great ship was beginning to move upon her 14,000 miles' course—“They have got Delhi!”

One lived in those times. We were dull, sickened, disheartened, and captious, so we never truly roused to the American war, which was extremely lucky, for more than one half of this nation was in favour of the South. The French insulted us, and we insulted them in return, and set the volunteers in motion. But we wanted rest, and, thank God, we have had it.

Chapter 63.

Eight months passed. Longmynd, Lawley, and Caradoc, towering up into the summer sun, and Pulverbatch Grange swept and garnished. Aunt Eleanor dressed in purple and pearl−grey, with grand kind of lace cap, looking magnificent. No Ethel here to−day. All by herself, alone.

“Bother George Mordaunt!” she said. “Why on earth he could not let an old woman like me be married without public *spectacle* I can't think. And the Dean is a goose about it, also. I shall look like a perfect fool beside Ethel. However, I have not submitted to have bridesmaids. *That* is a comfort. I certainly am a fool to have dressed two hours before the time. Who is that, Eliza? I can see no one.”

A maid came in and said that Sir Jasper Meredith was coming in, and what is more Sir Jasper Meredith *came* in, with only one stick, and a large bunch of Cape jasmine in his button−hole.

“You look mighty fine, Jasper,” said Aunt Eleanor. “Do you know that *I* am going to be married in public this morning?

“*I* know,” said Sir Jasper. “Do you know that I am going to be married in public this morning?”

“The man is out of his mind,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“Indeed, I think he is. But I have as much right to get married as—”

“Well, my dear Jasper, I will agree with you that we are a pair of fools.”

“Then don't bother,” said Sir Jasper. “I tell you that I have put it all before Mary Maynard, and she is perfectly willing; as willing as a girl could be. I am very fond of her, and she is very fond of me. If it had not been for the poor woman who is dead, I would have married her before. I pointed out to Mary Maynard the great advantages of the match, and the fact that I could not possibly live long. Whereupon, to my intense delight, she burst into a fury of tears, and said that I was not what she had thought me, but a wicked, cold−hearted little villain. The girl's heart is in the right place, Miss Evans, after all. I got her quieted, and had a special licence from the Archbishop at once. Come along, you and I together. We are both going to make fools of ourselves.”

“I am not sure about that,” said Aunt Eleanor.

There was a great crowd in Stretton churchyard. It had got about first that Captain Roland Evans was to be married to Miss Mordaunt, and that Major Edwardes, their old friend and neighbour, one of the greatest of Indian heroes, was to be his best man, along with Mr. Edward Evans and Captain James Mordaunt. Then it got about that Miss Evans was to be married to the Rector on the same day; and lastly, that Sir Jasper Meredith was to marry Miss Mary Maynard, of the Barton.

There was a great crowd. They hired omnibuses from Shrewsbury, and stood in rows on the grave−turf of the silent dead beneath them, to look at these three boys, Roland, Eddy, and Jim, whom they had seen winning a foolish boat−race, as it were but yesterday, but had since, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, been into the fiery furnace of the Indian Mutiny, and had come out unscathed.

They all met in the church, coming from the Rectory, without seeing the populace, but the people knew that they were coming their way, for the carriages of half the county were at the lych−gate, and the Shropshire county gentry, a thing which will pass one supposes in time, which is a good thing as it stands, were crowding the churchyard, and making for the church.

The Dean and Aunt Eleanor were married first. Then came Roland and Ethel. Lastly, Sir Jasper and Mary Maynard. And if any bride ever looked happy, it was Mary Maynard. The only unhappy time she has had since she was married was when she lost her first boy, but she has another now.

Then they all went into the vestry to sign the register, and Aunt Eleanor, leaving the Dean, took possession of Roland and Eddy, and bade them follow her. “Not you, Jim,” she said, as he prepared to come with them. And she took Roland and Eddy to a quiet place on the north side of the church, and showed them a well−executed brass, let in the wall, on which was written:— In Memory of
ALLAN EVANS,
ELDEST SON OF THE LATE CAPTAIN CHARLES EVANS,
of this parish.

No man knows his grave, but one may believe that,
being a soldier in Christ's Army from his youth,
he rests with Christ's soldiers.
All his life long he fought for Christ's poor;
all his life long he wrestled with God in prayer, and in
the end, he gave his own life for a life he believed
to be more precious than his own.

Conclusion.

Now the registers were signed, and they began coming out. Edwardes, of Moultan, came first, and was received by the crowd in the churchyard with a murmur of familiar welcome. For he was a feather in their caps, and they loved him. To think that he is dead.

Then came Squire Mordaunt and his son Jim, with young Somes. They were instantly mobbed. Every one wanted, on a sudden, as it seemed, to shake hands with these three. The Squire was resplendent and glorious, and shook as many hands as he could get hold of, but kept saying “Room for the couples, men; room for the couples!” And so they got through.

Then came Roland and Ethel. So wonderfully splendid in their beauty that the spectators down the churchyard kept a dead silence. It had pleased Roland to be married in his full−dress uniform, and he was resplendent in scarlet and gold. Ethel had on the same arrangement of rich lace which I saw on a great banker's lady the other day, arranged somehow in her hair, and falling down all over her. The people were simply dumb with admiration.

Next came the Dean and Aunt Eleanor. They were certainly an old couple, but a very fine one, though the Dean was not handsome, and wore an innocent wig, without any concealment about it. There was a perfect roar of welcome for aunt Eleanor. “God give you long days in the land, Madam Eleanor!” cried one. “God do to you, as you have done to us!” cried another. “You have the best wife in all England, sir,” said another. And the Dean replied that he agreed with him entirely, and had known it all his life.

There came next Sir Jasper Meredith and Mary Maynard. Sir Jasper walked very well, and Mary looked very happy, the good Shropshire folks cheering them very heartily.

Before the last group came out of the church, Major Edwardes and young Somes, known to every one, had been about among the crowd, and explained to them who was coming. Jasper Meredith and his wife were easily passed over. All eyes were turned to the church, to the most interesting group of the day.

First, Eddy and Jim, in full uniform, like Roland, side by side; there was no cheering now. The people wanted to get near them and see them closer; and at that moment, had such a thing been necessary, Jim and Eddy could have raised a battalion out of that churchyard. But they held up their hands for silence. The valley was mad about the Mordaunt hero and the Evans hero; but their curiosity overpowered their love, and they let their two heroes pass nearly in silence.

After them came a French lady, most beautifully dressed, on the arm of Maynard, explaining matters to him in a very voluble manner. But they only said, “Go it, young Maynard,” and let them pass on; for they noticed that Major Edwardes had gone back, that young Somes was standing in the centre of the path; that Jim and Eddy were waiting by the lych−gate, and they knew that the man of the day was to come.

He came out of the church with Major Edwardes. A tall, handsome gentleman, with a face a little browner than even “the Evans” and Mordaunt's, who had just passed by. A gentleman, clothed in snow−white from bead to foot, wearing a small turban. About his breast and shoulders he had developed innumerable diamonds—diamonds worth enough to pay for a province, which made them shade their eyes as they flashed in the sun. It was the Nawab of Belpore.

He was instantly stopped. Young Somes was terrified about his diamonds, as a lawyer should be; but not a soul in that Shropshire churchyard that morning would have touched one of them had it lay at his feet. Edwardes, Somes, Eddy, and Jim kept the crowd away from him. And Major Edwardes said—

“Gentlemen, this is the Nawab of Belpore. Faithful to us in prosperity, faithful to us in adversity, faithful to us in despair. When we believed that all was lost, he was true. Look on a true, loyal Indian gentleman for once. He goes away to work at the greatest work ever undertaken by any nation yet, to carry out among the one hundred and eighty millions of India this new civilisation, originated by the revolutionary wars: epitomised by us. There is a work before us in India more vastly important than the work of Hun or Mogul. The Nawab will help us. Now let us go.”

So ended the pageant, and so ends my seventh story. My boys were very dear to me, but they are passed into Shadowland for ever: the two Mordaunts, the two Evanses, and Maynard. Of all the ghosts of old friends which I have called up in this quaint trade, called the writing of fiction, only two remain with me, and never quit me. The

others come and go, and I love them well enough; but the two who are with me always are the peaked−faced man Charles Ravenshoe, and the lame French girl Mathilde.

THE END.