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EVAN HARRINGTON

By George Meredith

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CHAPTER XXVI

MRS. MEL MAKES A BED FOR HERSELF AND FAMILY

The last person thought of by her children at this period was Mrs. Mel: nor had she been thinking much of them till a letter from Mr. Goren arrived one day, which caused her to pass them seriously in review. Always an early bird, and with maxims of her own on the subject of rising and getting the worm, she was standing in a small perch in the corner of the shop, dictating accounts to Mrs. Fiske, who was copying hurriedly, that she might earn sweet intervals for gossip, when Dandy limped up and delivered the letter. Mrs. Fiske worked hard while her aunt was occupied in reading it, for a great deal of fresh talk follows the advent of the post, and may be reckoned on. Without looking up, however, she could tell presently that the letter had been read through. Such being the case, and no conversation coming of it, her curiosity was violent. Her aunt's face, too, was an index of something extraordinary. That inflexible woman, instead of alluding to the letter in any way, folded it up, and renewed her dictation. It became a contest between them which should show her human nature first. Mrs. Mel had to repress what she knew; Mrs. Fiske to control the passion for intelligence. The close neighbourhood of one anxious to receive, and one capable of giving, waxed too much for both.

'I think, Anne, you are stupid this morning,' said Mrs. Mel.

'Well, I am, aunt,' said Mrs. Fiske, pretending not to see which was the first to unbend, 'I don't know what it is. The figures seem all dazzled like. I shall really be glad when Evan comes to take his proper place.'

'Ah!' went Mrs. Mel, and Mrs. Fiske heard her muttering. Then she cried out: 'Are Harriet and Caroline as great liars as Louisa?'

Mrs. Fiske grimaced. 'That would be difficult, would it not, aunt?'

'And I have been telling everybody that my son is in town learning his business, when he's idling at a country house, and trying to play his father over again! Upon my word, what with liars and fools, if you go to sleep a minute you have a month's work on your back.'

'What is it, aunt?' Mrs. Fiske feebly inquired.

'A gentleman, I suppose! He wouldn't take an order if it was offered. Upon my word, when tailors think of winning heiresses it's time we went back to Adam and Eve.'

'Do you mean Evan, aunt?' interposed Mrs. Fiske, who probably did not see the turns in her aunt's mind.

'There--read for yourself,' said Mrs. Mel, and left her with the letter.

Mrs. Fiske read that Mr. Goren had been astonished at Evan's non-appearance, and at his total silence; which he did not consider altogether gentlemanly behaviour, and certainly not such as his father would have practised. Mr. Goren regretted his absence the more as he would have found him useful in a remarkable invention he was about to patent, being a peculiar red cross upon shirts--a fortune to the patentee; but as Mr. Goren had no natural heirs of his body, he did not care for that. What affected him painfully was the news of Evan's doings at a noble house, Beckley Court, to wit, where, according to the report of a rich young gentleman friend, Mr. Raikes (for whose custom Mr. Goren was bound to thank Evan), the youth who should have been learning the science of Tailoring, had actually passed himself off as a lord, or the son of one, or something of the kind, and had got engaged to a wealthy heiress, and would, no doubt, marry her if not found out. Where the chances of detection were so numerous, Mr. Goren saw much to condemn in the idea of such a marriage. But 'like father like son,' said Mr. Goren. He thanked the Lord that an honest tradesman was not looked down upon in this country; and, in fact, gave Mrs. Mel a few quiet digs to waken her remorse in having missed the man that he was.

When Mrs. Fiske met her aunt again she returned her the letter, and simply remarked: 'Louisa.'

Mrs. Mel nodded. She understood the implication.

The General who had schemed so successfully to gain Evan time at Beckley Court in his own despite and against a hundred obstructions, had now another enemy in the field, and one who, if she could not undo her work, could punish her. By the afternoon coach, Mrs. Mel, accompanied by Dandy her squire, was journeying to Fallow field, bent upon things. The faithful squire was kept by her side rather as a security for others than for, his particular services. Dandy's arms were crossed, and his countenance was gloomy. He had been promised a holiday that afternoon to give his mistress, Sally, Kilne's cook, an airing, and Dandy knew in his soul that Sally, when she once made up her mind to an excursion, would go, and would not go alone, and that her very force of will endangered her constancy. He had begged humbly to be allowed to stay, but Mrs. Mel could not trust him. She ought to have told him so, perhaps. Explanations were not approved of by this well-intended despot, and however beneficial her resolves might turn out for all parties, it was natural that in the interim the children of her rule should revolt, and Dandy, picturing his Sally flaunting on the arm of some accursed low marine, haply, kicked against Mrs. Mel's sovereignty, though all that he did was to shoot out his fist from time to time, and grunt through his set teeth: 'Iron!' to express the character of her awful rule.

Mrs. Mel alighted at the Dolphin, the landlady of which was a Mrs.

Hawkshaw, a rival of Mrs. Sockley of the Green Dragon. She was welcomed by Mrs. Hawkshaw with considerable respect. The great Mel had sometimes slept at the Dolphin.

'Ah, that black!' she sighed, indicating Mrs. Mel's dress and the story it told.

'I can't give you his room, my dear Mrs. Harrington, wishing I could! I'm sorry to say it's occupied, for all I ought to be glad, I dare say, for he's an old gentleman who does you a good turn, if you study him. But there! I'd rather have had poor dear Mr. Harrington in my best bed than old or young--Princes or nobodies, I would--he was that grand and pleasant.'

Mrs. Mel had her tea in Mrs. Hawkshaw's parlour, and was entertained about her husband up to the hour of supper, when a short step and a querulous voice were heard in the passage, and an old gentleman appeared before them.

'Who's to carry up my trunk, ma'am? No man here?'

Mrs. Hawkshaw bustled out and tried to lay her hand on a man. Failing to find the growth spontaneous, she returned and begged the old gentleman to wait a few moments and the trunk would be sent up.

'Parcel o' women!' was his reply. 'Regularly bedevilled. Gets worse and worse. I'll carry it up myself.'

With a wheezy effort he persuaded the trunk to stand on one end, and then looked at it. The exertion made him hot, which may account for the rage he burst into when Mrs. Hawkshaw began flutteringly to apologize.

'You're sure, ma'am, sure--what are you sure of? I'll tell you what I am sure of--eh? This keeping clear of men's a damned pretence. You don't impose upon me. Don't believe in your pothouse nunneries--not a bit. Just like you! when you are virtuous it's deuced inconvenient. Let one of the maids try? No. Don't believe in 'em.'

Having thus relieved his spleen the old gentleman addressed himself to further efforts and waxed hotter. He managed to tilt the trunk over, and thus gained a length, and by this method of progression arrived at the foot of the stairs, where he halted, and wiped his face, blowing lustily.

Mrs. Mel had been watching him with calm scorn all the while. She saw him attempt most ridiculously to impel the trunk upwards by a similar process, and thought it time to interfere.

'Don't you see you must either take it on your shoulders, or have a help?'

The old gentleman sprang up from his peculiarly tight posture to blaze round at her. He had the words well-peppered on his mouth, but somehow he stopped, and was subsequently content to growl: 'Where 's the help in

a parcel of petticoats?'

Mrs. Mel did not consider it necessary to give him an answer. She went up two or three steps, and took hold of one handle of the trunk, saying: 'There; I think it can be managed this way,' and she pointed for him to seize the other end with his hand.

He was now in that unpleasant state of prickly heat when testy old gentlemen could commit slaughter with ecstasy. Had it been the maid holding a candle who had dared to advise, he would have overturned her undoubtedly, and established a fresh instance of the impertinence, the uselessness and weakness of women. Mrs. Mel topped him by half a head, and in addition stood three steps above him; towering like a giantess. The extreme gravity of her large face dispersed all idea of an assault. The old gentleman showed signs of being horribly injured: nevertheless, he put his hand to the trunk; it was lifted, and the procession ascended the stairs in silence.

The landlady waited for Mrs. Mel to return, and then said:

'Really, Mrs. Harrington, you are clever. That lifting that trunk's as good as a lock and bolt on him. You've as good as made him a Dolphin--him that was one o' the oldest Green Dragons in Fallifield. My thanks to you most sincere.'

Mrs. Mel sent out to hear where Dandy had got to after which, she said: 'Who is the man?'

'I told you, Mrs. Harrington--the oldest Green Dragon. His name, you mean? Do you know, if I was to breathe it out, I believe he'd jump out of the window. He 'd be off, that you might swear to. Oh, such a whimsical! not ill-meaning--quite the contrary. Study his whims, and you'll never want. There's Mrs. Sockley--she 's took ill. He won't go there--that 's how I've caught him, my dear--but he pays her medicine, and she looks to him the same. He hate a sick house: but he pity a sick woman. Now, if I can only please him, I can always look on him as half a Dolphin, to say the least; and perhaps to-morrow I'll tell you who he is, and what, but not to-night; for there's his supper to get over, and that, they say, can be as bad as the busting of one of his own vats. Awful!'

'What does he eat?' said Mrs. Mel.

'A pair o' chops. That seem simple, now, don't it? And yet they chops make my heart go pitty-pat.'

'The commonest things are the worst done,' said Mrs. Mel.

'It ain't that; but they must be done his particular way, do you see, Mrs. Harrington. Laid close on the fire, he say, so as to keep in the juice. But he ups and bounces in a minute at a speck o' black. So, one thing or the other, there you are: no blacks, no juices, I say.'

'Toast the chops,' said Mrs. Mel.

The landlady of the Dolphin accepted this new idea with much enlightenment, but ruefully declared that she was afraid to go against his precise instructions. Mrs. Mel then folded her hands, and sat in quiet reserve. She was one of those numerous women who always know themselves to be right. She was also one of those very few whom Providence favours by confounding dissentients. She was positive the chops would be ill-cooked: but what could she do? She was not in command here; so she waited serenely for the certain disasters to enthrone her. Not that the matter of the chops occupied her mind particularly: nor could she dream that the pair in question were destined to form a part of her history, and divert the channel of her fortunes. Her thoughts were about her own immediate work; and when the landlady rushed in with the chops under a cover, and said: 'Look at 'em, dear Mrs. Harrington!' she had forgotten that she was again to be proved right by the turn of events.

'Oh, the chops!' she responded. 'Send them while they are hot.'

'Send 'em! Why you don't think I'd have risked their cooling? I have sent 'em; and what do he do but send 'em travelling back, and here they be; and what objections his is I might study till I was blind, and I shouldn't see 'em.'

'No; I suppose not,' said Mrs. Mel. 'He won't eat 'em?'

'Won't eat anything: but his bed-room candle immediately. And whether his sheets are aired. And Mary says he sniffed at the chops; and that gal really did expect he 'd fling them at her. I told you what he was. Oh, dear!'

The bell was heard ringing in the midst of the landlady's lamentations.

'Go to him yourself,' said Mrs. Mel. 'No Christian man should go to sleep without his supper.'

'Ah! but he ain't a common Christian,' returned Mrs. Hawkshaw.

The old gentleman was in a hurry to know when his bed-room candle was coming up, or whether they intended to give him one at all that night; if not, let them say so, as he liked plain-speaking. The moment Mrs. Hawkshaw touched upon the chops, he stopped her mouth.

'Go about your business, ma'am. You can't cook 'em. I never expected you could: I was a fool to try you. It requires at least ten years' instruction before a man can get a woman to cook his chop as he likes it.'

'But what was your complaint, sir?' said Mrs. Hawkshaw, imploringly.

'That's right!' and he rubbed his hands, and brightened his eyes savagely. 'That's the way. Opportunity for gossip! Thing's well done --down it goes: you know that. You can't have a word over it--eh?'

Thing's done fit to toss on a dungheap, aha! Then there's a cackle! My belief is, you do it on purpose. Can't be such rank idiots. You do it on purpose. All done for gossip!

'Oh, sir, no!' The landlady half curtsied.

'Oh, ma'am, yes!' The old gentleman bobbed his head.

'No, indeed, sir!' The landlady shook hers.

'Damn it, ma'am, I swear you do.'

Symptoms of wrath here accompanied the declaration; and, with a sigh and a very bitter feeling, Mrs. Hawkshaw allowed him to have the last word. Apparently this--which I must beg to call the lady's morsel--comforted his irascible system somewhat; for he remained in a state of composure eight minutes by the clock. And mark how little things hang together. Another word from the landlady, precipitating a retort from him, and a gesture or muttering from her; and from him a snapping outburst, and from her a sign that she held out still; in fact, had she chosen to battle for that last word, as in other cases she might have done, then would he have exploded, gone to bed in the dark, and insisted upon sleeping: the consequence of which would have been to change this history. Now while Mrs. Hawkshaw was upstairs, Mrs. Mel called the servant, who took her to the kitchen, where she saw a prime loin of mutton; off which she cut two chops with a cunning hand: and these she toasted at a gradual distance, putting a plate beneath them, and a tin behind, and hanging the chops so that they would turn without having to be pierced. The bell rang twice before she could say the chops were ready. The first time, the maid had to tell the old gentleman she was taking up his water. Her next excuse was, that she had dropped her candle. The chops ready--who was to take them?

'Really, Mrs. Harrington, you are so clever, you ought, if I might be so bold as say so; you ought to end it yourself,' said the landlady. 'I can't ask him to eat them: he was all but on the busting point when I left him.'

'And that there candle did for him quite,' said Mary, the maid.

'I'm afraid it's chops cooked for nothing,' added the landlady.

Mrs. Mel saw them endangered. The maid held back: the landlady feared.

'We can but try,' she said.

'Oh! I wish, mum, you'd face him, 'stead o' me,' said Mary; 'I do dread that old bear's den.'

'Here, I will go,' said Mrs. Mel. 'Has he got his ale? Better draw it fresh, if he drinks any.'

And upstairs she marched, the landlady remaining below to listen for the

commencement of the disturbance. An utterance of something certainly followed Mrs. Mel's entrance into the old bear's den. Then silence. Then what might have been question and answer. Then--was Mrs. Mel assaulted? and which was knocked down? It really was a chair being moved to the table. The door opened.

'Yes, ma'am; do what you like,' the landlady heard. Mrs. Mel descended, saying: 'Send him up some fresh ale.'

'And you have made him sit down obedient to those chops?' cried the landlady. 'Well might poor dear Mr. Harrington--pleasant man as he was! --say, as he used to say, "There's lovely women in the world, Mrs. Hawkshaw," he'd say, "and there's Duchesses," he'd say, "and there's they that can sing, and can dance, and some," he says, "that can cook." But he'd look sly as he'd stoop his head and shake it. "Roll 'em into one," he says, "and not any of your grand ladies can match my wife at home."

And, indeed, Mrs. Harrington, he told me he thought so many a time in the great company he frequented.'

Perfect peace reigning above, Mrs. Hawkshaw and Mrs. Mel sat down to supper below; and Mrs. Hawkshaw talked much of the great one gone. His relict did not care to converse about the dead, save in their practical aspect as ghosts; but she listened, and that passed the time. By-and-by, the old gentleman rang, and sent a civil message to know if the landlady had ship's rum in the house.

'Dear! here's another trouble,' cried the poor woman. 'No--none!'

'Say, yes,' said Mrs. Mel, and called Dandy, and charged him to run down the street to the square, and ask for the house of Mr. Coxwell, the maltster, and beg of him, in her name, a bottle of his ship's rum.

'And don't you tumble down and break the bottle, Dandy. Accidents with spirit-bottles are not excused.'

Dandy went on the errand, after an energetic grunt.

In due time he returned with the bottle, whole and sound, and Mr. Coxwell's compliments. Mrs. Mel examined the cork to see that no process of suction had been attempted, and then said:

'Carry it up to him, Dandy. Let him see there's a man in the house besides himself.'

'Why, my dear,' the landlady turned to her, 'it seems natural to you to be mistress where you go. I don't at all mind, for ain't it my profit? But you do take us off our legs.'

Then the landlady, warmed by gratitude, told her that the old gentleman was the great London brewer, who brewed there with his brother, and brewed for himself five miles out of Fallow field, half of which and a good part of the neighbourhood he owned, and his name was Mr. Tom

Cogglesby.

'Oh!' said Mrs. Mel. 'And his brother is Mr. Andrew.'

'That 's it,' said the landlady. 'And because he took it into his head to go and to choose for himself, and be married, no getting his brother, Mr. Tom, to speak to him. Why not, indeed? If there's to be no marrying, the sooner we lay down and give up, the better, I think. But that 's his way. He do hate us women, Mrs. Harrington. I have heard he was crossed. Some say it was the lady of Beckley Court, who was a Beauty, when he was only a poor cobbler's son.'

Mrs. Mel breathed nothing of her relationship to Mr. Tom, but continued from time to time to express solicitude about Dandy. They heard the door open, and old Tom laughing in a capital good temper, and then Dandy came down, evidently full of ship's rum.

'He's pumped me!' said Dandy, nodding heavily at his mistress.

Mrs. Mel took him up to his bed-room, and locked the door. On her way back she passed old Tom's chamber, and his chuckles were audible to her.

'They finished the rum,' said Mrs. Hawkshaw.

'I shall rate him for that to-morrow,' said Mrs. Mel. 'Giving that poor beast liquor!'

'Rate Mr. Tom! Oh! Mrs. Harrington! Why, he'll snap your head off for a word.'

Mrs. Mel replied that her head would require a great deal of snapping to come off.

During this conversation they had both heard a singular intermittent noise above. Mrs. Hawkshaw was the first to ask:

'What can it be? More trouble with him? He's in his bed-room now.'

'Mad with drink, like Dandy, perhaps,' said Mrs. Mel.

'Hark!' cried the landlady. 'Oh!'

It seemed that Old Tom was bouncing about in an extraordinary manner. Now came a pause, as if he had sworn to take his rest: now the room shook and the windows rattled.

'One 'd think, really, his bed was a frying-pan, and him a live fish in it,' said the landlady. 'Oh--there, again! My goodness! have he got a flea?'

The thought was alarming. Mrs. Mel joined in:

'Or a -----'

'Don't! don't, my dear!' she was cut short. 'Oh! one o' them little things 'd be ruin to me. To think o' that! Hark at him! It must be. And what's to do? I 've sent the maids to bed. We haven't a man. If I was to go and knock at his door, and ask?'

'Better try and get him to be quiet somehow.'

'Ah! I dare say I shall make him fire out fifty times worse.'

Mrs. Hawkshaw stipulated that Mrs. Mel should stand by her, and the two women went up-stairs and stood at Old Tom's door. There they could hear him fuming and muttering imprecations, and anon there was an interval of silence, and then the room was shaken, and the cursings recommenced.

'It must be a fight he 's having with a flea,' said the landlady. 'Oh! pray heaven, it is a flea. For a flea, my dear-gentlemen may bring that themselves; but a b-----, that's a stationary, and born of a bed. Don't you hear? The other thing 'd give him a minute's rest; but a flea's hop-hop-off and on. And he sound like an old gentleman worried by a flea. What are you doing?'

Mrs. Mel had knocked at the door. The landlady waited breathlessly for the result. It appeared to have quieted Old Tom.

'What's the matter?' said Mrs. Mel, severely.

The landlady implored her to speak him fair, and reflect on the desperate things he might attempt.

'What's the matter? Can anything be done for you?'

Mr. Tom Cogglesby's reply comprised an insinuation so infamous regarding women when they have a solitary man in their power, that it cannot be placed on record.

'Is anything the matter with your bed?'

'Anything? Yes; anything is the matter, ma'am. Hope twenty live geese inside it's enough-eh? Bed, do you call it? It's the rack! It's damnation! Bed? Ha!'

After delivering this, he was heard stamping up and down the room.

'My very best bed!' whispered the landlady. 'Would it please you, sir, to change--I can give you another?'

'I'm not a man of experiments, ma'am--specially in strange houses.'

'So very, very sorry!'

'What the deuce!' Old Tom came close to the door. 'You whimpering! You put a man in a beast of a bed--you drive him half mad--and then begin to

blubber! Go away.'

'I am so sorry, sir!'

'If you don't go away, ma'am, I shall think your intentions are improper.'

'Oh, my goodness!' cried poor Mrs. Hawkshaw. 'What can one do with him?' Mrs. Mel put Mrs. Hawkshaw behind her.

'Are you dressed?' she called out.

In this way Mrs. Mel tackled Old Tom. He was told that should he consent to cover himself decently, she would come into his room and make his bed comfortable. And in a voice that dispersed armies of innuendoes, she bade him take his choice, either to rest quiet or do her bidding. Had Old Tom found his master at last, and in one of the hated sex? Breathlessly Mrs. Hawkshaw waited his answer, and she was an astonished woman when it came.

'Very well, ma'am. Wait a couple of minutes. Do as you like.'

On their admission to the interior of the chamber, Old Tom was exhibited in his daily garb, sufficiently subdued to be civil and explain the cause of his discomfort. Lumps in his bed: he was bruised by them. He supposed he couldn't ask women to judge for themselves--they'd be shrieking--but he could assure them he was blue all down his back. Mrs. Mel and Mrs. Hawkshaw turned the bed about, and punched it, and rolled it.

'Ha!' went Old Tom, 'what's the good of that? That's just how I found it. Moment I got into bed geese began to put up their backs.'

Mrs. Mel seldom indulged in a joke, and then only when it had a proverbial cast. On the present occasion, the truth struck her forcibly, and she said:

'One fool makes many, and so, no doubt, does one goose.'

Accompanied by a smile the words would have seemed impudent; but spoken as a plain fact, and with a grave face, it set Old Tom blinking like a small boy ten minutes after the whip.

'Now,' she pursued, speaking to him as to an old child, 'look here. This is how you manage. Knead down in the middle of the bed. Then jump into the hollow. Lie there, and you needn't wake till morning.'

Old Tom came to the side of the bed. He had prepared himself for a wretched night, an uproar, and eternal complaints against the house, its inhabitants, and its foundations; but a woman stood there who as much as told him that digging his fist into the flock and jumping into the hole--into that hole under his, eyes--was all that was wanted! that he had been making a noise for nothing, and because he had not the wit to hit on

a simple contrivance! Then, too, his jest about the geese--this woman had put a stop to that! He inspected the hollow cynically. A man might instruct him on a point or two: Old Tom was not going to admit that a woman could.

'Oh, very well; thank you, ma'am; that's your idea. I'll try it. Good night.'

'Good night,' returned Mrs. Mel. 'Don't forget to jump into the middle.'

'Head foremost, ma'am?'

'As you weigh,' said Mrs. Mel, and Old Tom trumped his lips, silenced if not beaten. Beaten, one might almost say, for nothing more was heard of him that night.

He presented himself to Mrs. Mel after breakfast next morning.

'Slept well, ma'am.'

'Oh! then you did as I directed you,' said Mrs. Mel.

'Those chops, too, very good. I got through 'em.'

'Eating, like scratching, only wants a beginning,' said Mrs. Mel.

'Ha! you've got your word, then, as well as everybody else. Where's your Dandy this morning, ma'am?'

'Locked up. You ought to be ashamed to give that poor beast liquor. He won't get fresh air to-day.'

'Ha! May I ask you where you're going to-day, ma'am?'

'I am going to Beckley.'

'So am I, ma'am. What d' ye say, if we join company. Care for insinuations?'

'I want a conveyance of some sort,' returned Mrs. Mel.

'Object to a donkey, ma'am?'

'Not if he's strong and will go.'

'Good,' said Old Tom; and while he spoke a donkey-cart stopped in front of the Dolphin, and a well-dressed man touched his hat.

'Get out of that damned bad habit, will you?' growled Old Tom. 'What do you mean by wearing out the brim o' your hat in that way? Help this woman in.'

Mrs. Mel helped herself to a part of the seat.

'We are too much for the donkey,' she said.

'Ha, that's right. What I have, ma'am, is good. I can't pretend to horses, but my donkey's the best. Are you going to cry about him?'

'No. When he's tired I shall either walk or harness you,' said Mrs. Mel.

This was spoken half-way down the High Street of Fallow field. Old Tom looked full in her face, and bawled out:

'Deuce take it. Are you a woman?'

'I have borne three girls and one boy,' said Mrs. Mel.

'What sort of a husband?'

'He is dead.'

'Ha! that's an opening, but 'tain't an answer. I'm off to Beckley on a marriage business. I 'm the son of a cobbler, so I go in a donkey-cart. No damned pretences for me. I'm going to marry off a young tailor to a gal he's been playing the lord to. If she cares for him she'll take him: if not, they're all the luckier, both of 'em.'

'What's the tailor's name?' said Mrs. Mel.

'You are a woman,' returned Old Tom. 'Now, come, ma'am, don't you feel ashamed of being in a donkeycart?'

'I 'm ashamed of men, sometimes,' said Mrs. Mel; 'never of animals.'

'Shamed o' me, perhaps.'

'I don't know you.'

'Ha! well! I'm a man with no pretences. Do you like 'em? How have you brought up your three girls and one boy? No pretences--eh?'

Mrs. Mel did not answer, and Old Tom jogged the reins and chuckled, and asked his donkey if he wanted to be a racer.

'Should you take me for a gentleman, ma'am?'

'I dare say you are, sir, at heart. Not from your manner of speech.'

'I mean appearances, ma'am.'

'I judge by the disposition.'

'You do, ma'am? Then, deuce take it, if you are a woman, you 're ----'

Old Tom had no time to conclude.

A great noise of wheels, and a horn blown, caused them both to turn their heads, and they beheld a curricle descending upon them vehemently, and a fashionably attired young gentleman straining with all his might at the reins. The next instant they were rolling on the bank. About twenty yards ahead the curricle was halted and turned about to see the extent of the mischief done.

'Pardon, a thousand times, my worthy couple,' cried the sonorous Mr. Raikes. 'What we have seen we swear not to divulge. Franco and Fred--your pledge!'

'We swear!' exclaimed this couple.

But suddenly the cheeks of Mr. John Raikes flushed. He alighted from the box, and rushing up to Old Tom, was shouting, 'My bene--'

'Do you want my toe on your plate?' Old Tom stopped him with.

The mysterious words completely changed the aspect of Mr. John Raikes. He bowed obsequiously and made his friend Franco step down and assist in the task of reestablishing the donkey, who fortunately had received no damage.

CHAPTER XXVII

EXHIBITS ROSE'S GENERALSHIP; EVAN'S PERFORMANCE ON THE SECOND FIDDLE; AND THE WRETCHEDNESS OF THE COUNTESS

We left Rose and Evan on their way to Lady Jocelyn. At the library-door Rose turned to him, and with her chin archly lifted sideways, said:

'I know what you feel; you feel foolish.'

Now the sense of honour, and of the necessity of acting the part it imposes on him, may be very strong in a young man; but certainly, as a rule, the sense of ridicule is more poignant, and Evan was suffering horrid pangs. We none of us like to play second fiddle. To play second fiddle to a young woman is an abomination to us all. But to have to perform upon that instrument to the darling of our hearts--would we not rather die? nay, almost rather end the duet precipitately and with violence. Evan, when he passed Drummond into the house, and quietly returned his gaze, endured the first shock of this strange feeling. There could be no doubt that he was playing second fiddle to Rose. And what was he about to do? Oh, horror! to stand like a criminal, and say, or worse, have said for him, things to tip the ears with fire! To tell the young lady's mother that he had won her daughter's love, and meant--what did he mean? He knew not. Alas! he was second fiddle; he could only mean what she meant. Evan loved Rose deeply and completely, but noble manhood was strong in him. You may sneer at us, if you please, ladies. We have been educated in a theory, that when you lead off with

the bow, the order of Nature is reversed, and it is no wonder therefore, that, having stript us of one attribute, our fine feathers moult, and the majestic cock-like march which distinguishes us degenerates. You unsex us, if I may dare to say so. Ceasing to be men, what are we? If we are to please you rightly, always allow us to play First.

Poor Evan did feel foolish. Whether Rose saw it in his walk, or had a loving feminine intuition of it, and was aware of the golden rule I have just laid down, we need not inquire. She hit the fact, and he could only stammer, and bid her open the door.

'No,' she said, after a slight hesitation, 'it will be better that I should speak to Mama alone, I see. Walk out on the lawn, dear, and wait for me. And if you meet Drummond, don't be angry with him. Drummond is very fond of me, and of course I shall teach him to be fond of you. He only thinks . . . what is not true, because he does not know you. I do thoroughly, and there, you see, I give you my hand.'

Evan drew the dear hand humbly to his lips. Rose then nodded meaningly, and let her eyes dwell on him, and went in to her mother to open the battle.

Could it be that a flame had sprung up in those grey eyes latterly? Once they were like morning before sunrise. How soft and warm and tenderly transparent they could now be! Assuredly she loved him. And he, beloved by the noblest girl ever fashioned, why should he hang his head, and shrink at the thought of human faces, like a wretch doomed to the pillory? He visioned her last glance, and lightning emotions of pride and happiness flashed through his veins. The generous, brave heart! Yes, with her hand in his, he could stand at bay--meet any fate. Evan accepted Rose because he believed in her love, and judged it by the strength of his own; her sacrifice of her position he accepted, because in his soul he knew he should have done no less. He mounted to the level of her nobleness, and losing nothing of the beauty of what she did, it was not so strange to him.

Still there was the baleful reflection that he was second fiddle to his beloved. No harmony came of it in his mind. How could he take an initiative? He walked forth on the lawn, where a group had gathered under the shade of a maple, consisting of Drummond Forth, Mrs. Evremonde, Mrs. Shorne, Mr. George Uplift, Seymour Jocelyn, and Ferdinand Laxley. A little apart Juliana Bonner was walking with Miss Carrington. Juliana, when she saw him, left her companion, and passing him swiftly, said, 'Follow me presently into the conservatory.'

Evan strolled near the group, and bowed to Mrs. Shorne, whom he had not seen that morning.

The lady's acknowledgement of his salute was constrained, and but a shade on the side of recognition. They were silent till he was out of earshot. He noticed that his second approach produced the same effect. In the conservatory Juliana was awaiting him.

'It is not to give you roses I called you here, Mr. Harrington,' she said.

'Not if I beg one?' he responded.

'Ah! but you do not want them from . . . It depends on the person.'

'Pluck this,' said Evan, pointing to a white rose.

She put her fingers to the stem.

What folly!' she cried, and turned from it.

'Are you afraid that I shall compromise you?' asked Evan.

'You care for me too little for that.'

'My dear Miss Bonner!'

'How long did you know Rose before you called her by her Christian name?'

Evan really could not remember, and was beginning to wonder what he had been called there for. The little lady had feverish eyes and fingers, and seemed to be burning to speak, but afraid.

'I thought you had gone,' she dropped her voice, 'without wishing me good-bye.'

'I certainly should not do that, Miss Bonner.'

'Formal!' she exclaimed, half to herself. 'Miss Bonner thanks you. Do you think I wish you to stay? No friend of yours would wish it. You do not know the selfishness--brutal!--of these people of birth, as they call it.'

'I have met with nothing but kindness here,' said Evan.

'Then go while you can feel that,' she answered; 'for it cannot last another hour. Here is the rose.' She broke it from the stem and handed it to him. 'You may wear that, and they are not so likely to call you an adventurer, and names of that sort. I am hardly considered a lady by them.'

An adventurer! The full meaning of the phrase struck Evan's senses when he was alone. Miss Bonner knew something of his condition, evidently. Perhaps it was generally known, and perhaps it was thought that he had come to win Rose for his worldly advantage! The idea was overwhelmingly new to him. Up started self-love in arms. He would renounce her.

It is no insignificant contest when love has to crush self-love utterly. At moments it can be done. Love has divine moments. There are times also when Love draws part of his being from self-love, and can find no support without it.

But how could he renounce her, when she came forth to him,--smiling, speaking freshly and lightly, and with the colour on her cheeks which showed that she had done her part? How could he retract a step?

'I have told Mama, Evan. That's over. She heard it first from me.'

'And she?'

'Dear Evan, if you are going to be sensitive, I'll run away. You that fear no danger, and are the bravest man I ever knew! I think you are really trembling. She will speak to Papa, and then--and then, I suppose, they will both ask you whether you intend to give me up, or no. I'm afraid you'll do the former.'

'Your mother--Lady Jocelyn listened to you, Rose? You told her all?'

'Every bit.'

'And what does she think of me?'

'Thinks you very handsome and astonishing, and me very idiotic and natural, and that there is a great deal of bother in the world, and that my noble relatives will lay the blame of it on her. No, dear, not all that; but she talked very sensibly to me, and kindly. You know she is called a philosopher: nobody knows how deep-hearted she is, though. My mother is true as steel. I can't separate the kindness from the sense, or I would tell you all she said. When I say kindness, I don't mean any "Oh, my child," and tears, and kisses, and maundering, you know. You mustn't mind her thinking me a little fool. You want to know what she thinks of you. She said nothing to hurt you, Evan, and we have gained ground so far, and now we'll go and face our enemies. Uncle Mel expects to hear about your appointment, in a day or two, and----'

'Oh, Rose!' Evan burst out.

'What is it?'

'Why must I owe everything to you?'

'Why, dear? Why, because, if you do, it's very much better than your owing it to anybody else. Proud again?'

Not proud: only second fiddle.

'You know, dear Evan, when two people love, there is no such thing as owing between them.'

'Rose, I have been thinking. It is not too late. I love you, God knows! I did in Portugal: I do now--more and more. But Oh, my bright angel!' he ended the sentence in his breast.

'Well? but--what?'

Evan sounded down the meaning of his 'but.' Stripped of the usual heroics, it was, 'what will be thought of me?' not a small matter to any of us. He caught a distant glimpse of the little bit of bare selfishness, and shrank from it.

'Too late,' cried Rose. 'The battle has commenced now, and, Mr. Harrington, I will lean on your arm, and be led to my dear friends yonder. Do they think that I am going to put on a mask to please them? Not for anybody! What they are to know they may as well know at once.'

She looked in Evan's face.

'Do you hesitate?'

He felt the contrast between his own and hers; between the niggard spirit of the beggarly receiver, and the high bloom of the exalted giver. Nevertheless, he loved her too well not to share much of her nature, and wedding it suddenly, he said:

'Rose; tell me, now. If you were to see the place where I was born, could you love me still?'

'Yes, Evan.'

'If you were to hear me spoken of with contempt--'

'Who dares?' cried Rose. 'Never to me!'

'Contempt of what I spring from, Rose. Names used . . . Names are used . . .'

'Tush!--names!' said Rose, reddening. 'How cowardly that is! Have you finished? Oh, faint heart! I suppose I'm not a fair lady, or you wouldn't have won me. Now, come. Remember, Evan, I conceal nothing; and if anything makes you wretched here, do think how I love you.'

In his own firm belief he had said everything to arrest her in her course, and been silenced by transcendent logic. She thought the same.

Rose made up to the conclave under the maple.

The voices hushed as they approached.

'Capital weather,' said Rose. 'Does Harry come back from London to-morrow--does anybody know?'

'Not aware,' Laxley was heard to reply.

'I want to speak a word to you, Rose,' said Mrs. Shorne.

'With the greatest pleasure, my dear aunt': and Rose walked after her.

'My dear Rose,' Mrs. Shorne commenced, 'your conduct requires that I should really talk to you most seriously. You are probably not aware of what you are doing: Nobody likes ease and natural familiarity more than I do. I am persuaded it is nothing but your innocence. You are young to the world's ways, and perhaps a little too headstrong, and vain.'

'Conceited and wilful,' added Rose.

'If you like the words better. But I must say--I do not wish to trouble your father--you know he cannot bear worry--but I must say, that if you do not listen to me, he must be spoken to.'

'Why not Mama?'

'I should naturally select my brother first. No doubt you understand me.'

'Any distant allusion to Mr. Harrington?'

'Pertness will not avail you, Rose.'

'So you want me to do secretly what I am doing openly?'

'You must and shall remember you are a Jocelyn, Rose.'

'Only half, my dear aunt!'

'And by birth a lady, Rose.'

'And I ought to look under my eyes, and blush, and shrink, whenever I come near a gentleman, aunt!'

'Ah! my dear. No doubt you will do what is most telling. Since you have spoken of this Mr. Harrington, I must inform you that I have it on certain authority from two or three sources, that he is the son of a small shopkeeper at Lymport.'

Mrs. Shorne watched the effect she had produced.

'Indeed, aunt?' cried Rose. 'And do you know this to be true?'

'So when you talk of gentlemen, Rose, please be careful whom you include.'

'I mustn't include poor Mr. Harrington? Then my Grandpapa Bonner is out of the list, and such numbers of good worthy men?'

Mrs. Shorne understood the hit at the defunct manufacturer. She said: 'You must most distinctly give me your promise, while this young adventurer remains here--I think it will not be long--not to be compromising yourself further, as you now do. Or--indeed I must--I shall let your parents perceive that such conduct is ruin to a young girl in your position, and certainly you will be sent to Elburne House for the

winter.'

Rose lifted her hands, crying: 'Ye Gods!--as Harry says. But I'm very much obliged to you, my dear aunt. Concerning Mr. Harrington, wonderfully obliged. Son of a small-----! Is it a t-t-tailor, aunt?'

'It is--I have heard.'

'And that is much worse. Cloth is viler than cotton! And don't they call these creatures sn-snips? Some word of that sort?'

'It makes little difference what they are called.'

'Well, aunt, I sincerely thank you. As this subject seems to interest you, go and see Mama, now. She can tell you a great deal more: and, if you want her authority, come back to me.'

Rose then left her aunt in a state of extreme indignation. It was a clever move to send Mrs. Shorne to Lady Jocelyn. They were antagonistic, and, rational as Lady Jocelyn was, and with her passions under control, she was unlikely to side with Mrs. Shorne.

Now Rose had fought against herself, and had, as she thought, conquered. In Portugal Evan's half insinuations had given her small suspicions, which the scene on board the *Jocasta* had half confirmed: and since she came to communicate with her own mind, she bore the attack of all that rose against him, bit by bit. She had not been too blind to see the unpleasantness of the fresh facts revealed to her. They did not change her; on the contrary, drew her to him faster--and she thought she had completely conquered whatever could rise against him. But when Juliana Bonner told her that day that Evan was not only the son of the thing, but the thing himself, and that his name could be seen any day in Lymport, and that he had come from the shop to Beckley, poor Rosey had a sick feeling that almost sank her. For a moment she looked back wildly to the doors of retreat. Her eyes had to feed on Evan, she had to taste some of the luxury of love, before she could gain composure, and then her arrogance towards those she called her enemies did not quite return.

'In that letter you told me all--all--all, Evan?'

'Yes, all-religiously.'

'Oh, why did I miss it!'

'Would it give you pleasure?'

She feared to speak, being tender as a mother to his sensitiveness. The expressive action of her eyebrows sufficed. She could not bear concealment, or doubt, or a shadow of dishonesty; and he, gaining force of soul to join with hers, took her hands and related the contents of the letter fully. She was pale when he had finished. It was some time before she was able to get free from the trammels of prejudice, but when she did, she did without reserve, saying: 'Evan, there is no man who

would have done so much.' These little exaltations and generousities bind lovers tightly. He accepted the credit she gave him, and at that we need not wonder. It helped him further to accept herself, otherwise could he --his name known to be on a shop-front--have aspired to her still? But, as an unexampled man, princely in soul, as he felt, why, he might kneel to Rose Jocelyn. So they listened to one another, and blinded the world by putting bandages on their eyes, after the fashion of little boys and girls.

Meantime the fair being who had brought these two from the ends of the social scale into this happy tangle, the beneficent Countess, was wretched. When you are in the enemy's country you are dependent on the activity and zeal of your spies and scouts, and the best of these--Polly Wheedle, to wit--had proved defective, recalcitrant even. And because a letter had been lost in her room! as the Countess exclaimed to herself, though Polly gave her no reasons. The Countess had, therefore, to rely chiefly upon personal observation, upon her intuitions, upon her sensations in the proximity of the people to whom she was opposed; and from these she gathered that she was, to use the word which seemed fitting to her, betrayed. Still to be sweet, still to smile and to amuse,--still to give her zealous attention to the business of the diplomatist's Election, still to go through her church-services devoutly, required heroism; she was equal to it, for she had remarkable courage; but it was hard to feel no longer at one with Providence. Had not Providence suggested Sir Abraham to her? killed him off at the right moment in aid of her? And now Providence had turned, and the assistance she had formerly received from that Power, and given thanks for so profusely, was the cause of her terror. It was absolutely as if she had been borrowing from a Jew, and were called upon to pay fifty-fold interest.

'Evan!' she writes in a gasp to Harriet. 'We must pack up and depart. Abandon everything. He has disgraced us all, and ruined himself. Impossible that we can stay for the pic-nic. We are known, dear. Think of my position one day in this house! Particulars when I embrace you. I dare not trust a letter here. If Evan had confided in me! He is impenetrable. He will be low all his life, and I refuse any more to sully myself in attempting to lift him. For Silva's sake I must positively break the connection. Heaven knows what I have done for this boy, and will support me in the feeling that I have done enough. My conscience at least is safe.'

Like many illustrious Generals, the Countess had, for the hour, lost heart. We find her, however, the next day, writing:

'Oh! Harriet! what trials for sisterly affection! Can I possibly--weather the gale, as the old L---- sailors used to say? It is dreadful. I fear I am by duty bound to stop on. Little Bonner thinks Evan quite a duke's son, has been speaking to her Grandmama, and to-day, this morning, the venerable old lady quite as much as gave me to understand that an union between our brother and her son's child would sweetly gratify her, and help her to go to her rest in peace. Can I chase that spark of comfort from one so truly pious? Dearest Juliana! I have anticipated

Evan's feeling for her, and so she thinks his conduct cold. Indeed, I told her, point blank, he loved her. That, you know, is different from saying, dying of love, which would have been an untruth. But, Evan, of course! No getting him! Should Juliana ever reproach me, I can assure the child that any man is in love with any woman--which is really the case. It is, you dear humdrum! what the dictionary calls "nascent." I never liked the word, but it stands for a fact.'

The Countess here exhibits the weakness of a self-educated intelligence. She does not comprehend the joys of scholarship in her employment of Latinisms. It will be pardoned to her by those who perceive the profound piece of feminine discernment which precedes it.

'I do think I shall now have courage to stay out the pic-nic,' she continues. 'I really do not think all is known. Very little can be known, or I am sure I could not feel as I do. It would burn me up. George Up--- does not dare; and his most beautiful lady-love had far better not. Mr. Forth may repent his whispers. But, Oh! what Evan may do! Rose is almost detestable. Manners, my dear? Totally deficient!

'An ally has just come. Evan's good fortune is most miraculous. His low friend turns out to be a young Fortunatus; very original, sparkling, and in my hands to be made much of. I do think he will--for he is most zealous--he will counteract that hateful Mr. Forth, who may soon have work enough. Mr. Raikes (Evan's friend) met a mad captain in Fallow field! Dear Mr. Raikes is ready to say anything; not from love of falsehood, but because he is ready to think it. He has confessed to me that Evan told him! Louisa de Saldar has changed his opinion, and much impressed this eccentric young gentleman. Do you know any young girl who wants a fortune, and would be grateful?

'Dearest! I have decided on the pic-nic. Let your conscience be clear, and Providence cannot be against you. So I feel. Mr. Parsley spoke very beautifully to that purpose last Sunday in the morning service. A little too much through his nose, perhaps; but the poor young man's nose is a great organ, and we will not cast it in his teeth more than nature has done. I said so to my diplomatist, who was amused. If you are sparkingly vulgar with the English, you are aristocratic. Oh! what principle we women require in the thorny walk of life. I can show you a letter when we meet that will astonish humdrum. Not so diplomatic as the writer thought! Mrs. Melville (sweet woman!) must continue to practise civility; for a woman who is a wife, my dear, in verity she lives in a glass house, and let her fling no stones. "Let him who is without sin." How beautiful that Christian sentiment! I hope I shall be pardoned, but it always seems to me that what we have to endure is infinitely worse than any other suffering, for you find no comfort for the children of T----s in Scripture, nor any defence of their dreadful position. Robbers, thieves, Magdalens! but, no! the unfortunate offspring of that class are not even mentioned: at least, in my most diligent perusal of the Scriptures, I never lighted upon any remote allusion; and we know the Jews did wear clothing. Outcasts, verily! And Evan could go, and write --but I have no patience with him. He is the blind tool of his mother, and anybody's puppet.'

The letter concludes, with horrid emphasis:

'The Madre in Beckley! Has sent for Evan from a low public-house! I have intercepted the messenger. Evan closeted with Sir Franks. Andrew's horrible old brother with Lady Jocelyn. The whole house, from garret to kitchen, full of whispers!'

A prayer to Providence closes the communication.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TOM COGGLESEY'S PROPOSITION

The appearance of a curricle and a donkey-cart within the gates of Beckley Court, produced a sensation among the men of the lower halls, and a couple of them rushed out, with the left calf considerably in advance, to defend the house from violation. Toward the curricle they directed what should have been a bow, but was a nod. Their joint attention was then given to the donkey-cart, in which old Tom Cogglesby sat alone, bunchy in figure, bunched in face, his shrewd grey eyes twinkling under the bush of his eyebrows.

'Oy, sir--you! my man!' exclaimed the tallest of the pair, resolutely. 'This won't do. Don't you know driving this sort of conveyance slap along the gravel 'ere, up to the pillars, 's unparliamentary? Can't be allowed. Now, right about!'

This address, accompanied by a commanding elevation of the dexter hand, seemed to excite Mr. Raikes far more than Old Tom. He alighted from his perch in haste, and was running up to the stalwart figure, crying, 'Fellow!' when, as you tell a dog to lie down, Old Tom called out, 'Be quiet, Sir!' and Raikes halted with prompt military obedience.

The sight of the curricle acting satellite to the donkey-cart staggered the two footmen.

'Are you lords?' sang out Old Tom.

A burst of laughter from the friends of Mr. Raikes, in the curricle, helped to make the powdered gentlemen aware of a sarcasm, and one with no little dignity replied that they were not lords.

'Oh! Then come and hold my donkey.'

Great irresolution was displayed at the injunction, but having consulted the face of Mr. Raikes, one fellow, evidently half overcome by what was put upon him, with the steps of Adam into exile, descended to the gravel, and laid his hand on the donkey's head.

'Hold hard!' cried Old Tom. 'Whisper in his ear. He'll know your language.'

'May I have the felicity of assisting you to terra firma?' interposed Mr. Raikes, with the bow of deferential familiarity.

'Done that once too often,' returned Old Tom, jumping out. 'There. What's the fee? There's a crown for you that ain't afraid of a live donkey; and there 's a sixpenny bit for you that are--to keep up your courage; and when he's dead you shall have his skin--to shave by.'

'Excellent!' shouted Raikes.

'Thomas!' he addressed a footman, 'hand in my card. Mr. John Feversham Raikes.'

'And tell my lady, Tom Cogglesby's come,' added the owner of that name.

We will follow Tom Cogglesby, as he chooses to be called.

Lady Jocelyn rose on his entering the library, and walking up to him, encountered him with a kindly full face.

'So I see you at last, Tom?' she said, without releasing his hand; and Old Tom mounted patches of red in his wrinkled cheeks, and blinked, and betrayed a singular antiquated bashfulness, which ended, after a mumble of 'Yes, there he was, and he hoped her ladyship was well,' by his seeking refuge in a chair, where he sat hard, and fixed his attention on the leg of a table.

'Well, Tom, do you find much change in me?' she was woman enough to continue.

He was obliged to look up.

'Can't say I do, my lady.'

'Don't you see the grey hairs, Tom?'

'Better than a wig,' rejoined he.

Was it true that her ladyship had behaved rather ill to Old Tom in her youth? Excellent women have been naughty girls, and young Beauties will have their train. It is also very possible that Old Tom had presumed upon trifles, and found it difficult to forgive her his own folly.

'Preferable to a wig? Well, I would rather see you with your natural thatch. You're bent, too. You look as if you had kept away from Beckley a little too long.'

'Told you, my lady, I should come when your daughter was marriageable.'

'Oho! that's it? I thought it was the Election!'

'Election be ----- hem!--beg pardon, my lady.'

'Swear, Tom, if it relieves you. I think it bad to check an oath or a sneeze.'

'I 'm come to see you on business, my lady, or I shouldn't have troubled you.'

'Malice?'

'You 'll see I don't bear any, my lady.'

'Ah! if you had only sworn roundly twenty-five years ago, what a much younger man you would have been! and a brave capital old friend whom I should not have missed all that time.'

'Come!' cried Old Tom, varying his eyes rapidly between her ladyship's face and the floor, 'you acknowledge I had reason to.'

'Mais, cela va sans dire.'

'Cobblers' sons ain't scholars, my lady.'

'And are not all in the habit of throwing their fathers in our teeth, I hope!'

Old Tom wriggled in his chair. 'Well, my lady, I'm not going to make a fool of myself at my time o' life. Needn't be alarmed now. You've got the bell-rope handy and a husband on the premises.'

Lady Jocelyn smiled, stood up, and went to him. 'I like an honest fist,' she said, taking his. 'We 're not going to be doubtful friends, and we won't snap and snarl. That's for people who're independent of wigs, Tom. I find, for my part, that a little grey on the top of any head cools the temper amazingly. I used to be rather hot once.'

'You could be peppery, my lady.'

'Now I'm cool, Tom, and so must you be; or, if you fight, it must be in my cause, as you did when you thrashed that saucy young carter. Do you remember?'

'If you'll sit ye down, my lady, I'll just tell you what I'm come for,' said Old Tom, who plainly showed that he did remember, and was alarmingly softened by her ladyship's retention of the incident.

Lady Jocelyn returned to her place.

'You've got a marriageable daughter, my lady?'

'I suppose we may call her so,' said Lady Jocelyn, with a composed glance at the ceiling.

"Gaged to be married to any young chap?"

'You must put the question to her, Tom.'

'Ha! I don't want to see her.'

At this Lady Jocelyn looked slightly relieved. Old Tom continued.

'Happen to have got a little money--not so much as many a lord's got, I dare say; such as 'tis, there 'tis. Young fellow I know wants a wife, and he shall have best part of it. Will that suit ye, my lady?'

Lady Jocelyn folded her hands. 'Certainly; I've no objection. What it has to do with me I can't perceive.'

'Ahem!' went Old Tom. 'It won't hurt your daughter to be married now, will it?'

'Oh! my daughter is the destined bride of your "young fellow,"' said Lady Jocelyn. 'Is that how it's to be?'

'She'--Old Tom cleared his throat 'she won't marry a lord, my lady; but she--'hem--if she don't mind that--'ll have a deuced sight more hard cash than many lord's son 'd give her, and a young fellow for a husband, sound in wind and limb, good bone and muscle, speaks grammar and two or three languages, and--'

'Stop!' cried Lady Jocelyn. 'I hope this is not a prize young man? If he belongs, at his age, to the unco quid, I refuse to take him for a son-in-law, and I think Rose will, too.'

Old Tom burst out vehemently: 'He's a damned good young fellow, though he isn't a lord.'

'Well,' said Lady Jocelyn, 'I 've no doubt you're in earnest, Tom. It 's curious, for this morning Rose has come to me and given me the first chapter of a botheration, which she declares is to end in the common rash experiment. What is your "young fellow's" name? Who is he? What is he?'

'Won't take my guarantee, my lady?'

'Rose--if she marries--must have a name, you know?'

Old Tom hit his knee. 'Then there's a pill for ye to swallow, for he ain't the son of a lord.'

'That's swallowed, Tom. What is he?'

'He's the son of a tradesman, then, my lady.' And Old Tom watched her to note the effect he had produced.

'More 's the pity,' was all she remarked.

'And he 'll have his thousand a year to start with; and he's a tailor, my lady.'

Her ladyship opened her eyes.

'Harrington's his name, my lady. Don't know whether you ever heard of it.'

Lady Jocelyn flung herself back in her chair. 'The queerest thing I ever met!' said she.

'Thousand a year to start with,' Old Tom went on, 'and if she marries-- I mean if he marries her, I'll settle a thousand per ann. on the first baby-boy or gal.'

'Hum! Is this gross collusion, Mr. Tom?' Lady Jocelyn inquired.

'What does that mean?'

'Have you spoken of this before to any one?'

'I haven't, my lady. Decided on it this morning. Hem! you got a son, too. He's fond of a young gal, or he ought to be. I'll settle him when I've settled the daughter.'

'Harry is strongly attached to a dozen, I believe,' said his mother.

'Well, Tom, we'll think of it. I may as well tell you: Rose has just been here to inform me that this Mr. Harrington has turned her head, and that she has given her troth, and all that sort of thing. I believe such was not to be laid to my charge in my day.'

'You were open enough, my lady,' said Old Tom. 'She's fond of the young fellow? She'll have a pill to swallow! poor young woman!'

Old Tom visibly chuckled. Lady Jocelyn had a momentary temptation to lead him out, but she did not like the subject well enough to play with it.

'Apparently Rose has swallowed it,' she said.

'Goose, shears, cabbage, and all!' muttered Old Tom. 'Got a stomach!-- she knows he's a tailor, then? The young fellow told her? He hasn't been playing the lord to her?'

'As far as he's concerned, I think he has been tolerably honest, Tom, for a man and a lover.'

'And told her he was born and bound a tailor?'

'Rose certainly heard it from him.'

Slapping his knee, Old Tom cried: 'Bravo!' For though one part of his nature was disappointed, and the best part of his plot disarranged, he liked Evan's proceeding and felt warm at what seemed to him Rose's scorn of rank.

'She must be a good gal, my lady. She couldn't have got it from t' other side. Got it from you. Not that you--'

'No,' said Lady Jocelyn, apprehending him. 'I'm afraid I have no Republican virtues. I'm afraid I should have rejected the pill. Don't be angry with me,' for Old Tom looked sour again; 'I like birth and position, and worldly advantages, and, notwithstanding Rose's pledge of the instrument she calls her heart, and in spite of your offer, I shall, I tell you honestly, counsel her to have nothing to do with--'

'Anything less than lords,' Old Tom struck in. 'Very well. Are you going to lock her up, my lady?'

'No. Nor shall I whip her with rods.'

'Leave her free to her choice?'

'She will have my advice. That I shall give her. And I shall take care that before she makes a step she shall know exactly what it leads to. Her father, of course, will exercise his judgement.' (Lady Jocelyn said this to uphold the honour of Sir Franks, knowing at the same time perfectly well that he would be wheedled by Rose.) 'I confess I like this Mr. Harrington. But it's a great misfortune for him to have had a notorious father. A tailor should certainly avoid fame, and this young man will have to carry his father on his back. He 'll never throw the great Mel off.'

Tom Cogglesby listened, and was really astonished at her ladyship's calm reception of his proposal.

'Shameful of him! shameful!' he muttered perversely: for it would have made him desolate to have had to change his opinion of her ladyship after cherishing it, and consoling himself with it, five-and-twenty years. Fearing the approach of softness, he prepared to take his leave.

'Now--your servant, my lady. I stick to my word, mind: and if your people here are willing, I--I've got a candidate up for Fall'field-- I'll knock him down, and you shall sneak in your Tory. Servant, my lady.'

Old Tom rose to go. Lady Jocelyn took his hand cordially, though she could not help smiling at the humility of the cobbler's son in his manner of speaking of the Tory candidate.

'Won't you stop with us a few days?'

'I'd rather not, I thank ye.'

'Won't you see Rose?'

'I won't. Not till she's married.'

'Well, Tom, we're friends now?'

'Not aware I've ever done you any harm, my lady.'

'Look me in the face.'

The trial was hard for him. Though she had been five-and-twenty years a wife, she was still very handsome: but he was not going to be melted, and when the perverse old fellow obeyed her, it was with an aspect of resolute disgust that would have made any other woman indignant. Lady Jocelyn laughed.

'Why, Tom, your brother Andrew's here, and makes himself comfortable with us. We rode by Brook's farm the other day. Do you remember Copping's pond--how we dragged it that night? What days we had!'

Old Tom tugged once or twice at his imprisoned fist, while these youthful frolics of his too stupid self and the wild and beautiful Miss Bonner were being recalled.

'I remember!' he said savagely, and reaching the door hurled out: 'And I remember the Bull-dogs, too! servant, my lady.' With which he effected a retreat, to avoid a ringing laugh he heard in his ears.

Lady Jocelyn had not laughed. She had done no more than look and smile kindly on the old boy. It was at the Bull-dogs, a fall of water on the borders of the park, that Tom Cogglesby, then a hearty young man, had been guilty of his folly: had mistaken her frank friendliness for a return of his passion, and his stubborn vanity still attributed her rejection of his suit to the fact of his descent from a cobbler, or, as he put it, to her infernal worship of rank.

'Poor old Tom!' said her ladyship, when alone. 'He 's rough at the rind, but sound at the core.' She had no idea of the long revenge Old Tom cherished, and had just shaped into a plot to be equal with her for the Bull-dogs.

CHAPTER XXIX

PRELUDE TO AN ENGAGEMENT

Money was a strong point with the Elburne brood. The Jocelyns very properly respected blood; but being, as Harry, their youngest representative, termed them, poor as rats, they were justified in considering it a marketable stuff; and when they married they married for money. The Hon. Miss Jocelyn had espoused a manufacturer, who failed in

his contract, and deserved his death. The diplomatist, Melville, had not stepped aside from the family traditions in his alliance with Miss Black, the daughter of a bold bankrupt, educated in affluence; and if he touched nothing but £5000 and some very pretty ringlets, that was not his fault. Sir Franks, too, mixed his pure stream with gold. As yet, however, the gold had done little more than shine on him; and, belonging to expectancy, it might be thought unsubstantial. Beckley Court was in the hands of Mrs. Bonner, who, with the highest sense of duty toward her only living child, was the last to appreciate Lady Jocelyn's entire absence of demonstrative affection, and severely reprobated her daughter's philosophic handling of certain serious subjects. Sir Franks, no doubt, came better off than the others; her ladyship brought him twenty thousand pounds, and Harry had ten in the past tense, and Rose ten in the future; but living, as he had done, a score of years anticipating the demise of an incurable invalid, he, though an excellent husband and father, could scarcely be taught to imagine that the Jocelyn object of his bargain was attained. He had the semblance of wealth, without the personal glow which absolute possession brings. It was his habit to call himself a poor man, and it was his dream that Rose should marry a rich one. Harry was hopeless. He had been his Grandmother's pet up to the years of adolescence: he was getting too old for any prospect of a military career he had no turn for diplomacy, no taste for any of the walks open to blood and birth, and was in headlong disgrace with the fountain of goodness at Beckley Court, where he was still kept in the tacit understanding that, should Juliana inherit the place, he must be at hand to marry her instantly, after the fashion of the Jocelyns. They were an injured family; for what they gave was good, and the commercial world had not behaved honourably to them. Now, Ferdinand Laxley was just the match for Rose. Born to a title and fine estate, he was evidently fond of her, and there had been a gentle hope in the bosom of Sir Franks that the family fatality would cease, and that Rose would marry both money and blood.

From this happy delusion poor Sir Franks was awakened to hear that his daughter had plighted herself to the son of a tradesman: that, as the climax to their evil fate, she who had some blood and some money of her own--the only Jocelyn who had ever united the two--was desirous of wasting herself on one who had neither. The idea was so utterly opposed to the principles Sir Franks had been trained in, that his intellect could not grasp it. He listened to his sister, Mrs. Shorne: he listened to his wife; he agreed with all they said, though what they said was widely diverse: he consented to see and speak to Evan, and he did so, and was much the most distressed. For Sir Franks liked many things in life, and hated one thing alone--which was 'bother.' A smooth world was his delight. Rose knew this, and her instruction to Evan was: 'You cannot give me up--you will go, but you cannot give me up while I am faithful to you: tell him that.' She knew that to impress this fact at once on the mind of Sir Franks would be a great gain; for in his detestation of bother he would soon grow reconciled to things monstrous: and hearing the same on both sides, the matter would assume an inevitable shape to him. Mr. Second Fiddle had no difficulty in declaring the eternity of his sentiments; but he toned them with a despair Rose did not contemplate, and added also his readiness to repair, in any way possible, the evil done. He spoke of his birth and position. Sir Franks, with a

gentlemanly delicacy natural to all lovers of a smooth world, begged him to see the main and the insurmountable objection. Birth was to be desired, of course, and position, and so forth: but without money how can two young people marry? Evan's heart melted at this generous way of putting it. He said he saw it, he had no hope: he would go and be forgotten: and begged that for any annoyance his visit might have caused Sir Franks and Lady Jocelyn, they would pardon him. Sir Franks shook him by the hand, and the interview ended in a dialogue on the condition of the knees of Black Lymport, and on horseflesh in Portugal and Spain.

Following Evan, Rose went to her father and gave him a good hour's excitement, after which the worthy gentleman hurried for consolation to Lady Jocelyn, whom he found reading a book of French memoirs, in her usual attitude, with her feet stretched out and her head thrown back, as in a distant survey of the lively people screening her from a troubled world. Her ladyship read him a piquant story, and Sir Franks capped it with another from memory; whereupon her ladyship held him wrong in one turn of the story, and Sir Franks rose to get the volume to verify, and while he was turning over the leaves, Lady Jocelyn told him incidentally of old Tom Cogglesby's visit and proposal. Sir Franks found the passage, and that her ladyship was right, which it did not move her countenance to hear.

'Ah!' said he, finding it no use to pretend there was no bother in the world, 'here's a pretty pickle! Rose says she will have that fellow.'

'Hum!' replied her ladyship. 'And if she keeps her mind a couple of years, it will be a wonder.'

'Very bad for her this sort of thing--talked about,' muttered Sir Franks. 'Ferdinand was just the man.'

'Well, yes; I suppose it's her mistake to think brains an absolute requisite,' said Lady Jocelyn, opening her book again, and scanning down a column.

Sir Franks, being imitative, adopted a similar refuge, and the talk between them was varied by quotations and choice bits from the authors they had recourse to. Both leaned back in their chairs, and spoke with their eyes on their books.

'Julia's going to write to her mother,' said he.

'Very filial and proper,' said she.

'There'll be a horrible hubbub, you know, Emily.'

'Most probably. I shall get the blame; 'cela se concoit'.'

'Young Harrington goes the day after to-morrow. Thought it better not to pack him off in a hurry.'

'And just before the pic-nic; no, certainly. I suppose it would look

odd.'

'How are we to get rid of the Countess?'

'Eh? This Bautru is amusing, Franks; but he's nothing to Vandy. 'Homme incomparable!' On the whole I find Menage rather dull. The Countess? what an accomplished liar that woman is! She seems to have stepped out of Tallemant's Gallery. Concerning the Countess, I suppose you had better apply to Melville.'

'Where the deuce did this young Harrington get his breeding from?'

'He comes of a notable sire.'

'Yes, but there's no sign of the snob in him.'

'And I exonerate him from the charge of "adventuring" after Rose. George Uplift tells me--I had him in just now--that the mother is a woman of mark and strong principle. She has probably corrected the too luxuriant nature of Mel in her offspring. That is to say in this one. 'Pour les autres, je ne dis pas'. Well, the young man will go; and if Rose chooses to become a monument of constancy, we can do nothing. I shall give my advice; but as she has not deceived me, and she is a reasonable being, I shan't interfere. Putting the case at the worst, they will not want money. I have no doubt Tom Cogglesby means what he says, and will do it. So there we will leave the matter till we hear from Elburne House.'

Sir Franks groaned at the thought.

'How much does he offer to settle on them?' he asked.

'A thousand a year on the marriage, and the same amount to the first child. I daresay the end would be that they would get all.'

Sir Franks nodded, and remained with one eye-brow pitiably elevated above the level of the other.

'Anything but a tailor!' he exclaimed presently, half to himself.

'There is a prejudice against that craft,' her ladyship acquiesced.

'Beranger--let me see--your favourite Frenchman, Franks, wasn't it his father?--no, his grandfather. "Mon pauvre et humble grand-pyre," I think, was a tailor. Hum! the degrees of the thing, I confess, don't affect me. One trade I imagine to be no worse than another.'

'Ferdinand's allowance is about a thousand,' said Sir Franks, meditatively.

'And won't be a farthing more till he comes to the title,' added her ladyship.

'Well,' resumed Sir Franks, 'it's a horrible bother!'

His wife philosophically agreed with him, and the subject was dropped.

Lady Jocelyn felt with her husband, more than she chose to let him know, and Sir Franks could have burst into anathemas against fate and circumstances, more than his love of a smooth world permitted. He, however, was subdued by her calmness; and she, with ten times the weight of brain, was manoeuvred by the wonderful dash of General Rose Jocelyn. For her ladyship, thinking, 'I shall get the blame of all this,' rather sided insensibly with the offenders against those who condemned them jointly; and seeing that Rose had been scrupulously honest and straightforward in a very delicate matter, this lady was so constituted that she could not but applaud her daughter in her heart. A worldly woman would have acted, if she had not thought, differently; but her ladyship was not a worldly woman.

Evan's bearing and character had, during his residence at Beckley Court, become so thoroughly accepted as those of a gentleman, and one of their own rank, that, after an allusion to the origin of his breeding, not a word more was said by either of them on that topic. Besides, Rose had dignified him by her decided conduct.

By the time poor Sir Franks had read himself into tranquillity, Mrs. Shorne, who knew him well, and was determined that he should not enter upon his usual negotiations with an unpleasantness: that is to say, to forget it, joined them in the library, bringing with her Sir John Loring and Hamilton Jocelyn. Her first measure was to compel Sir Franks to put down his book. Lady Jocelyn subsequently had to do the same.

'Well, what have you done, Franks?' said Mrs. Shorne.

'Done?' answered the poor gentleman. 'What is there to be done? I've spoken to young Harrington.'

'Spoken to him! He deserves horsewhipping! Have you not told him to quit the house instantly?'

Lady Jocelyn came to her husband's aid: 'It wouldn't do, I think, to kick him out. In the first place, he hasn't deserved it.'

'Not deserved it, Emily!--the commonest, low, vile, adventuring tradesman!'

'In the second place,' pursued her ladyship, 'it's not adviseable to do anything that will make Rose enter into the young woman's sublimities. It's better not to let a lunatic see that you think him stark mad, and the same holds with young women afflicted with the love-mania. The sound of sense, even if they can't understand it, flatters them so as to keep them within bounds. Otherwise you drive them into excesses best avoided.'

'Really, Emily,' said Mrs. Shorne, 'you speak almost, one would say, as an advocate of such unions.'

'You must know perfectly well that I entirely condemn them,' replied her ladyship, who had once, and once only, delivered her opinion of the nuptials of Mr. and Mrs. Shorne.

In self-defence, and to show the total difference between the cases, Mrs. Shorne interjected: 'An utterly penniless young adventurer!'

'Oh, no; there's money,' remarked Sir Franks.

'Money is there?' quoth Hamilton, respectfully.

'And there's wit,' added Sir John, 'if he has half his sister's talent.'

'Astonishing woman!' Hamilton chimed in; adding, with a shrug, 'But, egad!'

'Well, we don't want him to resemble his sister,' said Lady Jocelyn. 'I acknowledge she's amusing.'

'Amusing, Emily!' Mrs. Shorne never encountered her sister-in-law's calmness without indignation. 'I could not rest in the house with such a person, knowing her what she is. A vile adventuress, as I firmly believe. What does she do all day with your mother? Depend upon it, you will repent her visit in more ways than one.'

'A prophecy?' asked Lady Jocelyn, smiling.

On the grounds of common sense, on the grounds of propriety, and consideration of what was due to themselves, all agreed to condemn the notion of Rose casting herself away on Evan. Lady Jocelyn agreed with Mrs. Shorne; Sir Franks with his brother, and Sir John. But as to what they were to do, they were divided. Lady Jocelyn said she should not prevent Rose from writing to Evan, if she had the wish to do so.

'Folly must come out,' said her ladyship. 'It's a combustible material. I won't have her health injured. She shall go into the world more. She will be presented at Court, and if it's necessary to give her a dose or two to counteract her vanity, I don't object. This will wear off, or, *'si c'est veritablement une grande passion, eh bien'* we must take what Providence sends us.'

'And which we might have prevented if we had condescended to listen to the plainest worldly wisdom,' added Mrs. Shorne.

'Yes,' said Lady Jocelyn, equably, 'you know, you and I, Julia, argue from two distinct points. Girls may be shut up, as you propose. I don't think nature intended to have them the obverse of men. I'm sure their mothers never designed that they should run away with footmen, riding-masters, chance curates, as they occasionally do, and wouldn't if they had points of comparison. My opinion is that Prospero was just saved by the Prince of Naples being wrecked on his island, from a shocking mis-alliance between his daughter and the son of Sycorax. I see it clearly. Poetry conceals the extreme probability, but from what I know of my sex,

I should have no hesitation in turning prophet also, as to that.'

What could Mrs. Shorne do with a mother who talked in this manner?

Mrs. Melville, when she arrived to take part in the conference, which gradually swelled to a family one, was equally unable to make Lady Jocelyn perceive that her plan of bringing up Rose was, in the present result of it, other than unlucky.

Now the two Generals--Rose Jocelyn and the Countess de Saldar--had brought matters to this pass; and from the two tactical extremes: the former by openness and dash; the latter by subtlety, and her own interpretations of the means extended to her by Providence. I will not be so bold as to state which of the two I think right. Good and evil work together in this world. If the Countess had not woven the tangle, and gained Evan time, Rose would never have seen his blood,--never have had her spirit hurried out of all shows and forms and habits of thought, up to the gates of existence, as it were, where she took him simply as God created him and her, and clave to him. Again, had Rose been secret, when this turn in her nature came, she would have forfeited the strange power she received from it, and which endowed her with decision to say what was in her heart, and stamp it lastingly there. The two Generals were quite antagonistic, but no two, in perfect ignorance of one another's proceedings, ever worked so harmoniously toward the main result. The Countess was the skilful engineer: Rose the General of cavalry. And it did really seem that, with Tom Cogglesby and his thousands in reserve, the victory was about to be gained. The male Jocelyns, an easy race, decided that, if the worst came to the worst, and Rose proved a wonder, there was money, which was something.

But social prejudice was about to claim its champion. Hitherto there had been no General on the opposite side. Love, aided by the Countess, had engaged an inert mass. The champion was discovered in the person of the provincial Don Juan, Mr. Harry Jocelyn. Harry had gone on a mysterious business of his own to London. He returned with a green box under his arm, which, five minutes after his arrival, was entrusted to Conning, in company with a genial present for herself, of a kind not perhaps so fit for exhibition; at least they both thought so, for it was given in the shades. Harry then went to pay his respects to his mother, who received him with her customary ironical tolerance. His father, to whom he was an incarnation of both, likewise nodded to him and gave him a finger. Duty done, Harry looked round him for pleasure, and observed nothing but glum faces. Even the face of John Raikes was, heavy. He had been hovering about the Duke and Miss Current for an hour, hoping the Countess would come and give him a promised introduction. The Countess stirred not from above, and Jack drifted from group to group on the lawn, and grew conscious that wherever he went he brought silence with him. His isolation made him humble, and when Harry shook his hand, and said he remembered Fallow field and the fun there, Mr. Raikes thanked him.

Harry made his way to join his friend Ferdinand, and furnished him with the latest London news not likely to appear in the papers. Laxley was distant and unamused. From the fact, too, that Harry was known to be the Countess's slave, his presence produced the same effect in the different

circles about the grounds, as did that of John Raikes. Harry began to yawn and wish very ardently for his sweet lady. She, however, had too fine an instinct to descend.

An hour before dinner, Juliana sent him a message that she desired to see him.

'Jove! I hope that girl's not going to be blowing hot again,' sighed the conqueror.

He had nothing to fear from Juliana. The moment they were alone she asked him, 'Have you heard of it?'

Harry shook his head and shrugged.

'They haven't told you? Rose has engaged herself to Mr. Harrington, a tradesman, a tailor!'

'Pooh! have you got hold of that story?' said Harry. 'But I'm sorry for old Ferdy. He was fond of Rosey. Here's another bother!'

'You don't believe me, Harry?'

Harry was mentally debating whether, in this new posture of affairs, his friend Ferdinand would press his claim for certain moneys lent.

'Oh, I believe you,' he said. 'Harrington has the knack with you women. Why, you made eyes at him. It was a toss-up between you and Rosey once.'

Juliana let this accusation pass.

'He is a tradesman. He has a shop in Lymport, I tell you, Harry, and his name on it. And he came here on purpose to catch Rose. And now he has caught her, he tells her. And his mother is now at one of the village inns, waiting to see him. Go to Mr. George Uplift; he knows the family. Yes, the Countess has turned your head, of course; but she has schemed, and schemed, and told such stories--God forgive her!'

The girl had to veil her eyes in a spasm of angry weeping.

'Oh, come! Juley!' murmured her killing cousin. Harry boasted an extraordinary weakness at the sight of feminine tears. 'I say! Juley! you know if you begin crying I'm done for, and it isn't fair.'

He dropped his arm on her waist to console her, and generously declared to her that he always had been, very fond of her. These scenes were not foreign to the youth. Her fits of crying, from which she would burst in a frenzy of contempt at him, had made Harry say stronger things; and the assurances of profound affection uttered in a most languid voice will sting the hearts of women.

Harry still went on with his declarations, heating them rapidly, so as to bring on himself the usual outburst and check. She was longer in coming

to it this time, and he had a horrid fear, that instead of dismissing him fiercely, and so annulling his words, the strange little person was going to be soft and hold him to them. There were her tears, however, which she could not stop.

'Well, then, Juley, look. I do, upon my honour, yes--there, don't cry any more--I do love you.'

Harry held his breath in awful suspense. Juliana quietly disengaged her waist, and looking at him, said, 'Poor Harry! You need not lie any more to please me.'

Such was Harry's astonishment, that he exclaimed,

'It isn't a lie! I say, I do love you.' And for an instant he thought and hoped that he did love her.

'Well, then, Harry, I don't love you,' said Juliana; which revealed to our friend that he had been mistaken in his own emotions. Nevertheless, his vanity was hurt when he saw she was sincere, and he listened to her, a moody being. This may account for his excessive wrath at Evan Harrington after Juliana had given him proofs of the truth of what she said.

But the Countess was Harrington's sister! The image of the Countess swam before him. Was it possible? Harry went about asking everybody he met. The initiated were discreet; those who had the whispers were open. A bare truth is not so convincing as one that discretion confirms. Harry found the detestable news perfectly true.

'Stop it by all means if you can,' said his father.

'Yes, try a fall with Rose,' said his mother.

'And I must sit down to dinner to-day with a confounded fellow, the son of a tailor, who's had the impudence to make love to my sister!' cried Harry. 'I'm determined to kick him out of the house!--half.'

'To what is the modification of your determination due?' Lady Jocelyn inquired, probably suspecting the sweet and gracious person who divided Harry's mind.

Her ladyship treated her children as she did mankind generally, from her intellectual eminence. Harry was compelled to fly from her cruel shafts. He found comfort with his Aunt Shorne, and she as much as told Harry that he was the head of the house, and must take up the matter summarily. It was expected of him. Now was the time for him to show his manhood.

Harry could think of but one way to do that.

'Yes, and if I do--all up with the old lady,' he said, and had to explain that his Grandmama Bonner would never leave a penny to a fellow who had fought a duel.

'A duel!' said Mrs. Shorne. 'No, there are other ways. Insist upon his renouncing her. And Rose--treat her with a high hand, as becomes you. Your mother is incorrigible, and as for your father, one knows him of old. This devolves upon you. Our family honour is in your hands, Harry.'

Considering Harry's reputation, the family honour must have got low: Harry, of course, was not disposed to think so. He discovered a great deal of unused pride within him, for which he had hitherto not found an agreeable vent. He vowed to his aunt that he would not suffer the disgrace, and while still that blandishing olive-hued visage swam before his eyes, he pledged his word to Mrs. Shorne that he would come to an understanding with Harrington that night.

'Quietly,' said she. 'No scandal, pray.'

'Oh, never mind how I do it,' returned Harry, manfully. 'How am I to do it, then?' he added, suddenly remembering his debt to Evan.

Mrs. Shorne instructed him how to do it quietly, and without fear of scandal. The miserable champion replied that it was very well for her to tell him to say this and that, but--and she thought him demented--he must, previous to addressing Harrington in those terms, have money.

'Money!' echoed the lady. 'Money!'

'Yes, money!' he iterated doggedly, and she learnt that he had borrowed a sum of Harrington, and the amount of the sum.

It was a disastrous plight, for Mrs. Shorne was penniless.

She cited Ferdinand Laxley as a likely lender.

'Oh, I'm deep with him already,' said Harry, in apparent dejection.

'How dreadful are these everlasting borrowings of yours!' exclaimed his aunt, unaware of a trifling incongruity in her sentiments. 'You must speak to him without--pay him by-and-by. We must scrape the money together. I will write to your grandfather.'

'Yes; speak to him! How can I when I owe him? I can't tell a fellow he's a blackguard when I owe him, and I can't speak any other way. I ain't a diplomatist. Dashed if I know what to do!'

'Juliana,' murmured his aunt.

'Can't ask her, you know.'

Mrs. Shorne combated the one prominent reason for the objection: but there were two. Harry believed that he had exhausted Juliana's treasury. Reproaching him further for his wastefulness, Mrs. Shorne promised him the money should be got, by hook or by crook, next day.

'And you will speak to this Mr. Harrington to-night, Harry? No allusion to the loan till you return it. Appeal to his sense of honour.'

The dinner-bell assembled the inmates of the house. Evan was not among them. He had gone, as the Countess said aloud, on a diplomatic mission to Fallow field, with Andrew Cogglesby. The truth being that he had finally taken Andrew into his confidence concerning the letter, the annuity, and the bond. Upon which occasion Andrew had burst into a laugh, and said he could lay his hand on the writer of the letter.

'Trust Old Tom for plots, Van! He'll blow you up in a twinkling, the cunning old dog! He pretends to be hard--he 's as soft as I am, if it wasn't for his crotchets. We'll hand him back the cash, and that's ended. And--eh? what a dear girl she is! Not that I'm astonished. My Harry might have married a lord--sit at top of any table in the land! And you're as good as any man.

That's my opinion. But I say she's a wonderful girl to see it.'

Chattering thus, Andrew drove with the dear boy into Fallow field. Evan was still in his dream. To him the generous love and valiant openness of Rose, though they were matched in his own bosom, seemed scarcely human. Almost as noble to him were the gentlemanly plainspeaking of Sir Franks and Lady Jocelyn's kind commonsense. But the more he esteemed them, the more unbounded and miraculous appeared the prospect of his calling their daughter by the sacred name, and kneeling with her at their feet. Did the dear heavens have that in store for him? The horizon edges were dimly lighted.

Harry looked about under his eye-lids for Evan, trying at the same time to compose himself for the martyrdom he had to endure in sitting at table with the presumptuous fellow. The Countess signalled him to come within the presence. As he was crossing the room, Rose entered, and moved to meet him, with: 'Ah, Harry! back again! Glad to see you.'

Harry gave her a blunt nod, to which she was inattentive.

'What!' whispered the Countess, after he pressed the tips of her fingers. 'Have you brought back the grocer?'

Now this was hard to stand. Harry could forgive her her birth, and pass it utterly by if she chose to fall in love with him; but to hear the grocer mentioned, when he knew of the tailor, was a little too much, and what Harry felt his ingenuous countenance was accustomed to exhibit. The Countess saw it. She turned her head from him to the diplomatist, and he had to remain like a sentinel at her feet. He did not want to be thanked for the green box: still he thought she might have favoured him with one of her much-embracing smiles:

In the evening, after wine, when he was warm, and had almost forgotten the insult to his family and himself, the Countess snubbed him. It was unwise on her part, but she had the ghastly thought that facts were

oozing out, and were already half known. She was therefore sensitive tenfold to appearances; savage if one failed to keep up her lie to her, and was guilty of a shadow of difference of behaviour. The pic-nic over, our General would evacuate Beckley Court, and shake the dust off her shoes, and leave the harvest of what she had sown to Providence. Till then, respect, and the honours of war! So the Countess snubbed him, and he being full of wine, fell into the hands of Juliana, who had witnessed the little scene.

'She has made a fool of others as well as of you,' said Juliana.

'How has she?' he inquired.

'Never mind. Do you want to make her humble and crouch to you?'

'I want to see Harrington,' said Harry.

'He will not return to-night from Fallow field. He has gone there to get Mr. Andrew Cogglesby's brother to do something for him. You won't have such another chance of humbling them both--both! I told you his mother is at an inn here. The Countess has sent Mr. Harrington to Fallow field to be out of the way, and she has told her mother all sorts of falsehoods.'

'How do you know all that?' quoth Harry. 'By Jove, Juley! talk about plotters! No keeping anything from you, ever!'

'Never mind. The mother is here. She must be a vulgar woman. Oh! if you could manage, Harry, to get this woman to come--you could do it so easily! while they are at the pie-nic tomorrow. It would have the best effect on Rose. She would then understand! And the Countess!'

'I could send the old woman a message!' cried Harry, rushing into the scheme, inspired by Juliana's fiery eyes. 'Send her a sort of message to say where we all were.'

'Let her know that her son is here, in some way,' Juley resumed.

'And, egad! what an explosion!' pursued Harry. 'But, suppose--'

'No one shall know, if you leave it to me--if you do just as I tell you, Harry. You won't be treated as you were this evening after that, if you bring down her pride. And, Harry, I hear you want money--I can give you some.'

'You're a perfect trump, Juley!' exclaimed her enthusiastic cousin.

'But, no; I can't take it. I must kiss you, though.'

He put a kiss upon her cheek. Once his kisses had left a red waxen stamp; she was callous to these compliments now.

'Will you do what I advise you to-morrow?' she asked.

After a slight hesitation, during which the olive-hued visage flitted faintly in the distances of his brain, Harry said:

'It 'll do Rose good, and make Harrington cut. Yes! I declare I will.'

Then they parted. Juliana went to her bed-room, and flung herself upon the bed hysterically. As the tears came thick and fast, she jumped up to lock the door, for this outrageous habit of crying had made her contemptible in the eyes of Lady Jocelyn, and an object of pity to Rose. Some excellent and noble natures cannot tolerate disease, and are mystified by its ebullitions. It was very sad to see the slight thin frame grasped by those wan hands to contain the violence of the frenzy that possessed her! the pale, hapless face rigid above the torment in her bosom! She had prayed to be loved like other girls, and her readiness to give her heart in return had made her a by-word in the house. She went to the window and leaned out on the casement, looking towards Fallowfield over the downs, weeping bitterly, with a hard shut mouth. One brilliant star hung above the ridge, and danced on her tears.

'Will he forgive me?' she murmured. 'Oh, my God! I wish we were dead together!'

Her weeping ceased, and she closed the window, and undressed as far away from the mirror as she could get; but its force was too much for her, and drew her to it. Some undefined hope had sprung in her suddenly. With nervous slow steps she approached the glass, and first brushing back the masses of black hair from her brow, looked as for some new revelation. Long and anxiously she perused her features: the wide bony forehead; the eyes deep-set and rounded with the scarlet of recent tears, the thin nose-sharp as the dead; the weak irritable mouth and sunken cheeks. She gazed like a spirit disconnected from what she saw. Presently a sort of forlorn negative was indicated by the motion of her head.

'I can pardon him,' she said, and sighed. 'How could he love such a face!'

CHAPTER XXX

THE BATTLE OF THE BULL-DOGS. PART I

At the South-western extremity of the park, with a view extending over wide meadows and troubled mill waters, yellow barn-roofs and weather-gray old farm-walls, two grassy mounds threw their slopes to the margin of the stream. Here the bull-dogs held revel. The hollow between the slopes was crowned by a bending birch, which rose three-stemmed from the root, and hung a noiseless green shower over the basin of green it shadowed. Beneath it the interminable growl sounded pleasantly; softly shot the sparkle of the twisting water, and you might dream things half-fulfilled. Knots of fern were about, but the tops of the mounds were firm grass,

evidently well rolled, and with an eye to airy feet. Olympus one eminence was called, Parnassus the other. Olympus a little overlooked Parnassus, but Parnassus was broader and altogether better adapted for the games of the Muses. Round the edges of both there was a well-trimmed bush of laurel, obscuring only the feet of the dancers from the observing gods. For on Olympus the elders reclined. Great efforts had occasionally been made to dispossess and unseat them, and their security depended mainly on a hump in the middle of the mound which defied the dance.

Watteau-like groups were already couched in the shade. There were ladies of all sorts: town-bred and country-bred: farmers' daughters and daughters of peers: for this pic-nic, as Lady Jocelyn, disgusting the Countess, would call it, was in reality a 'fete champetre', given annually, to which the fair offspring of the superior tenants were invited the brothers and fathers coming to fetch them in the evening. It struck the eye of the Countess de Saldar that Olympus would be a fitting throne for her, and a point whence her shafts might fly without fear of a return. Like another illustrious General at Salamanca, she directed a detachment to take possession of the height. Courtly Sir John Loring ran up at once, and gave the diplomatist an opportunity to thank her flatteringly for gaining them two minutes to themselves. Sir John waved his handkerchief in triumph, welcoming them under an awning where carpets and cushions were spread, and whence the Countess could eye the field. She was dressed ravishingly; slightly in a foreign style, the bodice being peaked at the waist, as was then the Portuguese persuasion. The neck, too, was deliciously veiled with fine lace--and thoroughly veiled, for it was a feature the Countess did not care to expose to the vulgar daylight. Off her gentle shoulders, as it were some fringe of cloud blown by the breeze this sweet lady opened her bosom to, curled a lovely black lace scarf: not Caroline's. If she laughed, the tinge of mourning lent her laughter new charms. If she sighed, the exuberant array of her apparel bade the spectator be of good cheer. Was she witty, men surrendered reason and adored her. Only when she entered the majestic mood, and assumed the languors of greatness, and recited musky anecdotes of her intimacy with it, only then did mankind, as represented at Beckley Court, open an internal eye and reflect that it was wonderful in a tailor's daughter. And she felt that mankind did so reflect. Her instincts did not deceive her. She knew not how much was known; in the depths of her heart she kept low the fear that possibly all might be known; and succeeding in this, she said to herself that probably nothing was known after all. George Uplift, Miss Carrington, and Rose, were the three she abhorred. Partly to be out of their way, and to be out of the way of chance shots (for she had heard names of people coming that reminded her of Dubbins's, where, in past days, there had been on one awful occasion a terrific discovery made), the Countess selected Olympus for her station. It was her last day, and she determined to be happy. Doubtless, she was making a retreat, but have not illustrious Generals snatched victory from their pursuers? Fair, then, sweet, and full of grace, the Countess moved. As the restless shifting of colours to her motions was the constant interchange of her semisorrowful manner and ready archness. Sir John almost capered to please her, and the diplomatist in talking to her forgot his diplomacy and the craft of his

tongue.

It was the last day also of Caroline and the Duke. The Countess clung to Caroline and the Duke more than to Evan and Rose. She could see the first couple walking under an avenue of limes, and near them that young man or monkey, Raikes, as if in ambush. Twice they passed him, and twice he doffed his hat and did homage.

'A most singular creature!' exclaimed the Countess. 'It is my constant marvel where my brother discovered such a curiosity. Do notice him.'

'That man? Raikes?' said the diplomatist. 'Do you know he is our rival? Harry wanted an excuse for another bottle last night, and proposed the "Member" for Fallowfield. Up got this Mr. Raikes and returned thanks.'

'Yes?' the Countess negligently interjected in a way she had caught from Lady Jocelyn.

'Cogglesby's nominee, apparently.'

'I know it all,' said the Countess. 'We need have no apprehension. He is docile. My brother-in-law's brother, you see, is most eccentric. We can manage him best through this Mr. Raikes, for a personal application would be ruin. He quite detests our family, and indeed all the aristocracy.'

Melville's mouth pursed, and he looked very grave.

Sir John remarked: 'He seems like a monkey just turned into a man.'

'And doubtful about the tail,' added the Countess.

The image was tolerably correct, but other causes were at the bottom of the air worn by John Raikes. The Countess had obtained an invitation for him, with instructions that he should come early, and he had followed them so implicitly that the curricle was flinging dust on the hedges between Fallow field and Beckley but an hour or two after the chariot of Apollo had mounted the heavens, and Mr. Raikes presented himself at the breakfast table. Fortunately for him the Countess was there. After the repast she introduced him to the Duke: and he bowed to the Duke, and the Duke bowed to him: and now, to instance the peculiar justness in the mind of Mr. Raikes, he, though he worshipped a coronet and would gladly have recalled the feudal times to a corrupt land, could not help thinking that his bow had beaten the Duke's and was better. He would rather not have thought so, for it upset his preconceptions and threatened a revolution in his ideas. For this reason he followed the Duke, and tried, if possible, to correct, or at least chasten the impressions he had of possessing a glaring advantage over the nobleman. The Duke's second notice of him was hardly a nod. 'Well!' Mr. Raikes reflected, 'if this is your Duke, why, egad! for figure and style my friend Harrington beats him hollow.' And Raikes thought he knew who could conduct a conversation with superior dignity and neatness. The torchlight of a delusion was extinguished in him, but he did not wander long in that gloomy cavernous

darkness of the disenchanted, as many of us do, and as Evan had done, when after a week at Beckley Court he began to examine of what stuff his brilliant father, the great Mel, was composed. On the contrary, as the light of the Duke dwindled, Raikes gained in lustre. 'In fact,' he said, 'there's nothing but the title wanting.' He was by this time on a level with the Duke in his elastic mind.

Olympus had been held in possession by the Countess about half an hour, when Lady Jocelyn mounted it, quite unconscious that she was scaling a fortified point. The Countess herself fired off the first gun at her.

'It has been so extremely delightful up alone here, Lady Jocelyn: to look at everybody below! I hope many will not intrude on us!'

'None but the dowagers who have breath to get up,' replied her ladyship, panting. 'By the way, Countess, you hardly belong to us yet. You dance?'

'Indeed, I do not.'

'Oh, then you are in your right place. A dowager is a woman who doesn't dance: and her male attendant is--what is he? We will call him a fogy.'

Lady Jocelyn directed a smile at Melville and Sir John, who both protested that it was an honour to be the Countess's fogy.

Rose now joined them, with Laxley morally dragged in her wake.

'Another dowager and fogy!' cried the Countess, musically. 'Do you not dance, my child?'

'Not till the music strikes up,' rejoined Rose. 'I suppose we shall have to eat first.'

'That is the Hamlet of the pic-nic play, I believe,' said her mother.

'Of course you dance, don't you, Countess?' Rose inquired, for the sake of amiable conversation.

The Countess's head signified: 'Oh, no! quite out of the question': she held up a little bit of her mournful draperies, adding: 'Besides, you, dear child, know your company, and can select; I do not, and cannot do so. I understand we have a most varied assembly!'

Rose shut her eyes, and then looked at her mother. Lady Jocelyn's face was undisturbed; but while her eyes were still upon the Countess, she drew her head gently back, imperceptibly. If anything, she was admiring the lady; but Rose could be no placid philosophic spectator of what was to her a horrible assumption and hypocrisy. For the sake of him she loved, she had swallowed a nauseous cup bravely. The Countess was too much for her. She felt sick to think of being allied to this person. She had a shuddering desire to run into the ranks of the world, and hide her head from multitudinous hootings. With a pang of envy she saw her

friend Jenny walking by the side of William Harvey, happy, untried, unoffending: full of hope, and without any bitter draughts to swallow!

Aunt Bel now came tripping up gaily.

'Take the alternative, 'douairiere or demoiselle'?' cried Lady Jocelyn. 'We must have a sharp distinction, or Olympus will be mobbed.'

'Entre les deux, s'il vous plait,' responded Aunt Bel. 'Rose, hurry down, and leaven the mass. I see ten girls in a bunch. It's shocking. Ferdinand, pray disperse yourself. Why is it, Emily, that we are always in excess at pic-nics? Is man dying out?'

'From what I can see,' remarked Lady Jocelyn, 'Harry will be lost to his species unless some one quickly relieves him. He's already half eaten up by the Conley girls. Countess, isn't it your duty to rescue him?'

The Countess bowed, and murmured to Sir John:

'A dismissal!'

'I fear my fascinations, Lady Jocelyn, may not compete with those fresh young persons.'

'Ha! ha! "fresh young persons,"' laughed Sir John for the ladies in question were romping boisterously with Mr. Harry.

The Countess inquired for the names and condition of the ladies, and was told that they sprang from Farmer Conley, a well-to-do son of the soil, who farmed about a couple of thousand acres between Fallow field and Beckley, and bore a good reputation at the county bank.

'But I do think,' observed the Countess, 'it must indeed be pernicious for any youth to associate with that class of woman. A deterioration of manners!'

Rose looked at her mother again. She thought 'Those girls would scorn to marry a tradesman's son!'

The feeling grew in Rose that the Countess lowered and degraded her. Her mother's calm contemplation of the lady was more distressing than if she had expressed the contempt Rose was certain, according to her young ideas, Lady Jocelyn must hold.

Now the Countess had been considering that she would like to have a word or two with Mr. Harry, and kissing her fingers to the occupants of Olympus, and fixing her fancy on the diverse thoughts of the ladies and gentlemen, deduced from a rapturous or critical contemplation of her figure from behind, she descended the slope.

Was it going to be a happy day? The well-imagined opinions of the gentleman on her attire and style, made her lean to the affirmative; but Rose's demure behaviour, and something--something would come across her

hopes. She had, as she now said to herself, stopped for the pic-nic, mainly to give Caroline a last opportunity of binding the Duke to visit the Cogglesby saloons in London. Let Caroline cleverly contrive this, as she might, without any compromise, and the stay at Beckley Court would be a great gain. Yes, Caroline was still with the Duke; they were talking earnestly. The Countess breathed a short appeal to Providence that Caroline might not prove a fool. Overnight she had said to Caroline: 'Do not be so English. Can one not enjoy friendship with a nobleman without wounding one's conscience or breaking with the world? My dear, the Duke visiting you, you cow that infamous Strike of yours. He will be utterly obsequious! I am not telling you to pass the line. The contrary. But we continentals have our grievous reputation because we dare to meet as intellectual beings, and defy the imputation that ladies and gentlemen are no better than animals.'

It sounded very lofty to Caroline, who, accepting its sincerity, replied:

'I cannot do things by halves. I cannot live a life of deceit. A life of misery--not deceit.'

Whereupon, pitying her poor English nature, the Countess gave her advice, and this advice she now implored her familiars to instruct or compel Caroline to follow.

The Countess's garment was plucked at. She beheld little Dorothy Loring glancing up at her with the roguish timidity of her years.

'May I come with you?' asked the little maid, and went off into a prattle: 'I spent that five shillings--I bought a shilling's worth of sweet stuff, and nine penn'orth of twine, and a shilling for small wax candles to light in my room when I'm going to bed, because I like plenty of light by the looking-glass always, and they do make the room so hot! My Jane declared she almost fainted, but I burnt them out! Then I only had very little left for a horse to mount my doll on; and I wasn't going to get a screw, so I went to Papa, and he gave me five shillings. And, oh, do you know, Rose can't bear me to be with you. Jealousy, I suppose, for you're very agreeable. And, do you know, your Mama is coming to-day? I've got a Papa and no Mama, and you've got a Mama and no Papa. Isn't it funny? But I don't think so much of it, as you 're grown up. Oh, I'm quite sure she is coming, because I heard Harry telling Juley she was, and Juley said it would be so gratifying to you.'

A bribe and a message relieved the Countess of Dorothy's attendance on her.

What did this mean? Were people so base as to be guilty of hideous plots in this house? Her mother coming! The Countess's blood turned deadly chill. Had it been her father she would not have feared, but her mother was so vilely plain of speech; she never opened her mouth save to deliver facts: which was to the Countess the sign of atrocious vulgarity.

But her mother had written to say she would wait for Evan in Fallow field! The Countess grasped at straws. Did Dorothy hear that? And if

Harry and Juliana spoke of her mother, what did that mean? That she was hunted, and must stand at bay!

'Oh, Papa! Papa! why did you marry a Dawley?' she exclaimed, plunging to what was, in her idea, the root of the evil.

She had no time for outcries and lamentations. It dawned on her that this was to be a day of battle. Where was Harry? Still in the midst of the Conley throng, apparently pooh-poohing something, to judge by the twist of his mouth.

The Countess delicately signed for him to approach her. The extreme delicacy of the signal was at least an excuse for Harry to perceive nothing. It was renewed, and Harry burst into a fit of laughter at some fun of one of the Conley girls. The Countess passed on, and met Juliana pacing by herself near the lower gates of the park. She wished only to see how Juliana behaved. The girl looked perfectly trustful, as much so as when the Countess was pouring in her ears the tales of Evan's growing but bashful affection for her.

'He will soon be here,' whispered the Countess. 'Has he told you he will come by this entrance?'

'No,' replied Juliana.

'You do not look well, sweet child.'

'I was thinking that you did not, Countess?'

'Oh, indeed, yes! With reason, alas! All our visitors have by this time arrived, I presume?'

'They come all day.'

The Countess hastened away from one who, when roused, could be almost as clever as herself, and again stood in meditation near the joyful Harry. This time she did not signal so discreetly. Harry could not but see it, and the Conley girls accused him of cruelty to the beautiful dame, which novel idea stung Harry with delight, and he held out to indulge in it a little longer. His back was half turned, and as he talked noisily, he could not observe the serene and resolute march of the Countess toward him. The youth gaped when he found his arm taken prisoner by the insertion of a small deliciously-gloved and perfumed hand through it. 'I must claim you for a few moments,' said the Countess, and took the startled Conley girls one and all in her beautiful smile of excuse.

'Why do you compromise me thus, sir?'

These astounding words were spoken out of the hearing of the Conley girls.

'Compromise you!' muttered Harry.

Masterly was the skill with which the Countess contrived to speak angrily and as an injured woman, while she wore an indifferent social countenance.

'I repeat, compromise me. No, Mr. Harry Jocelyn, you are not the jackanapes you try to make people think you: you understand me.'

The Countess might accuse him, but Harry never had the ambition to make people think him that: his natural tendency was the reverse: and he objected to the application of the word jackanapes to himself, and was ready to contest the fact of people having that opinion at all. However, all he did was to repeat: 'Compromise!'

'Is not open unkindness to me compromising me?'

'How?' asked Harry.

'Would you dare to do it to a strange lady? Would you have the impudence to attempt it with any woman here but me? No, I am innocent; it is my consolation; I have resisted you, but you by this cowardly behaviour place me--and my reputation, which is more--at your mercy. Noble behaviour, Mr. Harry Jocelyn! I shall remember my young English gentleman.'

The view was totally new to Harry.

'I really had no idea of compromising you,' he said. 'Upon my honour, I can't see how I did it now!'

'Oblige me by walking less in the neighbourhood of those fat-faced glaring farm-girls,' the Countess spoke under her breath; 'and don't look as if you were being whipped. The art of it is evident--you are but carrying on the game.--Listen. If you permit yourself to exhibit an unkindness to me, you show to any man who is a judge, and to every woman, that there has been something between us. You know my innocence--yes! but you must punish me for having resisted you thus long.'

Harry swore he never had such an idea, and was much too much of a man and a gentleman to behave in that way.--And yet it seemed wonderfully clever! And here was the Countess saying:

'Take your reward, Mr. Harry Jocelyn. You have succeeded; I am your humble slave. I come to you and sue for peace. To save my reputation I endanger myself. This is generous of you.'

'Am I such a clever fellow?' thought the young gentleman. 'Deuced lucky with women': he knew that: still a fellow must be wonderfully, miraculously, clever to be able to twist and spin about such a woman as this in that way. He did not object to conceive that he was the fellow to do it. Besides, here was the Countess de Saldar--worth five hundred of the Conley girls--almost at his feet!

Mollified, he said: 'Now, didn't you begin it?'

'Evasion!' was the answer. 'It would be such pleasure to you so see a proud woman weep! And if yesterday, persecuted as I am, with dreadful falsehoods abroad respecting me and mine, if yesterday I did seem cold to your great merits, is it generous of you to take this revenge?'

Harry began to scent the double meaning in her words. She gave him no time to grow cool over it. She leaned, half abandoned, on his arm. Arts feminine and irresistible encompassed him. It was a fatal mistake of Juliana's to enlist Harry Jocelyn against the Countess de Saldar. He engaged, still without any direct allusion to the real business, to move heaven and earth to undo all that he had done, and the Countess implied an engagement to do--what? more than she intended to fulfil.

Ten minutes later she was alone with Caroline.

'Tie yourself to the Duke at the dinner,' she said, in the forcible phrase she could use when necessary. 'Don't let them scheme to separate you. Never mind looks--do it!'

Caroline, however, had her reasons for desiring to maintain appearances. The Countess dashed at her hesitation.

'There is a plot to humiliate us in the most abominable way. The whole family have sworn to make us blush publicly. Publicly blush! They have written to Mama to come and speak out. Now will you attend to me, Caroline? You do not credit such atrocity? I know it to be true.'

'I never can believe that Rose would do such a thing,' said Caroline. 'We can hardly have to endure more than has befallen us already.'

Her speech was pensive, as of one who had matter of her own to ponder over. A swift illumination burst in the Countess's mind.

'No? Have you, dear, darling Carry? not that I intend that you should! but to-day the Duke would be such ineffable support to us. May I deem you have not been too cruel to-day? You dear silly English creature, "Duck," I used to call you when I was your little Louy. All is not yet lost, but I will save you from the ignominy if I can. I will!'

Caroline denied nothing--confirmed nothing, just as the Countess had stated nothing. Yet they understood one another perfectly. Women have a subtler language than ours: the veil pertains to them morally as bodily, and they see clearer through it.

The Countess had no time to lose. Wrath was in her heart. She did not lend all her thoughts to self-defence.

Without phrasing a word, or absolutely shaping a thought in her head, she slanted across the sun to Mr. Raikes, who had taken refreshment, and in obedience to his instinct, notwithstanding his enormous pretensions, had commenced a few preliminary antics.

'Dear Mr. Raikes!' she said, drawing him aside, 'not before dinner!'

'I really can't contain the exuberant flow!' returned that gentleman.
'My animal spirits always get the better of me,' he added confidentially.

'Suppose you devote your animal spirits to my service for half an hour.'

'Yours, Countess, from the 'os frontis' to the chine!' was the exuberant rejoinder.

The Countess made a wry mouth.

'Your curricle is in Beckley?'

'Behold!' said Jack. 'Two juveniles, not half so blest as I, do from the seat regard the festive scene o'er yon park palings. They are there, even Franko and Fred. I 'm afraid I promised to get them in at a later period of the day. Which sadly sore my conscience doth disturb! But what is to be done about the curricle, my Countess?'

'Mr. Raikes,' said the Countess, smiling on him fixedly, 'you are amusing; but in addressing me, you must be precise, and above all things accurate. I am not your Countess!'

He bowed profoundly. 'Oh, that I might say my Queen!'

The Countess replied: 'A conviction of your lunacy would prevent my taking offence, though I might wish you enclosed and guarded.'

Without any further exclamations, Raikes acknowledged a superior.

'And, now, attend to me,' said the Countess. 'Listen:

You go yourself, or send your friends instantly to Fallow field. Bring with you that girl and her child. Stop: there is such a person. Tell her she is to be spoken to about the prospects of the poor infant. I leave that to your inventive genius. Evan wishes her here. Bring her, and should you see the mad captain who behaves so oddly, favour him with a ride. He says he dreams his wife is here, and he will not reveal his name! Suppose it should be my own beloved husband! I am quite anxious.'

The Countess saw him go up to the palings and hold a communication with his friends Franko and Fred. One took the whip, and after mutual flourishes, drove away.

'Now!' mused the Countess, 'if Captain Evremonde should come!' It would break up the pic-nic. Alas! the Countess had surrendered her humble hopes of a day's pleasure. But if her mother came as well, what a diversion that would be! If her mother came before the Captain, his arrival would cover the retreat; if the Captain preceded her, she would not be noticed. Suppose her mother refrained from coming? In that case it was a pity, but the Jocelyns had brought it on themselves.

This mapping out of consequences followed the Countess's deeds, and did not inspire them. Her passions sharpened her instincts, which produced her actions. The reflections ensued: as in nature, the consequences were all seen subsequently! Observe the difference between your male and female Generals.

On reflection, too, the Countess praised herself for having done all that could be done. She might have written to her mother: but her absence would have been remarked: her messenger might have been overhauled and, lastly, Mrs. Mel--'Gorgon of a mother!' the Countess cried out: for Mrs. Mel was like a Fate to her. She could remember only two occasions in her whole life when she had been able to manage her mother, and then by lying in such a way as to distress her conscience severely.

'If Mama has conceived this idea of coming, nothing will impede her. My prayers will infuriate her!' said the Countess, and she was sure that she had acted both rightly and with wisdom.

She put on her armour of smiles: she plunged into the thick of the enemy. Since they would not allow her to taste human happiness--she had asked but for the pic-nic! a small truce! since they denied her that, rather than let them triumph by seeing her wretched, she took into her bosom the joy of demons. She lured Mr. George Uplift away from Miss Carrington, and spoke to him strange hints of matrimonial disappointments, looking from time to time at that apprehensive lady, doating on her terrors. And Mr. George seconded her by his clouded face, for he was ashamed not to show that he did not know Louisa Harrington in the Countess de Saldar, and had not the courage to declare that he did. The Countess spoke familiarly, but without any hint of an ancient acquaintance between them. 'What a post her husband's got!' thought Mr. George, not envying the Count. He was wrong: she was an admirable ally. All over the field the Countess went, watching for her mother, praying that if she did come, Providence might prevent her from coming while they were at dinner. How clearly Mrs. Shorne and Mrs. Melville saw her vulgarity now! By the new light of knowledge, how certain they were that they had seen her ungentle training in a dozen little instances.

'She is not well-bred, 'cela se voit', said Lady Jocelyn.

'Bred! it's the stage! How could such a person be bred?' said Mrs. Shorne.

Accept in the Countess the heroine who is combating class-prejudices, and surely she is pre-eminently noteworthy. True, she fights only for her family, and is virtually the champion of the opposing institution misplaced. That does not matter: the Fates may have done it purposely: by conquering she establishes a principle. A Duke adores her sister, the daughter of the house her brother, and for herself she has many protestations in honour of her charms: nor are they empty ones. She can confound Mrs. Melville, if she pleases to, by exposing an adorer to lose a friend. Issuing out of Tailorhood, she, a Countess, has done all this; and it were enough to make her glow, did not little evils, and angers, and spites, and alarms so frightfully beset her.

The sun of the pic-nic system is dinner. Hence philosophers may deduce that the pic-nic is a British invention. There is no doubt that we do not shine at the pic-nic until we reflect the face of dinner. To this, then, all who were not lovers began seriously to look forward, and the advance of an excellent county band, specially hired to play during the entertainment, gave many of the guests quite a new taste for sweet music; and indeed we all enjoy a thing infinitely more when we see its meaning.

About this time Evan entered the lower park-gates with Andrew. The first object he encountered was John Raikes in a state of great depression. He explained his case:

'Just look at my frill! Now, upon my honour, you know, I'm good-tempered; I pass their bucolic habits, but this is beyond bearing. I was near the palings there, and a fellow calls out, "Hi! will you help the lady over?" Holloa! thinks I, an adventure! However, I advised him to take her round to the gates. The beast burst out laughing. "Now, then," says he, and I heard a scrambling at the pales, and up came the head of a dog. "Oh! the dog first," says I. "Catch by the ears," says he. I did so. "Pull," says he. "Gad, pull indeed!", The beast gave a spring and came slap on my chest, with his dirty wet muzzle on my neck! I felt instantly it was the death of my frill, but gallant as you know me, I still asked for the lady. "If you will please, or an it meet your favour, to extend your hand to me!" I confess I did think it rather odd, the idea of a lady coming in that way over the palings! but my curst love of adventure always blinds me. It always misleads my better sense, Harrington. Well, instead of a lady, I see a fellow--he may have been a lineal descendant of Cedric the Saxon. "Where's the lady?" says I. "Lady?" says he, and stares, and then laughs: "Lady! why," he jumps over, and points at his beast of a dog, "don't you know a bitch when you see one?" I was in the most ferocious rage! If he hadn't been a big burly bully, down he'd have gone. "Why didn't you say what it was?" I roared. "Why," says he, "the word isn't considered polite!" I gave him a cut there. I said, "I rejoice to be positively assured that you uphold the laws and forms of civilization, sir." My belief is he didn't feel it.'

'The thrust sinned in its shrewdness,' remarked Evan, ending a laugh.

'Hem!' went Mr. Raikes, more contentedly: 'after all, what are appearances to the man of wit and intellect? Dress, and women will approve you: but I assure you they much prefer the man of wit in his slouched hat and stockings down. I was introduced to the Duke this morning. It is a curious thing that the seduction of a Duchess has always been one of my dreams.'

At this Andrew Cogglesby fell into a fit of laughter.

'Your servant,' said Mr. Raikes, turning to him. And then he muttered 'Extraordinary likeness! Good Heavens! Powers!'

From a state of depression, Mr. Raikes--changed into one of bewilderment.

Evan paid no attention to him, and answered none of his hasty undertoned questions. Just then, as they were on the skirts of the company, the band struck up a lively tune, and quite unconsciously, the legs of Raikes, affected, it may be, by supernatural reminiscences, loosely hornpiped. It was but a moment: he remembered himself the next: but in that fatal moment eyes were on him. He never recovered his dignity in Beckley Court: he was fatally mercurial.

'What is the joke against this poor fellow?' asked Evan of Andrew.

'Never mind, Van. You'll roar. Old Tom again. We 'll see by-and-by, after the champagne. He--this young Raikes-ha! ha!--but I can't tell you.' And Andrew went away to Drummond, to whom he was more communicative. Then he went to Melville, and one or two others, and the eyes of many became concentrated on Raikes, and it was observed as a singular sign that he was constantly facing about, and flushing the fiercest red. Once he made an effort to get hold of Evan's arm and drag him away, as one who had an urgent confession to be delivered of, but Evan was talking to Lady Jocelyn, and other ladies, and quietly disengaged his arm without even turning to notice the face of his friend. Then the dinner was announced, and men saw the dinner. The Countess went to shake her brother's hand, and with a very gratulatory visage, said through her half-shut teeth.

'If Mama appears, rise up and go away with her, before she has time to speak a word.' An instant after Evan found himself seated between Mrs. Evremonde and one of the Conley girls. The dinner had commenced. The first half of the Battle of the Bull-dogs was as peaceful as any ordinary pic-nic, and promised to the general company as calm a conclusion.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE BATTLE OF THE BULL-DOGS. PART II.

If it be a distinct point of wisdom to hug the hour that is, then does dinner amount to a highly intellectual invitation to man, for it furnishes the occasion; and Britons are the wisest of their race, for more than all others they take advantage of it. In this Nature is undoubtedly our guide, seeing that he who, while feasting his body allows to his soul a thought for the morrow, is in his digestion curst, and becomes a house of evil humours. Now, though the epicure may complain of the cold meats, a dazzling table, a buzzing company, blue sky, and a band of music, are incentives to the forgetfulness of troubles past and imminent, and produce a concentration of the faculties. They may not exactly prove that peace is established between yourself and those who object to your carving of the world, but they testify to an armistice.

Aided by these observations, you will understand how it was that the Countess de Saldar, afflicted and menaced, was inspired, on taking her seat, to give so graceful and stately a sweep to her dress that she was

enabled to conceive woman and man alike to be secretly overcome by it. You will not refuse to credit the fact that Mr. Raikes threw care to the dogs, heavy as was that mysterious lump suddenly precipitated on his bosom; and you will think it not impossible that even the springers of the mine about to explode should lose their subterranean countenances. A generous abandonment to one idea prevailed. As for Evan, the first glass of champagne rushed into reckless nuptials with the music in his head, bringing Rose, warm almost as life, on his heart. Sublime are the visions of lovers! He knew he must leave her on the morrow; he feared he might never behold her again; and yet he tasted bliss, for it seemed within the contemplation of the Gods that he should dance with his darling before dark-haply waltz with her! Oh, heaven! he shuts his eyes, blinded. The band wheels off meltingly in a tune all cadences, and twirls, and risings and sinkings, and passionate outbursts trippingly consoled. Ah! how sweet to waltz through life with the right partner. And what a singular thing it is to look back on the day when we thought something like it! Never mind: there may be spheres where it is so managed--doubtless the planets have their Hanwell and Bedlam.

I confess that the hand here writing is not insensible to the effects of that first glass of champagne. The poetry of our Countess's achievements waxes rich in manifold colours: I see her by the light of her own pleas to Providence. I doubt almost if the hand be mine which dared to make a hero play second fiddle, and to his beloved. I have placed a bushel over his light, certainly. Poor boy! it was enough that he should have tailordom on his shoulders: I ought to have allowed him to conquer Nature, and so come out of his eclipse. This shall be said of him: that he can play second fiddle without looking foolish, which, for my part, I call a greater triumph than if he were performing the heroics we are more accustomed to. He has steady eyes, can gaze at the right level into the eyes of others, and commands a tongue which is neither struck dumb nor set in a flutter by any startling question. The best instances to be given that he does not lack merit are that the Jocelyns, whom he has offended by his birth, cannot change their treatment of him, and that the hostile women, whatever they may say, do not think Rose utterly insane. At any rate, Rose is satisfied, and her self-love makes her a keen critic. The moment Evan appeared, the sickness produced in her by the Countess passed, and she was ready to brave her situation. With no mock humility she permitted Mrs. Shorne to place her in a seat where glances could not be interchanged. She was quite composed, calmly prepared for conversation with any one. Indeed, her behaviour since the hour of general explanation had been so perfectly well-contained, that Mrs. Melville said to Lady Jocelyn:

'I am only thinking of the damage to her. It will pass over--this fancy. You can see she is not serious. It is mere spirit of opposition. She eats and drinks just like other girls. You can see that the fancy has not taken such very strong hold of her.'

'I can't agree with you,' replied her ladyship. 'I would rather have her sit and sigh by the hour, and loathe roast beef. That would look nearer a cure.'

'She has the notions of a silly country girl,' said Mrs. Shorne.

'Exactly,' Lady Jocelyn replied. 'A season in London will give her balance.'

So the guests were tolerably happy, or at least, with scarce an exception, open to the influences of champagne and music. Perhaps Juliana was the wretchedest creature present. She was about to smite on both cheeks him she loved, as well as the woman she despised and had been foiled by. Still she had the consolation that Rose, seeing the vulgar mother, might turn from Evan: a poor distant hope, meagre and shapeless like herself. Her most anxious thoughts concerned the means of getting money to lockup Harry's tongue. She could bear to meet the Countess's wrath, but not Evan's offended look. Hark to that Countess!

'Why do you denominate this a pic-nic, Lady Jocelyn? It is in verity a fete!'

'I suppose we ought to lie down 'A la Grecque' to come within the term,' was the reply. 'On the whole, I prefer plain English for such matters.'

'But this is assuredly too sumptuous for a pic-nic, Lady Jocelyn. From what I can remember, pic-nic implies contribution from all the guests. It is true I left England a child!'

Mr. George Uplift could not withhold a sharp grimace: The Countess had throttled the inward monitor that tells us when we are lying, so grievously had she practised the habit in the service of her family.

'Yes,' said Mrs. Melville, 'I have heard of that fashion, and very stupid it is.'

'Extremely vulgar,' murmured Miss Carrington.

'Possibly,' Lady Jocelyn observed; 'but good fun. I have been to pic-nics, in my day. I invariably took cold pie and claret. I clashed with half-a-dozen, but all the harm we did was to upset the dictum that there can be too much of a good thing. I know for certain that the bottles were left empty.'

'And this woman,' thought the Countess, 'this woman, with a soul so essentially vulgar, claims rank above me!' The reflection generated contempt of English society, in the first place, and then a passionate desire for self-assertion.

She was startled by a direct attack which aroused her momentarily lulled energies.

A lady, quite a stranger, a dry simpering lady, caught the Countess's benevolent passing gaze, and leaning forward, said: 'I hope her ladyship bears her affliction as well as can be expected?'

In military parlance, the Countess was taken in flank. Another would

have asked--What ladyship? To whom do you allude, may I beg to inquire? The Countess knew better. Rapid as light it shot through her that the relict of Sir Abraham was meant, and this she divined because she was aware that devilish malignity was watching to trip her.

A little conversation happening to buzz at the instant, the Countess merely turned her chin to an angle, agitated her brows very gently, and crowned the performance with a mournful smile. All that a woman must feel at the demise of so precious a thing as a husband, was therein eloquently expressed: and at the same time, if explanations ensued, there were numerous ladyships in the world, whom the Countess did not mind afflicting, should she be hard pressed.

'I knew him so well!' resumed the horrid woman, addressing anybody. 'It was so sad! so unexpected! but he was so subject to affection of the throat. And I was so sorry I could not get down to him in time. I had not seen him since his marriage, when I was a girl!--and to meet one of his children!--But, my dear, in quinsey, I have heard that there is nothing on earth like a good hearty laugh.'

Mr. Raikes hearing this, sucked down the flavour of a glass of champagne, and with a look of fierce jollity, interposed, as if specially charged by Providence to make plain to the persecuted Countess his mission and business there: 'Then our vocation is at last revealed to us! Quinsey-doctor! I remember when a boy, wandering over the paternal mansion, and envying the life of a tinker, which my mother did not think a good omen in me. But the traps of a Quinsey-doctor are even lighter. Say twenty good jokes, and two or three of a practical kind. A man most enviable!'

'It appears,' he remarked aloud to one of the Conley girls, 'that quinsey is needed before a joke is properly appreciated.'

'I like fun,' said she, but had not apparently discovered it.

What did that odious woman mean by perpetually talking about Sir Abraham? The Countess intercepted a glance between her and the hated Juliana. She felt it was a malignant conspiracy: still the vacuous vulgar air of the woman told her that most probably she was but an instrument, not a confederate, and was only trying to push herself into acquaintance with the great: a proceeding scorned and abominated by the Countess, who longed to punish her for her insolent presumption. The bitterness of her situation stung her tenfold when she considered that she dared not.

Meantime the champagne became as regular in its flow as the Bull-dogs, and the monotonous bass of these latter sounded through the music, like life behind the murmur of pleasure, if you will. The Countess had a not unfeminine weakness for champagne, and old Mr. Bonner's cellar was well and choicely stocked. But was this enjoyment to the Countess?--this dreary station in the background! 'May I emerge?' she as much as implored Providence.

The petition was infinitely tender. She thought she might, or it may be that nature was strong, and she could not restrain herself.

Taking wine with Sir John, she said:

'This bowing! Do you know how amusing it is deemed by us Portuguese? Why not embrace? as the dear Queen used to say to me.'

'I am decidedly of Her Majesty's opinion,' observed Sir John, with emphasis, and the Countess drew back into a mingled laugh and blush.

Her fiendish persecutor gave two or three nods. 'And you know the Queen!' she said.

She had to repeat the remark: whereupon the Countess murmured, 'Intimately.'

'Ah, we have lost a staunch old Tory in Sir Abraham,' said the lady, performing lamentation.

What did it mean? Could design lodge in that empty-looking head with its crisp curls, button nose, and diminishing simper? Was this pic-nic to be made as terrible to the Countess by her putative father as the dinner had been by the great Mel? The deep, hard, level look of Juliana met the Countess's smile from time to time, and like flimsy light horse before a solid array of infantry, the Countess fell back, only to be worried afresh by her perfectly unwitting tormentor.

'His last days?--without pain? Oh, I hope so!' came after a lapse of general talk.

'Aren't we getting a little funereal, Mrs. Perkins?' Lady Jocelyn asked, and then rallied her neighbours.

Miss Carrington looked at her vexedly, for the fiendish Perkins was checked, and the Countess in alarm, about to commit herself, was a pleasant sight to Miss Carrington.

'The worst of these indiscriminate meetings is that there is no conversation,' whispered the Countess, thanking Providence for the relief.

Just then she saw Juliana bend her brows at another person. This was George Uplift, who shook his head, and indicated a shrewd-eyed, thin, middle-aged man, of a lawyer-like cast; and then Juliana nodded, and George Uplift touched his arm, and glanced hurriedly behind for champagne. The Countess's eyes dwelt on the timid young squire most affectionately. You never saw a fortress more unprepared for dread assault.

'Hem!' was heard, terrific. But the proper pause had evidently not yet come, and now to prevent it the Countess strained her energies and tasked her genius intensely. Have you an idea of the difficulty of keeping up the ball among a host of ill-assorted, stupid country people, who have no open topics, and can talk of nothing continuously but scandal of their

neighbours, and who, moreover, feel they are not up to the people they are mixing with? Darting upon Seymour Jocelyn, the Countess asked touchingly for news of the partridges. It was like the unlocking of a machine. Seymour was not blythe in his reply, but he was loud and forcible; and when he came to the statistics--oh, then you would have admired the Countess!--for comparisons ensued, braces were enumerated, numbers given were contested, and the shooting of this one jeered at, and another's sure mark respectfully admitted. And how lay the coveys? And what about the damage done by last winter's floods? And was there good hope of the pheasants? Outside this latter the Countess hovered. Twice the awful 'Hem!' was heard. She fought on. She kept them at it. If it flagged she wished to know this or that, and finally thought that, really, she should like herself to try one shot. The women had previously been left behind. This brought in the women. Lady Jocelyn proposed a female expedition for the morrow.

'I believe I used to be something of a shot, formerly,' she said.

'You peppered old Tom once, my lady,' remarked Andrew, and her ladyship laughed, and that foolish Andrew told the story, and the Countess, to revive her subject, had to say: 'May I be enrolled to shoot?' though she detested and shrank from fire-arms.

'Here are two!' said the hearty presiding dame. 'Ladies, apply immediately to have your names put down.'

The possibility of an expedition of ladies now struck Seymour vividly, and said he: 'I 'll be secretary'; and began applying to the ladies for permission to put down their names. Many declined, with brevity, muttering, either aloud or to themselves, 'unwomanly'; varied by 'unladylike': some confessed cowardice; some a horror of the noise close to their ears; and there was the plea of nerves. But the names of half-a-dozen ladies were collected, and then followed much laughter, and musical hubbub, and delicate banter. So the ladies and gentlemen fell one and all into the partridge pit dug for them by the Countess: and that horrible 'Hem!' equal in force and terror to the roar of artillery preceding the charge of ten thousand dragoons, was silenced--the pit appeared impassable. Did the Countess crow over her advantage? Mark her: the lady's face is entirely given up to partridges. 'English sports are so much envied abroad,' she says: but what she dreads is a reflection, for that leads off from the point. A portion of her mind she keeps to combat them in Lady Jocelyn and others who have the tendency: the rest she divides between internal-prayers for succour, and casting about for another popular subject to follow partridges. Now, mere talent, as critics say when they are lighting candles round a genius, mere talent would have hit upon pheasants as the natural sequitur, and then diverged to sports--a great theme, for it ensures a chorus of sneers at foreigners, and so on probably to a discussion of birds and beasts best adapted to enrapture the palate of man. Stories may succeed, but they are doubtful, and not to be trusted, coming after cookery. After an exciting subject which has made the general tongue to wag, and just enough heated the brain to cause it to cry out for spiced food--then start your story: taking care that it be mild; for one too marvellous

stops the tide, the sense of climax being strongly implanted in all bosoms. So the Countess told an anecdote--one of Mel's. Mr. George Uplift was quite familiar with it, and knew of one passage that would have abashed him to relate 'before ladies.' The sylph-like ease with which the Countess floated over this foul abyss was miraculous. Mr. George screwed his eye-lids queerly, and closed his jaws with a report, completely beaten. The anecdote was of the character of an apologue, and pertained to game. This was, as it happened, a misfortune; for Mr. Raikes had felt himself left behind by the subject; and the stuff that was in this young man being naturally ebullient, he lay by to trip it, and take a lead. His remarks brought on him a shrewd cut from the Countess, which made matters worse; for a pun may also breed puns, as doth an anecdote. The Countess's stroke was so neat and perfect that it was something for the gentlemen to think over; and to punish her for giving way to her cleverness and to petty vexation, 'Hem!' sounded once more, and then: 'May I ask you if the present Baronet is in England?'

Now Lady Jocelyn perceived that some attack was directed against her guest. She allowed the Countess to answer:

'The eldest was drowned in the Lisbon waters'

And then said: 'But who is it that persists in serving up the funeral baked meats to us?'

Mrs. Shorne spoke for her neighbour: 'Mr. Farnley's cousin was the steward of Sir Abraham Harrington's estates.'

The Countess held up her head boldly. There is a courageous exaltation of the nerves known to heroes and great generals in action when they feel sure that resources within themselves will spring up to the emergency, and that over simple mortals success is positive.

'I had a great respect for Sir Abraham,' Mr. Farnley explained, 'very great. I heard that this lady' (bowing to the Countess) 'was his daughter.'

Lady Jocelyn's face wore an angry look, and Mrs. Shorne gave her the shade of a shrug and an expression implying, 'I didn't!'

Evan was talking to Miss Jenny Graine at the moment rather earnestly. With a rapid glance at him, to see that his ears were closed, the Countess breathed:

'Not the elder branch!--Cadet!'

The sort of noisy silence produced by half-a-dozen people respirating deeply and moving in their seats was heard. The Countess watched Mr. Farnley's mystified look, and whispered to Sir John: 'Est-ce qu'il comprenne le Francais, lui?'

It was the final feather-like touch to her triumph. She saw safety and a clear escape, and much joyful gain, and the pleasure of relating her

sufferings in days to come. This vista was before her when, harsh as an execution bell, telling her that she had vanquished man, but that Providence opposed her, 'Mrs. Melchisedec Harrington!' was announced to Lady Jocelyn.

Perfect stillness reigned immediately, as if the pic-nic had heard its doom.

'Oh! I will go to her,' said her ladyship, whose first thought was to spare the family. 'Andrew, come and give me your arm.'

But when she rose Mrs. Mel was no more than the length of an arm from her elbow.

In the midst of the horrible anguish she was enduring, the Countess could not help criticizing her mother's curtsey to Lady Jocelyn. Fine, but a shade too humble. Still it was fine; all might not yet be lost.

'Mama!' she softly exclaimed, and thanked heaven that she had not denied her parent.

Mrs. Mel did not notice her or any of her children. There was in her bosom a terrible determination to cast a devil out of the one she best loved. For this purpose, heedless of all pain to be given, or of impropriety, she had come to speak publicly, and disgrace and humiliate, that she might save him from the devils that had ruined his father.

'My lady,' said the terrible woman, thanking her in reply to an invitation that she should be seated, 'I have come for my son. I hear he has been playing the lord in your house, my lady. I humbly thank your ladyship for your kindness to him, but he is nothing more than a tailor's son, and is bound a tailor himself that his father may be called an honest man. I am come to take him away.'

Mrs. Mel seemed to speak without much effort, though the pale flush of her cheeks showed that she felt what she was doing. Juliana was pale as death, watching Rose. Intensely bright with the gem-like light of her gallant spirit, Rose's eyes fixed on Evan. He met them. The words of Ruth passed through his heart. But the Countess, who had given Rose to Evan, and the Duke to Caroline, where was her supporter? The Duke was entertaining Caroline with no less dexterity, and Rose's eyes said to Evan: 'Feel no shame that I do not feel!' but the Countess stood alone. It is ever thus with genius! to quote the numerous illustrious authors who have written of it.

What mattered it now that in the dead hush Lady Jocelyn should assure her mother that she had been misinformed, and that Mrs. Mel was presently quieted, and made to sit with others before the fruits and wines? All eyes were hateful--the very thought of Providence confused her brain. Almost reduced to imbecility, the Countess imagined, as a reality, that Sir Abraham had borne with her till her public announcement of relationship, and that then the outraged ghost would no longer be restrained, and had struck this blow.

The crushed pic-nic tried to get a little air, and made attempts at conversation. Mrs. Mel sat upon the company with the weight of all tailordom.

And now a messenger came for Harry. Everybody was so zealously employed in the struggle to appear comfortable under Mrs. Mel, that his departure was hardly observed. The general feeling for Evan and his sisters, by their superiors in rank, was one of kindly pity. Laxley, however, did not behave well. He put up his glass and scrutinized Mrs. Mel, and then examined Evan, and Rose thought that in his interchange of glances with any one there was a lurking revival of the scene gone by. She signalled with her eyebrows for Drummond to correct him, but Drummond had another occupation. Andrew made the diversion. He whispered to his neighbour, and the whisper went round, and the laugh; and Mr. Raikes grew extremely uneasy in his seat, and betrayed an extraordinary alarm. But he also was soon relieved. A messenger had come from Harry to Mrs. Evremonde, bearing a slip of paper. This the lady glanced at, and handed it to Drummond. A straggling pencil had traced these words:

'Just running by S.W. gates--saw the Captain coming in--couldn't stop to stop him--tremendous hurry--important. Harry J.'

Drummond sent the paper to Lady Jocelyn. After her perusal of it a scout was despatched to the summit of Olympus, and his report proclaimed the advance in the direction of the Bull-dogs of a smart little figure of a man in white hat and white trousers, who kept flicking his legs with a cane.

Mrs. Evremonde rose and conferred with her ladyship an instant, and then Drummond took her arm quietly, and passed round Olympus to the East, and Lady Jocelyn broke up the sitting.

Juliana saw Rose go up to Evan, and make him introduce her to his mother. She turned lividly white, and went to a corner of the park by herself, and cried bitterly.

Lady Jocelyn, Sir Franks, and Sir John, remained by the tables, but before the guests were out of ear-shot, the individual signalled from Olympus presented himself.

'There are times when one can't see what else to do but to lie,' said her ladyship to Sir Franks, 'and when we do lie the only way is to lie intrepidly.'

Turning from her perplexed husband, she exclaimed:

'Ah! Lawson?'

Captain Evremonde lifted his hat, declining an intimacy.

'Where is my wife, madam?'

'Have you just come from the Arctic Regions?'

'I have come for my wife, madam!'

His unsettled grey eyes wandered restlessly on Lady Jocelyn's face. The Countess standing near the Duke, felt some pity for the wife of that cropped-headed, tight-skinned lunatic at large, but deeper was the Countess's pity for Lady Jocelyn, in thinking of the account she would have to render on the Day of Judgement, when she heard her ladyship reply

'Evelyn is not here.'

Captain Evremonde bowed profoundly, trailing his broad white hat along the sward.

'Do me the favour to read this, madam,' he said, and handed a letter to her.

Lady Jocelyn raised her brows as she gathered the contents of the letter.

'Ferdinand's handwriting!' she exclaimed.

'I accuse no one, madam,--I make no accusation. I have every respect for you, madam,--you have my esteem. I am sorry to intrude, madam, an intrusion is regretted. My wife runs away from her bed, madam, and I have the law, madam, the law is with the husband. No force!' He lashed his cane sharply against his white legs. 'The law, madam. No brute force!' His cane made a furious whirl, cracking again on his legs, as he reiterated, 'The law!'

'Does the law advise you to strike at a tangent all over the country in search for her?' inquired Lady Jocelyn.

Captain Evremonde became ten times more voluble and excited.

Mrs. Mel was heard by the Countess to say: 'Her ladyship does not know how to treat madmen.'

Nor did Sir Franks and Sir John. They began expostulating with him.

'A madman gets madder when you talk reason to him,' said Mrs. Mel.

And now the Countess stepped forward to Lady Jocelyn, and hoped she would not be thought impertinent in offering her opinion as to how this frantic person should be treated. The case indeed looked urgent. Many gentlemen considered themselves bound to approach and be ready in case of need. Presently the Countess passed between Sir Franks and Sir John, and with her hand put up, as if she feared the furious cane, said:

'You will not strike me?'

'Strike a lady, madam?' The cane and hat were simultaneously lowered.

'Lady Jocelyn permits me to fetch for you a gentleman of the law. Or will you accompany me to him?'

In a moment, Captain Evremonde's manners were subdued and civilized, and in perfectly sane speech he thanked the Countess and offered her his arm. The Countess smilingly waved back Sir John, who motioned to attend on her, and away she went with the Captain, with all the glow of a woman who feels that she is heaping coals of fire on the heads of her enemies.

Was she not admired now?

'Upon my honour,' said Lady Jocelyn, 'they are a remarkable family,' meaning the Harringtons.

What farther she thought she did not say, but she was a woman who looked to natural gifts more than the gifts of accidents; and Evan's chance stood high with her then. So the battle of the Bull-dogs was fought, and cruelly as the Countess had been assailed and wounded, she gained a victory; yea, though Demogorgon, aided by the vindictive ghost of Sir Abraham, took tangible shape in the ranks opposed to her. True, Lady Jocelyn, forgetting her own recent intrepidity, condemned her as a liar; but the fruits of the Countess's victory were plentiful. Drummond Forth, fearful perhaps of exciting unjust suspicions in the mind of Captain Evremonde, disappeared altogether. Harry was in a mess which threw him almost upon Evan's mercy, as will be related. And, lastly, Ferdinand Laxley, that insufferable young aristocrat, was thus spoken to by Lady Jocelyn.

'This 'letter addressed to Lawson, telling him that his wife is here, is in your handwriting, Ferdinand. I don't say you wrote it--I don't think you could have written it. But, to tell you the truth, I have an unpleasant impression about it, and I think we had better shake hands and not see each other for some time.'

Laxley, after one denial of his guilt, disdained to repeat it. He met her ladyship's hand haughtily, and, bowing to Sir Franks, turned on his heel.

So, then, in glorious complete victory, the battle of the Bull-dogs ended!

Of the close of the pic-nic more remains to be told.

For the present I pause, in observance of those rules which demand that after an exhibition of consummate deeds, time be given to the spectator to digest what has passed before him.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A madman gets madder when you talk reason to him

Ah! how sweet to waltz through life with the right partner
And not any of your grand ladies can match my wife at home
Any man is in love with any woman
Believed in her love, and judged it by the strength of his own
Eating, like scratching, only wants a beginning
Feel no shame that I do not feel!
Feel they are not up to the people they are mixing with
Found it difficult to forgive her his own folly
Good and evil work together in this world
Hated one thing alone--which was 'bother'
He has been tolerably honest, Tom, for a man and a lover
I cannot live a life of deceit. A life of misery--not deceit
If we are to please you rightly, always allow us to play First
It is no insignificant contest when love has to crush self-love
Listened to one another, and blinded the world
Maxims of her own on the subject of rising and getting the worm
My belief is, you do it on purpose. Can't be such rank idiots
No conversation coming of it, her curiosity was violent
One fool makes many, and so, no doubt, does one goose
Play second fiddle without looking foolish
Second fiddle; he could only mean what she meant
Sense, even if they can't understand it, flatters them so
The commonest things are the worst done
The thrust sinned in its shrewdness
Those numerous women who always know themselves to be right
Two people love, there is no such thing as owing between them
Waited serenely for the certain disasters to enthrone her
What will be thought of me? not a small matter to any of us
When testy old gentlemen could commit slaughter with ecstasy
Why, he'll snap your head off for a word

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