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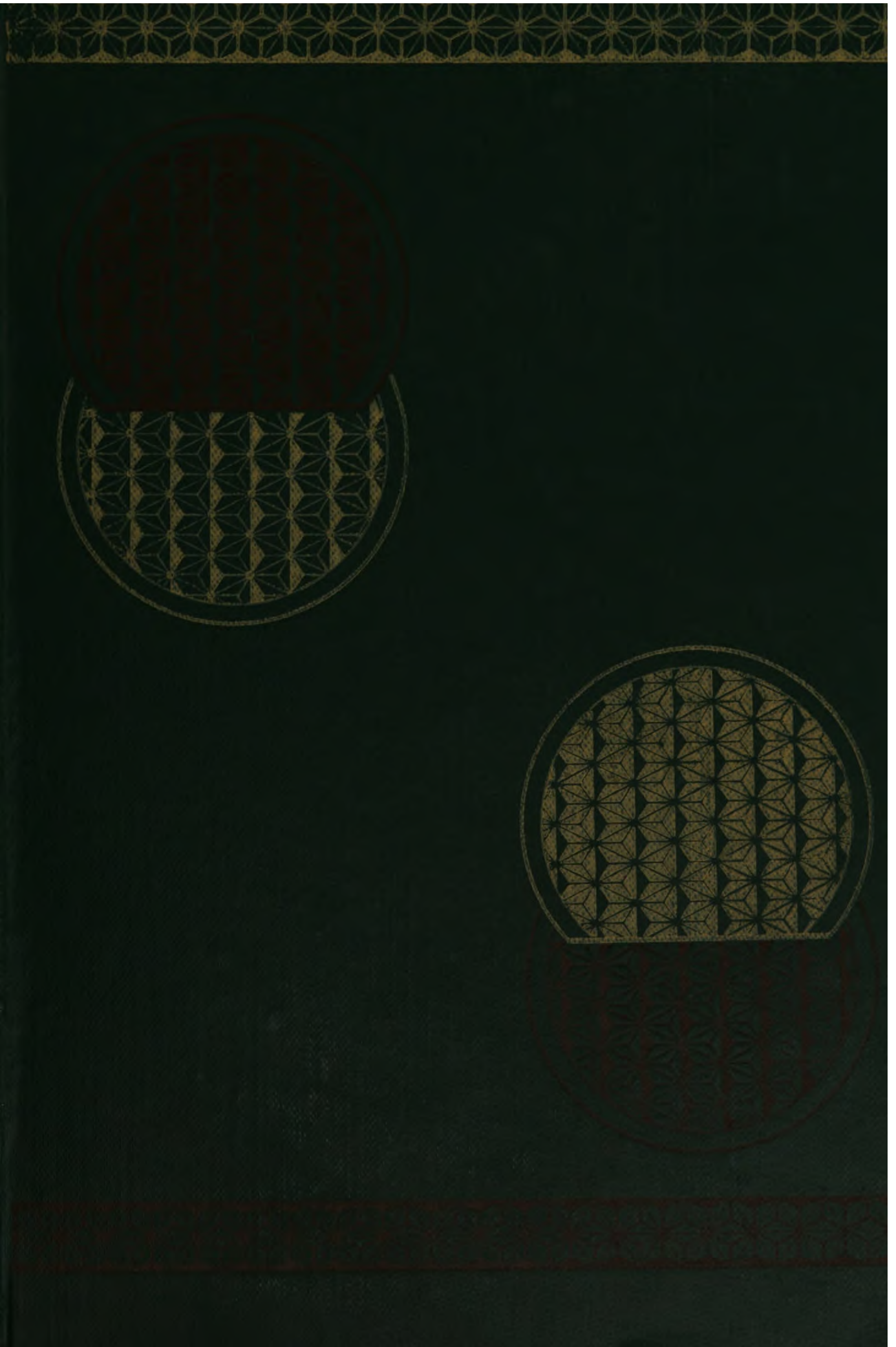
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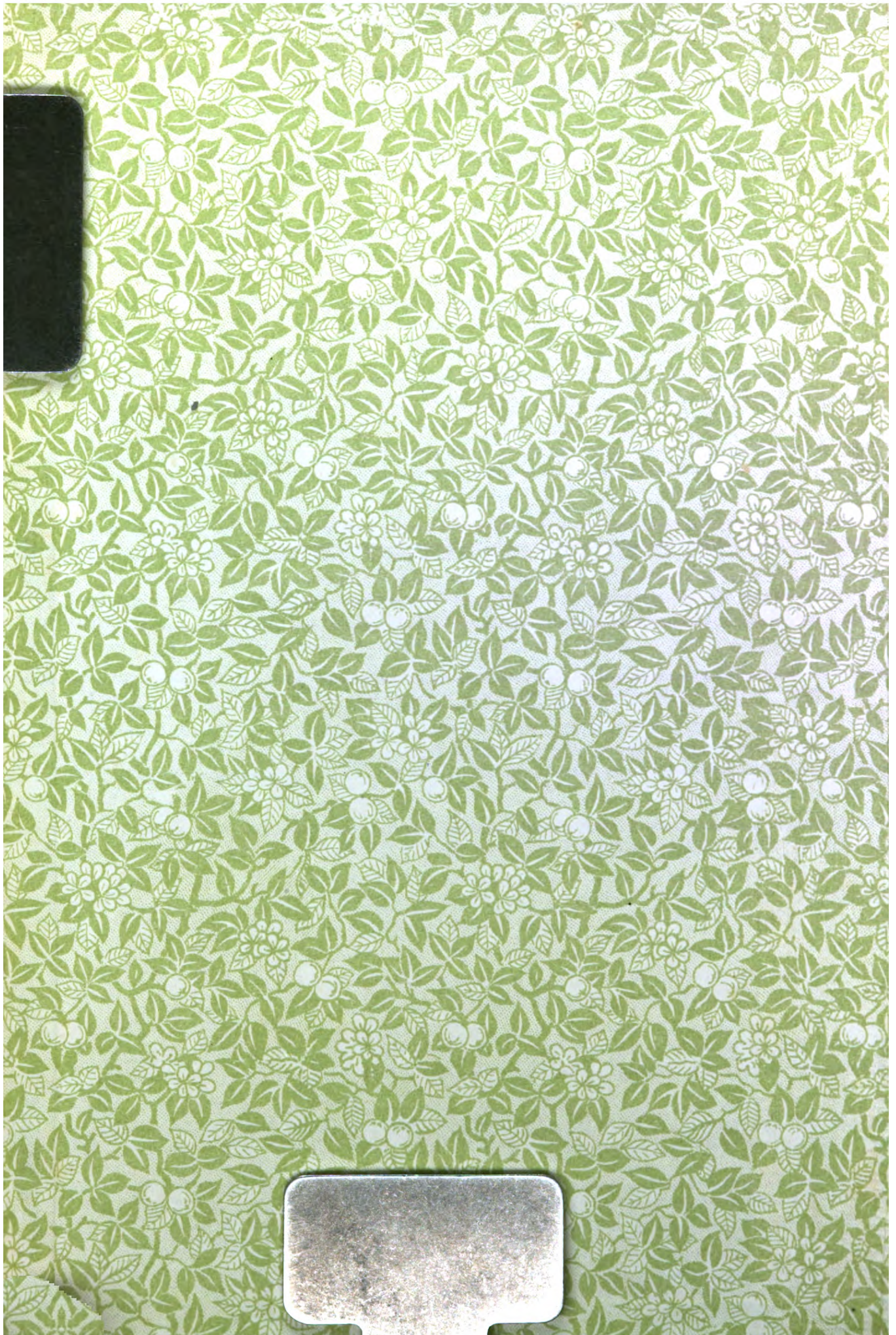
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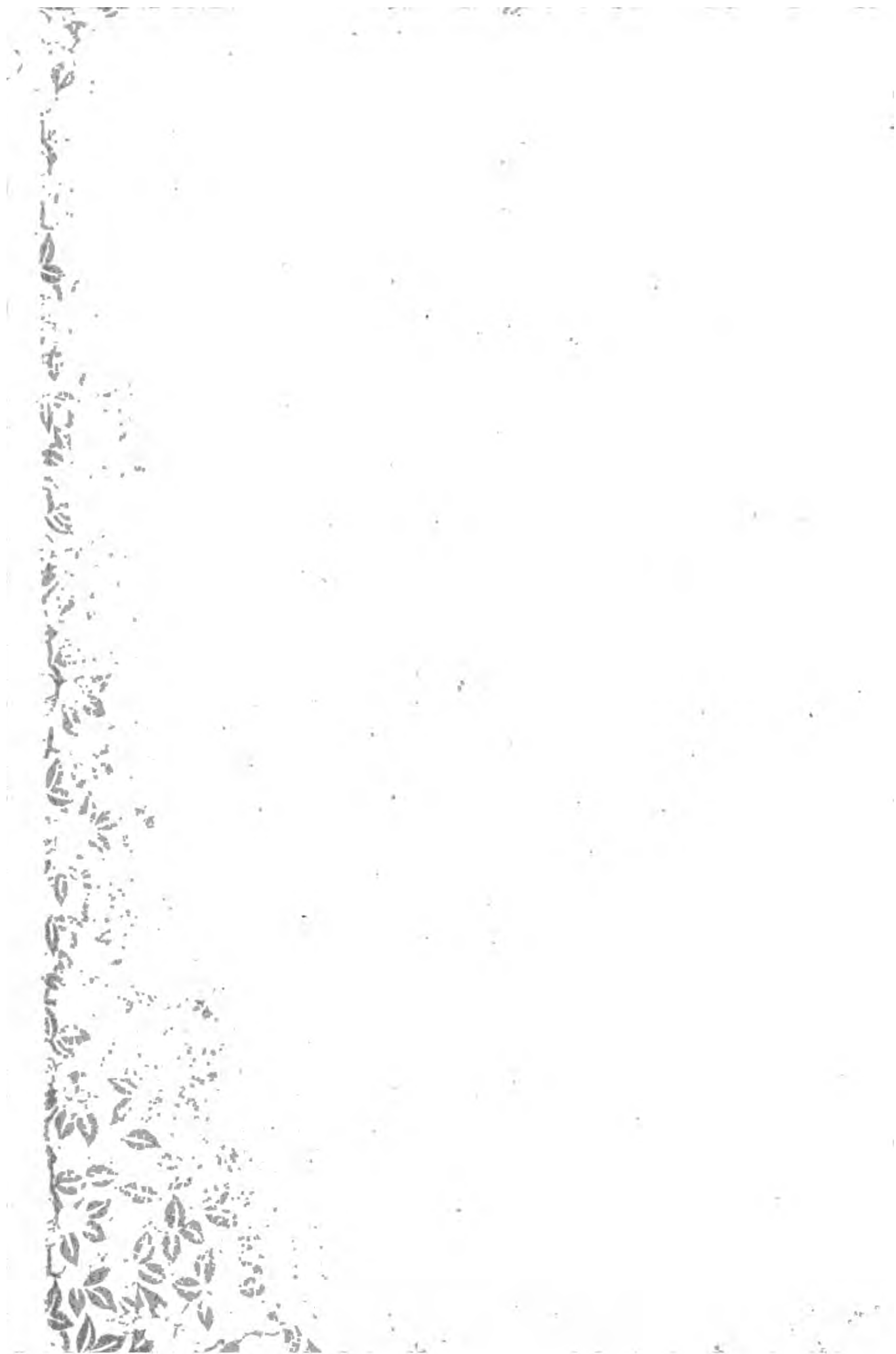
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# P H I L I S T I A

BY

CECIL POWER

*i.e. 'Charles' Grant*



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

London

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# PHILISTIA.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY.

AT the very top of the winding footpath cut deeply into the sandstone side of the East Cliff Hill at Hastings, a wooden seat, set a little back from the road, invites the panting climber to rest for five minutes after his steep ascent from the primitive fisher village of Old Hastings, which nestles warmly in the narrow sun-smitten gully at his feet. On this seat, one bright July morning, Herbert Le Breton lay at half length, basking in the brilliant open sunshine and evidently waiting for somebody whom he expected to arrive by the side path

from the All Saints' Valley. Even the old coastguardsman, plodding his daily round over to Ecclesbourne, noticed the obvious expectation implied in his attentive attitude, and ventured to remark, in his cheery familiar fashion, 'She won't be long a-comin' now, sir, you may depend upon it: the gals is sure to be out early of a fine mornin' like this 'ere.' Herbert stuck his double eye-glass gingerly upon the tip of his nose, and surveyed the bluff old sailor through it with a stony British stare of mingled surprise and indignation, which drove the poor man hastily off, with a few muttered observations about some people being so confounded stuck up that they didn't even understand the point of a little good-natured seafarin' banter.

As the coastguardsman disappeared round the corner of the flagstaff, a young girl came suddenly into sight by the jutting edge of sandstone bluff near the High Wickham; and

Herbert, jumping up at once from his reclining posture, raised his hat to her with stately politeness, and moved forward in his courtly graceful manner to meet her as she approached. 'Well, Selah,' he said, taking her hand a little warmly (judged at least by Herbert Le Breton's usual standard), 'so you've come at last! I've been waiting here for you for fully half an hour. You see, I've come down to Hastings again as I promised, the very first moment I could possibly get away from my pressing duties at Oxford.'

The girl withdrew her hand from his, blushing deeply, but looking into his face with evident pleasure and admiration. She was tall and handsome, with a certain dashing air of queenliness about her, too; and she was dressed in a brave, outspoken sort of finery, which, though cheap enough in its way, was neither common nor wholly wanting in a touch of native good taste and even bold



refinement of contrast and harmony. 'It's very kind of you to come, Mr. Walters,' she answered in a firm but delicate voice. 'I'm so sorry I've kept you waiting. I got your letter, and tried to come in time; but father he's been more aggravating than usual, almost, this morning, and kept saying he'd like to know what on earth a young woman could want to go out walking for, instead of stopping at home at her work and minding her Bible like a proper Christian. In *his* time young women usen't to be allowed to go walking except on Sundays, and then only to chapel or Bible class. So I've not been able to get away till this very minute, with all this bundle of tracts, too, to give to the excursionists on the way. Father feels a most incomprehensible interest, somehow, in the future happiness of the Sunday excursionists.'

'I wish he'd feel a little more interest in the present happiness of his own daughter,' Herbert said smiling. 'But it hasn't mattered

your keeping me waiting here, Selah. Of course I'd have enjoyed it all far better in your society—I don't think I need tell you that now, dear—but the sunshine, and the sea breeze, and the song of the larks, and the splash of the waves below, and the shouts of the fishermen down there on the beach mending their nets and putting out their smacks, have all been so delightful after our humdrum round of daily life at Oxford, that I only wanted your presence here to make it all into a perfect paradise.—Why, Selah, how pretty you look in that sweet print! It suits your complexion admirably. I never saw you wear anything before so perfectly becoming.'

Selah drew herself up with the conscious pride of an unaffected pretty girl. 'I'm so glad you think so, Mr. Walters,' she said, playing nervously with the handle of her dark-blue parasol. 'You always say such very flattering things.'

‘No, not flattering,’ Herbert answered, smiling: ‘not flattering, Selah, simply truthful. You always extort the truth from me with your sweet face, Selah. Nobody can look at it and not forget the stupid conventions of ordinary society. But please, dear, don’t call me Mr. Walters. Call me Herbert. You always do, you know, when you write to me.’

‘But it’s so much harder to do it to your face, Mr. Walters,’ Selah said, again blushing. ‘Every time you go away I say to myself, “I shall call him Herbert as soon as ever he comes back again:” and every time you come back, I feel too much afraid of you, the moment I see you, ever to do it. And yet of course I ought to, you know, for when we’re married, why, naturally, then I shall have to learn to call you Herbert, shan’t I?’

‘You will, I suppose,’ Herbert answered, rather chillily: ‘but that subject is one upon which we shall be able to form a better opinion

when the time comes for actually deciding it. Meanwhile, I want you to call me Herbert, if you please, as a personal favour and a mark of confidence. Suppose I were to go on calling you Miss Briggs all the time! a pretty sort of thing that would be! what inference would you draw as to the depth of my affection? Well, now, Selah, how have these dreadful home authorities of yours been treating you, my dear girl, all the time since I last saw you?’

‘Much the same as usual, Mr Walters—Herbert, I mean,’ Selah answered, hastily correcting herself. ‘The regular round. Prayers; clean the shop; breakfast, with a chapter; serve in the shop all morning; dinner, with a chapter; serve in the shop all afternoon; tea, with a chapter; prayer meeting in the evening; supper, with a chapter; exhortation; and go to bed, sick of it all, to get up next morning and repeat the entire performance *da capo*, as they always say in the

music to the hymn-books. Occasional relaxations,—Sunday at chapel three times, and Wednesday evening Bible class; mothers' assembly, Dorcas society, missionary meeting, lecture on the Holy Land, dissolving views of Jerusalem, and Primitive Methodist district conference in the Mahanaim Jubilee meeting hall. Salvation privileges every day and all the year round, till I'm ready to drop with it, and begin to wish I'd only been lucky enough to have been born one of those happy benighted little pagans in a heathen land where they don't know the value of the precious Sabbath, and haven't yet been taught to build Primitive Methodist district chapels for crushing the lives out of their sons and daughters!'

Herbert smiled a gentle smile of calm superiority at this vehement outburst of natural irreligion. 'You must certainly be bored to death with it all, Selah,' he said, laughingly. 'What a funny sort of creed it really is, after

all, for rational beings! Who on earth could believe that the religion these people use to render your life so absolutely miserable is meant for the same thing as the one that makes my poor dear brother Ronald so perfectly and inexpressibly serene and happy? The formalism of lower natures, like your father's, has turned it into a machine for crushing all the spontaneity out of your existence. What a *régime* for a high-spirited girl like you to be compelled to live under, Selah!

‘It is, it is!’ Selah answered, vehemently. ‘I wish you could only see the way father goes on at me all the time about chapel, and so on, Mr. Wal—Herbert, I mean. You wouldn't wonder, if you were to hear him, at my being anxious for the time to come when you can leave Oxford and we can get comfortably married. What between the drudgery of the shop and the drudgery of the chapel my life's positively getting almost worn out of me.’

Herbert took her hand in his, quietly. It was not a very small hand, but it was prettily, though cheaply, gloved, and the plain silver bracelet that encircled the wrist, though simple and inexpensive, was not wanting in rough tastefulness. 'You're a bad philosopher, Selah,' he said, turning with her along the path towards Ecclesbourne; 'you're always anxious to hurry on too fast the lagging wheels of an unknown future. After all, how do you know whether we should be any the happier if we were really and truly married? Don't you know what Swinburne says, in "Dolores"—you've read it in the Poems and Ballads I gave you—

Time turns the old days to derision,  
Our loves into corpses or wives,  
And marriage and death and division  
Make barren our lives?'

'I've read it,' Selah answered, carelessly, 'and I thought it all very pretty. Of course Swinburne always *is* very pretty: but I'm

sure I never try to discover what on earth he means by it. I suppose father would say I don't read him tearfully and prayerfully—at any rate, I'm quite sure I never understand what he's driving at.'

'And yet he's worth understanding,' Herbert answered in his clear musical voice—  
'well worth understanding, Selah, especially for you, dearest. If, in imitation of obsolete fashions, you wished to read a few verses of some improving volume every night and morning, as a sort of becoming religious exercise in the elements of self-culture, I don't know that I could recommend you a better book to begin upon than the Poems and Ballads. Don't you see the moral of those four lines I've just quoted to you? Why should we wish to change from anything so free and delightful and poetical as lovers into anything so fettered, and commonplace, and prosaic, and *banal*, as wives and husbands? Why should we wish



to give up the fanciful paradise of fluttering hope and expectation for the dreary reality of housekeeping and cold mutton on Mondays? Why should we not be satisfied with the real pleasure of the passing moment, without for ever torturing our souls about the imaginary but delusive pleasure of the unrealisable, impossible future?’

‘But we *must* get married some time or other, Herbert,’ Selah said, turning her big eyes full upon him with a doubtful look of interrogation. ‘We can’t go on courting in this way for ever and ever, without coming to any definite conclusion. We *must* get married by-and-by, now mustn’t we?’

‘Je n’en vois pas la nécessité, moi,’ Herbert answered with just a trace of cynicism in his curling lip. ‘I don’t see any *must* about it, that is to say, in English, Selah. The fact is, you see, I’m above all things a philosopher; you’re a philosopher, too, but only an instinctive one, and

I want to make your instinctive philosophy assume a rather more rational and extrinsic shape. Why should we really be in any hurry to go and get married? Do the actual married people of our acquaintance, as a matter of fact, seem so very much more ethereally happy—with their eight children to be washed and dressed and schooled daily, for example—than the lovers, like you and me, who walk arm-in-arm out here in the sunshine, and haven't yet got over their delicious first illusions? Depend upon it, the longer you can keep your illusions the better. You haven't read Aristotle in all probability; but as Aristotle would put it, it isn't the end that is anything in love-making, it's the energy, the active pursuit, the momentary enjoyment of it. I suppose we shall have to get married some day, Selah, though I don't know when; but I confess to you I don't look forward to the day quite so rapturously as you do. Shall we feel more

the thrill of possession, do you think, than I feel it now when I hold your hand in mine, so, and catch the beating of your pulse in your veins, even through the fingers of your pretty little glove? Shall we look deeper into one another's eyes and hearts than I look now into the very inmost depths of yours? Shall we drink in more fully the essence of love than when I touch your lips here—one moment, Selah, the gorse is very deep here—now don't be foolish—ah, there, what's the use of philosophising, tell me, by the side of that? Come over here to the bench, Selah, by the edge of the cliff; look down yonder into Ecclesbourne glen; hear the waves dashing on the shore below, and your own heart beating against your bosom within—and then ask yourself what's the good of living in any moment, in any moment but the present.'

Selah turned her great eyes admiringly upon him once more. 'Oh, Herbert,' she

said, looking at him with a clever uneducated girl's unfeigned and undisguised admiration for any cultivated gentleman who takes the trouble to draw out her higher self. 'Oh, Herbert, how can you talk so beautifully to me, and then ask me why it is I'm longing for the day to come when I can be really and truly married to you? Do you think I don't feel the difference between spending my life with such a man as you, and spending it for years and years together with a ranting, canting Primitive Methodist?'

Herbert smiled to himself a quiet, unobtrusive, self-satisfied smile. 'She appreciates me,' he thought silently in his own heart, 'she appreciates me at my true worth; and, after all, that's a great thing. Well, Selah,' he went on aloud, toying unreprieved with her pretty little silver bracelet, 'let us be practical. You belong to a business family and you know the necessity for being practical.

There's a great deal to be said in favour of my hanging on at Oxford a little longer. I must get a situation somewhere else as soon as possible, in which I can get married; but I can't give up my fellowship without having found something else to do which would enable me to put my wife in the position I should like her to occupy.'

'A very small income would do for me, with you, Herbert,' Selah put in eagerly. 'You see, I've been brought up economically enough, heaven knows, and I could live extremely well on very little.'

'But *I* could not, Selah,' Herbert answered, in his colder tone. 'Pardon me, but I could not. I've been accustomed to a certain amount of comfort, not to say luxury, which I couldn't readily do without. And then, you know, dear,' he added, seeing a certain cloud gathering dimly on Selah's forehead, 'I want to make my wife a real lady.'

Selah looked at him tenderly, and gave the hand she held in hers a faint pressure. And then Herbert began to talk about the waves, and the cliffs, and the sun, and the great red sails, and to quote Shelley and Swinburne; and the conversation glided off into more ordinary everyday topics.

They sat for a couple of hours together on the edge of the cliff, talking to one another about such and other subjects, till, at last, Selah asked the time, hurriedly, and declared she must go off at once, or father'd be in a tearing passion. Herbert walked back with her through the green lanes in the golden mass of gorse, till he reached the brow of the hill by the fisher village. Then Selah said lightly, 'Not any nearer, Herbert—you see I can say Herbert quite naturally now—the neighbours will go talking about it if they see me standing here with a strange gentleman. Good-bye, good-bye, till Friday.' Herbert held her face

up to his in his hands, and kissed her twice over in spite of a faint resistance. Then they each went their own way, Selah to the little greengrocer's shop in a back street of the red-brick fisher village, and Herbert to his big fashionable hotel on the Marine Parade in the noisy stuccoed modern watering place.

'It's an awkward sort of muddle to have got oneself into,' he thought to himself as he walked along the asphalte pavement in front of the sea-wall: 'a most confoundedly awkward fix to have got oneself into with a pretty girl of the lower classes. She's beautiful certainly; that there's no denying; the handsomest woman on the whole I ever remember to have seen at any time anywhere; and when I'm actually by her side—though it's a weakness to confess it—I'm really not quite sure that I'm not positively quite in love with her! She'd make a grand sort of Messalina, without a doubt, a model for a painter, with her frank imperious face, and

her splendid voluptuous figure ; a Faustina, a Catherine of Russia, an Ann Boleyn—to be fitly painted only by a Rubens or a Gustave Courbet. Yet how I can ever have been such a particular fool as to go and get myself entangled with her I can't imagine. Heredity, heredity ; it must run in the family, for certain. There's Ernest has gone and handed himself over bodily to this grocer person somewhere down in Devonshire ; and I myself, who perfectly see the folly of his absurd proceeding, have independently put myself into this very similar awkward fix with Selah Briggs here. Selah Briggs, indeed ! The very name reeks with commingled dissent, vulgarity, and greengrocery. Her father's deacon of his chapel, and goes out at night when there's no missionary meeting on, to wait at serious dinner parties ! Or rather, I suppose he'd desert the most enticing missionary to earn a casual half-crown at even an ungodly champagne-drinking dinner ! Then that's the differ-



ence between me and Ernest. Ernest's selfish, incurably and radically selfish. Because this Oswald girl happens to take his passing fancy, and to fit in with his impossible Schurzian notions, he'll actually go and marry her. Not only will he have no consideration for mother—who really is a very decent sort of body in her own fashion, if you don't rub her up the wrong way or expect too much from her—but he'll also interfere, without a thought, with *my* prospects and my advancement. Now, *that* I call really selfish; and selfishness is a vulgar piggish vice that I thoroughly abominate. I don't deny that I'm a trifle selfish myself, of course, in a refined and cultivated manner—I flatter myself, in fact, that introspective analysis is one of my strong points; and I don't conceal my own failings from my own consciousness with any weak girlish prevarications. But after all, as Hobbes very well showed (though our shallow modern philosophers pretend to laugh at him), selfishness in one form

or another is at the very base of all human motives ; the difference really is between sympathetic and unsympathetic selfishness—between piggishness and cultivated feelings. Now *I* will *not* give way to the foolish and selfish impulses which would lead me to marry Selah Briggs. I will put a curb upon my inclinations, and do what is really best in the end for all the persons concerned—and for myself especially.’

He strolled down on to the beach, and began throwing pebbles carelessly into the plashing water. ‘Yes,’ he went on in his internal colloquy, ‘I can only account for my incredible stupidity in this matter by supposing that it depends somehow upon some incomprehensible hereditary leaning in the Le Breton family idiosyncrasy. It’s awfully unlike me, I will do myself the justice to say, to have got myself into such a silly dilemma all for nothing. It was all very well a few years ago, when I first met Selah. I was an undergraduate in those days,

and even if somebody had caught me walking with a young lady of unknown antecedents and doubtful aspirates on the East Cliff at Hastings, it really wouldn't have much mattered. She was beautiful even then—though not so beautiful as now, for she grows handsomer every day; and it was natural enough I should have taken to going harmless walks about the place with her. She attracted me by her social rebelliousness—another family trait, in me passive not active, contemplative not personal; but she certainly attracted me. She attracts me still. A man must have some outlet for the natural and instinctive emotions of our common humanity; and if a monastic Oxford community imposes celibacy upon one with mediæval absurdity—why, Selah Briggs is, for the time being, the only possible sort of outlet. One needn't marry her in the end; but for the moment it is certainly very excellent fooling. Not unsentimental either—for my part I could

never care for mere coarse, commonplace, venal wretches. Indeed, when I spoke to her just now about my wishing to make my wife a lady, upon my word, at the time, I almost think I was just then quite in earnest. The idea flitted across my mind vaguely—"Why not send her for a year or two to be polished up at Paris or somewhere, and really marry her afterwards for good and always?" But on second thoughts, it won't hold water. She's magnificent, she's undeniable, she's admirable, but she isn't possible. The name alone's enough to condemn her. Fancy marrying somebody with a Christian name out of the hundred and somethingth psalm! It's too atrocious! I really couldn't inflict her for a moment on poor suffering innocent society.'

He paused awhile, watching the great russet sails of the fishing vessels flapping idly in the breeze as the men raised them to catch the faint breath of wind, and then he thought once

more, 'But how to get rid of her, that's the question. Every time I come here now she goes on more and more about the necessity of our getting soon married—and I don't wonder at it either, for she has a perfect purgatory of a life with that snivelling Methodistical father of hers, one may be sure of it. It would be awfully awkward if any Oxford people were to catch me here walking with her on the cliff over yonder—some sniggering fellow of Jesus or Worcester, for example, or, worse than all, some prying young Pecksniff of a third-year undergraduate! Somehow, she seems to fascinate me, and I can't get away from her; but I must really do it and be done with it. It's no use going on this way much longer. I must stop here for a few days more only, and then tell her that I'm called away on important college business, say to Yorkshire or Worcestershire, or somewhere. I needn't tell her in person, face to face: I can write hastily at the

last moment to the usual name at the Post Office—to be left till called for. And as a matter of fact I won't go to Yorkshire either—very awkward and undignified, though, these petty prevarications ; when a man once begins lowering himself by making love to a girl in an inferior position, he lets himself in for all kinds of disagreeable necessities afterwards ;—I shall go to Switzerland. Yes, no place better after the bother of running away like a coward from Selah : in the Alps, one would forget all petty human degradations ; I shall go to Switzerland. Of course I won't break off with her altogether—that would be cruel ; and I really like her ; upon my word, even when she isn't by, up to her own level, I really like her ; but I'll let the thing die a natural death of inanition. As they always put it in the newspapers, with their stereotyped phraseology, a gradual coldness shall intervene between us. That'll be the best and only way out of it.

‘And if I go to Switzerland, why not ask Oswald of Oriel to go with me? That, I fancy, wouldn’t be a bad stroke of social policy. Ernest *will* marry this Oswald girl · unfortunately he’s as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile ; and as he’s going to drag her inevitably into the family, I may as well put the best possible face upon the disagreeable matter. Let’s make a virtue of necessity. The father and mother are old : they’ll die soon, and be gathered to their fathers (if they had any), and the world will straightway forget all about them. But Oswald will always be there *en évidence*, and the safest thing to do will be to take him as much as possible into the world, and let the sister rest upon *his* reputation for her place in society. It’s quite one thing to say that Ernest has married the daughter of a country grocer down in Devonshire, and quite another thing to say that he has married the sister of Oswald of Oriel, the distinguished

mathematician and fellow of the Royal Society. How beautifully that warm brown sail stands out in a curve against the cold grey line of the horizon—a bulging curve just like the swell of Selah's neck, when she throws her head back, so, and lets you see the contour of her throat, her beautiful rounded throat—ah, that's not giving her up now, is it?—What a confounded fool I am, to be sure! Anybody would say, if they could only have read my thoughts that moment, that I was really in love with this girl Selah!



## CHAPTER XIII.

## YE MOUNTAINS OF GILBOA!

THE old Englischer Hof at Pontresina looked decidedly sleepy and misty at five o'clock on an August morning, when two sturdy British holiday-seekers, in knickerbockers and regular Alpine climbing rig, sat drinking their parting cup of coffee in the *salle-à-manger*, before starting to make the ascent of the Piz Margatsch, one of the tallest and by far the most difficult among the peaks of the Bernina range. There are few prettier villages in the Engadine than Pontresina, and few better hotels in all Switzerland than the old ivy-covered Englischer Hof. Yet on this particular morning, and at that particular hour, it certainly did look just a

trifle cold and cheerless. 'He never makes very warm in the Engadine,' Carlo the waiter observed with a shudder, in his best English, to one of the two early risers: 'and he makes colder on an August morning here than he makes at Nice in full December. For poor Carlo was one of those cosmopolitan waiters who follow the cosmopolitan tourist *clientèle* round all the spas, health resorts, kurs and winter quarters of fashionable Europe. In January he and his brother, as Charles and Henri, handed round absinthes and cigarettes at the Cercle Nautique at Nice; in April, as Carlo and Enrico, they turned up again with water ices and wafer cakes in the Caffè Manzoni at Milan; and in August, the observant traveller might recognise them once more under the disguise of Karl and Heinrich, laying the *table d'hôte* in the long and narrow old-fashioned dining-room of the Englischer Hof at Pontresina. Though their native

tongue was the *patois* of the Canton Ticino, they spoke all the civilised languages of the world, 'and also German,' with perfect fluency, and without the slightest attempt at either grammar or idiomatic accuracy. And they both profoundly believed in their hearts that the rank, wealth, youth, beauty, and fashion of all other nations were wisely ordained by the inscrutable designs of Providence for a single purpose, to enrich and reward the active, intelligent, and industrious natives of the Canton Ticino.

'Are the guides come yet?' asked Harry Oswald of the waiter in somewhat feeble and hesitating German. He made it a point to speak German to the waiters, because he regarded it as the only proper and national language of the universal Teutonic Swiss people.

'They await the gentlemen in the corridor,' answered Carlo, in his own peculiar

and racy English; for he on his side resented the imputation that any traveller need ever converse with him in any but that traveller's own tongue, provided only it was one of the recognised and civilised languages of the world, or even German. They are a barbarous and disgusting race, those Tedeschi, look you well, Signor; they address you as though you were the dust in the piazza; yet even from them a polite and attentive person may confidently look for a modest, a very modest, but still a welcome trink-geld.

'Then we'd better hurry up, Oswald,' said Herbert Le Breton, 'for guides are the most tyrannical set of people on the entire face of this planet. I shall have another cup of coffee before I go, though, if the guides swear at me roundly in the best Roumansch for it, anyhow.'

'Your acquaintance with the Roumansch dialect being probably limited,' Harry Oswald

answered, 'the difference between their swearing and their blessing would doubtless be reduced to a vanishing point. Though I've noticed that swearing is really a form of human speech everywhere readily understood of the people in spite of all differences of race or language. One touch of nature, you see; and swearing, after all, is extremely natural.'

'Are you ready?' asked Herbert, having tossed off his coffee. 'Yes? Then come along at once. I can feel the guides frowning at us through the partition.'

They turned out into the street, with its green-shuttered windows all still closed in the pale grey of early morning, and walked along with the three guides by the high road which leads through rocks and fir-trees up to the beginning of the steep path to the Piz Margatsch. Passing the clear emerald-green waterfall that rushes from under the lower melting end of the Morteratsch glacier, they took at once to

the narrow track by the moraine along the edge of the ice, and then to the glacier itself, which is easy enough climbing, as glaciers go, for a good pedestrian. Herbert Le Breton, the older mountaineer of the two, got over the big blocks readily enough; but Harry, less accustomed to Swiss expeditions, lagged and loitered behind a little, and required more assistance from the guides every now and again than his sturdy companion.

‘I’m getting rather blown at starting,’ Harry called out at last to Herbert, some yards in front of him. ‘Do you think the despotic guide would let us sit down and rest a bit if we asked him very prettily?’

‘Offer him a cigar first,’ Herbert shouted back, ‘and then after a short and decent interval, prefer your request humbly in your politest French. The savage potentate always expects to be propitiated by gifts, as a pre-

liminary to answering the petitions of his humble subjects.'

'I see,' Harry said, laughing. 'Supply before grievances, not grievances before supply.' And he halted a moment to light a cigar, and to offer one to each of the two guides who were helping him along on either side.

Thus mollified, the senior guide grudgingly allowed ten minutes' halt and a drink of water at the bend by the corner of the glacier. They sat down upon the great translucent sea-green blocks, and began talking with the taciturn chief guide.

'Is this glacier dangerous?' Harry asked.

'Dangerous, monsieur? Oh no, not as one counts glaciers. It is very safe. There are seldom accidents.'

'But there have been some?'

'Some, naturally. You don't climb mountains always without accidents. There was

one the first time anyone ever made the ascent of the Piz Margatsch. That was fifty years ago. My uncle was killed in it.'

'Killed in it?' Harry echoed. 'How did it all happen, and where?'

'Yonder, monsieur, in a crevasse that was then situated near the bend at the corner, just where the great crevasse you see before you now stands. That was fifty years ago; since then the glacier has moved much. Its substance, in effect, has changed entirely.'

'Tell us all about it,' Herbert put in carelessly. He knew the guide wouldn't go on again till he had finished his whole story.

'It's a strange tale,' the guide answered, taking a puff or two at his cigar pensively and then removing it altogether for his set narrative—he had told the tale before a hundred times, and he had the very words of it now regularly by heart. 'It was the first time anyone ever tried to climb the Piz Mar-



gatsch. At that time, nobody in the valley knew the best path; it is my father who afterwards discovered it. Two English gentlemen came to Pontresina one morning; one might say you two gentlemen; but in those days there were not many tourists in the Engadine; the exploitation of the tourist had not yet begun to be developed. My father and my uncle were then the only two guides at Pontresina. The English gentlemen asked them to try with them the scaling of the Piz Margatsch. My uncle was afraid of it, but my father laughed down his fears. So they started. My uncle was dressed in a blue coat with brass buttons, and a pair of brown velvet breeches. Ah, heaven, I can see him yet, his white corpse in the blue coat and the brown velvet breeches!

‘But you can’t be fifty yourself,’ Harry said, looking at the tall long-limbed man attentively; ‘no, nor forty, nor thirty either.’

‘No, monsieur, I am twenty-seven,’ the chief guide answered, taking another puff at his cigar very deliberately; ‘and this was fifty years ago: yet I have seen his corpse just as the accident happened. You shall hear all about it. It is a tale from the dead; it is worth hearing.’

‘This begins to grow mysterious,’ said Herbert in English, hammering impatiently at the ice with the shod end of his alpenstock. ‘Sounds for all the world just like the introduction to a Christmas number.’

‘A young girl in the village loved my uncle,’ the guide went on imperturbably; ‘and she begged him not to go on this expedition. She was betrothed to him. But he wouldn’t listen: and they all started together for the top of the Piz Margatsch. After many trials, my father and my uncle and the two tourists reached the summit. “So you see, Andreas,” said my father, “your fears were all folly.”’

“Half-way through the forest,” said my uncle, “one is not yet safe from the wolf.” Then they began to descend again. They got down past all the dangerous places, and on to this glacier, so well known, so familiar. And then my uncle began indeed to get careless. He laughed at his own fears; “Cathrein was all wrong,” he said to my father, “we shall get down again safely, with Our Lady’s assistance.” So they reached at last the great crevasse. My father and one of the Englishmen got over without difficulty; but the other Englishman slipped; his footing failed him; and he was sinking, sinking, down, down, down, slipping quickly into the deep dark green abyss below. My uncle stretched out his hand over the edge: the Englishman caught it; and then my uncle missed his foothold, they both fell together and were lost to sight at once completely, in the invisible depths of the great glacier!

‘Well,’ Herbert Le Breton said, as the man paused a moment. ‘Is that all?’

‘No,’ the guide answered, with a tone of deep solemnity. ‘That is not all. The glacier went on moving, moving, slowly, slowly, but always downward, for years and years. Yet no one ever heard anything more of the two lost bodies. At last one day, when I was seven years old, I went out playing with my brother, among the pine-woods, near the waterfall that rushes below there, from under the glacier. We saw something lying in the ice-cold water, just beneath the bottom of the ice-sheet. We climbed over the moraine; and there, oh heaven! we could see two dead bodies. They were drowned, just drowned, we thought: it might have been yesterday. One of them was short and thick-set, with the face of an Englishman: he was close-shaven, and, what seemed odd to us, he had on clothes which, though

we were but children, we knew at once for the clothes of a long past fashion—in fact, a suit of the Louis dix-huit style. The other was a tall and handsome man, dressed in the unchangeable blue coat and brown velvet breeches of our own canton, of the Graubunden. We were very frightened about it, and so we ran away trembling and told an old woman who lived close by; her name was Cathrein, and her grandchildren used to play with us, though she herself was about the age of my father, for my father married very late. Old Cathrein came out with us to look; and the moment she saw the bodies, she cried out with a great cry, “It is he! It is Andreas! It is my betrothed, who was lost on the very day week when I was to be married. I should know him at once among ten thousand. It is many, many years now, but I have not forgotten his face—ah, my God, that face; I know it well!” And she took his hand in

hers, that fair white young hand in her own old brown withered one, and kissed it gently. "And yet," she said, "he is five years older than me, this fair young man here; five years older than me!" We were frightened to hear her talk so, for we said to ourselves, "She must be mad;" so we ran home and brought our father. He looked at the dead bodies and at old Cathrein, and he said, "It is indeed true. He is my brother." Ah, monsieur, you would not have forgotten it if you had seen those two old people standing there beside the fresh corpses they had not seen for all those winters! They themselves had meanwhile grown old and grey and wrinkled; but the ice of the glacier had kept those others young, and fresh, and fair, and beautiful as on the day they were first engulfed in it. It was terrible to look at!

'A most ghastly story, indeed,' Herbert Le Breton said, yawning; 'and now I think we'd

better be getting under way again, hadn't we, Oswald?'

Harry Oswald rose from his seat on the block of ice unwillingly, and proceeded on his road up the mountain with a distinct and decided feeling of nervousness. Was it the guide's story that made his knees tremble slightly? was it his own inexperience in climbing? or was it the cold and the fatigue of the first ascent of the season to a man not yet in full pedestrian Alpine training? He did not feel at all sure about it in his own mind: but this much he knew with perfect certainty, that his footing was not nearly so secure under him as it had been during the earlier part of the climb over the lower end of the glacier.

By-and-by they reached the long sheer snowy slope near the Three Brothers. This slope is liable to slip, and requires careful walking, so the guides began roping them

together. 'The stout monsieur in front, next after me,' said the chief guide, knotting the rope soundly round Herbert Le Breton: 'then Kaspar; then you, monsieur,' to Harry Oswald, 'and finally Paolo, to bring up the rear. The thin monsieur is nervous, I think; it's best to place him most in the middle.'

'If you really *are* nervous, Oswald,' Herbert said, not unkindly, 'you'd better stop behind, I think, and let me go on with two of the guides. The really hard work, you know, has scarcely begun yet.'

'Oh dear, no,' Harry answered lightly (he didn't care to confess his timidity before Herbert Le Breton of all men in the world): 'I do feel just a little groggy about the knees, I admit; but it's not nervousness, it's only want of training. I haven't got accustomed to glacier-work yet, and the best way to overcome it is by constant practice. "Solvitur ambulando," you know, as Aldrich says about Achilles and the tortoise.'



‘Very good,’ Herbert answered drily; ‘only mind, whatever you do, for Heaven’s sake don’t go and stumble and pull *me* down on the top of you. It’s the clear duty of a good citizen to respect the lives of the other men who are roped together with him on the side of a mountain.’

They set to work again, in single file, with cautious steps planted firmly on the treacherous snow, to scale the great white slope that stretched so temptingly before them. Harry felt his knees becoming at every step more and more ungovernable, while Herbert didn’t improve matters by calling out to him from time to time, ‘Now, then, look out for a hard bit here,’ or ‘Mind that loose piece of ice there,’ or ‘Be very careful how you put your foot down by the yielding edge yonder,’ and so forth. At last, they had almost reached the top of the slope, and were just above the bare gully on the side, when Harry’s insecure foot-

ing on a stray scrap of ice gave way suddenly, and he began to slip rapidly down the sheer slope of the mountain. In a second he had knocked against Paolo, and Paolo had begun to slip too, so that both were pulling with all their weight against Kaspar and the others in front. 'For Heaven's sake, man,' Herbert cried hastily, 'dig your alpenstock deep into the snow.' At the same instant, the chief guide shouted in Roumansch to the same effect to Kaspar. But even as they spoke, Kaspar, pushing his feet hard against the snow, began to give way too; and the whole party seemed about to slip together down over the sheer rocky precipice of the great gulley on the right. It was a moment of supreme anxiety; but Herbert Le Breton, looking back with blood almost unstirred and calmly observant eye, saw at once the full scope of the threatening danger. 'There's only one chance,' he said to himself quietly. 'Oswald is lost already!

Unless the rope breaks, we are all lost together!' At that very second, Harry Oswald, throwing his arms up wildly, had reached the edge of the terrible precipice; he went over with a piercing cry into the abyss, with the last guide beside him, and Kaspar following him close in mute terror. Then Herbert Le Breton felt the rope straining, straining, straining, upon the sharp frozen edge of the rock; for an inappreciable point of time it strained and crackled; one loud snap, and it was gone for ever. Herbert and the chief guide, almost upset by the sudden release from the heavy pull that was steadily dragging them over, threw themselves flat on their faces in the drifted snow, and checked their fall by a powerful muscular effort. The rope was broken and their lives were saved, but what had become of the three others?

They crept cautiously on hands and knees to the most practicable spot at the edge of the

precipice, and the guide peered over into the great white blank below with eager eyes of horrid premonition. As he did so, he recoiled with awe, and made a rapid gesture with his hands, half prayer, half speechless terror. 'What do you see?' asked Herbert, not daring himself to look down upon the blank beneath him, lest he should be tempted to throw himself over in a giddy moment.

'Jesu, Maria,' cried the guide, crossing himself instinctively over and over again, 'they have all fallen to the very foot of the second precipice! They are lying, all three, huddled together on the ledge there just above the great glacier. They are dead, quite dead, dead before they reached the ground even. Great God, it is too terrible!'

Herbert Le Breton looked at the white-faced guide with just the faintest suspicion of a sneering curl upon his handsome features. The excitement of the danger was over now,

and he had at once recovered his usual philosophic equanimity. 'Quite dead,' he said, in French, 'quite dead, are they? Then we can't be of any further use to them. But I suppose we must go down again at once to help recover the dead bodies!'

The guide gazed at him blankly with simple open-mouthed undisguised amazement. 'Naturally,' he said, in a very quiet voice of utter disgust and loathing. 'You wouldn't leave them lying there alone on the cold snow, would you?'

'This is really most annoying,' thought Herbert Le Breton to himself, in his rational philosophic fashion: 'here we are, almost at the summit, and now we shall have to turn back again from the very threshold of our goal, without having seen the view for which we've climbed up, and risked our lives too—all for a purely sentimental reason, because we won't leave those three dead men alone on the snow

for an hour or two longer! It's a very short climb to the top now, and I could manage it by myself in twenty minutes. If only the chief guide had slid over with the others, I should have gone on alone, and had the view at least for my trouble. I could have pretended the accident happened on the way down again. As it is, I shall have to turn back ingloriously, *re infecta*. The guide will tell everybody at Pontresina that I went on, in spite of the accident; and then it would get into the English papers, and all the world would say that I was so dreadfully cruel and heartless. People are always so irrational in their ethical judgments. Oswald's quite dead, that's certain; nobody could fall over such a precipice as that without being killed a dozen times over before he even reached the bottom. A very painless and easy death too; I couldn't myself wish for a better one. We can't do them the slightest good by picking up their lifeless bodies, and yet a

foolishly sentimental public opinion positively compels one to do it. Poor Oswald! Upon my soul I'm sorry for him, and for that pretty little sister of his too; but what's the use of bothering about it? The thing's done, and nothing that I can do or say will ever make it any better.'

So they turned once more in single file down by the great glacier, and retraced their way to Pontresina without exchanging another word. To say the truth, the chief guide felt appalled and frightened by the presence of this impassive, unemotional British traveller, and did not even care to conceal his feelings. But then he wasn't an educated philosopher and man of culture like Herbert Le Breton.

Late that evening a party of twelve villagers brought back three stiff and mangled corpses on loose cattle hurdles into the village of Pontresina. Two of them were the bodies of two local Swiss guides, and the third, with its

delicate face unscathed by the fall, and turned calmly upwards to the clear moonlight, was the body of Harry Oswald. Alas, alas, Gilboa! The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## ‘ WHAT DO THESE HEBREWS HERE ? ’

FROM Calcombe Pomeroy Ernest had returned, not to Dunbude, but to meet the Exmoor party in London. There he had managed somehow—he hardly knew how himself—to live through a whole season without an explosion in his employer’s family. That an explosion must come, sooner or later, he felt pretty sure in his own mind for several reasons: his whole existence there was a mistake and an anomaly, and he could no more mix in the end with the Exmoor family than oil can mix with vinegar, or *vice versâ*. The round of dances and dinners to which he had to accompany his pupil was utterly distasteful

to him. Lynmouth never learnt anything ; so Ernest felt his own function in the household a perfectly useless one ; and he was always on the eve of a declaration that he couldn't any longer put up with this, that, or the other 'gross immorality' in which Lynmouth was actively or passively encouraged by his father and mother. Still, there there were two things which indefinitely postponed the smouldering outbreak. In the first place, Ernest wrote to, and heard from, Edie every day ; and he believed he ought for Edie's sake to give the situation a fair trial, as long as he was able, or at least till he saw some other opening, which might make it possible within some reasonable period to marry her. In the second place, Lady Hilda had perceived with her intuitive quickness the probability that a cause of dispute might arise between her father and Ernest, and had made up her mind as far as in her lay to prevent its ever coming to a head. She didn't wish Ernest

to leave his post in the household—so much originality was hardly again to be secured in a hurry—and therefore she laid herself out with all her ingenuity to smooth over all the possible openings for a difference of opinion whenever they occurred. If Ernest's scruples were getting the upper hand of his calmer judgment, Lady Hilda read the change in his face at once, and managed dexterously to draw off Lynmouth, or to talk over her mother quietly to acquiesce in Ernest's view of the question. If Lord Exmoor was beginning to think that this young man's confounded fads were really getting quite unbearable, Lady Hilda interposed some casual remark about how much better Lynmouth was kept out of the way now than he used to be in Mr. Walsh's time. Ernest himself never even suspected this unobtrusive diplomatist and peacemaker; but as a matter of fact it was mainly owing to Lady Hilda's constant interposition that he contrived to stop

in Wilton Place through all that dreary and penitential London season.

At last, to Ernest's intense joy, the season began to show premonitory symptoms of collapsing from inanition. The twelfth of August was drawing nigh, and the coming-of-age of grouse, that most important of annual events in the orthodox British social calendar, would soon set free Lord Exmoor and his brother hereditary legislators from their arduous duty of acting as constitutional drag on the general advance of a great, tolerant, and easy-going nation. Soon the family would be off again to Dunbude, or away to its other moors in Scotland; and among the rocks and the heather Ernest felt he could endure Lord Exmoor and Lord Lynmouth a little more resignedly than among the reiterated polite platitudes and monotonous gaieties of the vacuous London drawing-rooms.

Lady Hilda, too, was longing in her own

way for the season to be over. She had gone through another of them, thank goodness, she said to herself at times with a rare tinge of pensiveness, only to discover that the Hughs, and the Guys, and the Algies, and the Montys were just as fatuously inane as ever; and were just as anxious as before to make her share their fatuous inanity for a whole lifetime. Only fancy living with an unadulterated Monty from the time you were twenty to the time you were seventy-five—at which latter date he, being doubtless some five years older than oneself to begin with, would probably drop off quietly with suppressed gout, and leave you a mourning widow to deplore his untimely and lamented extinction for the rest of your existence! Why, long before that time you would have got to know his very thoughts by heart (if he had any, poor fellow!) and would be able to finish all his sentences and eke out all his stories for him, the moment he began them.

Much better marry a respectable pork-butcher outright, and have at least the healthful exercise of chopping sausage-meat to fill up the stray gaps in the conversation. In that condition of life, they say, people are at any rate perfectly safe from the terrors of *ennui*. However, the season was over at last, thank Heaven; and in a week or so more they would be at dear old ugly Dunbude again for the whole winter. There Hilda would go sketching once more on the moorland, and if this time she didn't make that stupid fellow Ernest see what she was driving at, why, then her name certainly wasn't Hilda Tregellis.

A day or two before the legal period fixed for the beginning of the general grouse-slaughter, Ernest was sitting reading in the breakfast room at Wilton Place, when Lynmouth burst unexpectedly into the room in his usual boisterous fashion.

‘Oh, I say, Mr. Le Breton,’ he began,

holding the door in his hand like one in a hurry, 'I want leave to miss work this morning. Gerald Talfourd has called for me in his dog-cart, and wants me to go out with him now immediately.'

'Not to-day, Lynmouth,' Ernest answered quietly. 'You were out twice last week, you know, and you hardly ever get your full hours for work at all since we came to London.'

'Oh, but look here, you know, Mr. Le Breton; I really *must* go to-day, because Talfourd has made an appointment for me. It's awful fun—he's going to have some pigeon-shooting.'

Ernest's countenance fell a little, and he answered in a graver voice than before, 'If that's what you want to go for, Lynmouth, I certainly can't let you go. You shall never have leave from me to go pigeon-shooting.'

'Why not?' Lynmouth asked, still holding the door-handle at the most significant angle.

'Because it's a cruel and brutal sport,' Ernest replied, looking him in the face steadily; 'and as long as you're under my charge I can't allow you to take part in it.'

'Oh, you can't,' said Lynmouth mischievously, with a gentle touch of satire in his tone. 'You can't, can't you! Very well, then, never mind about it.' And he shut the door after him with a bang, and ran off upstairs without further remonstrance.

'It's time for study, Lynmouth,' Ernest called out, opening the door and speaking to him as he retreated. 'Come down again at once, please, will you?'

But Lynmouth made no answer, and went straight off upstairs to the drawing-room. In a few minutes more he came back, and said in a tone of suppressed triumph, 'Well, Mr. Le Breton, I'm going with Talfourd. I've been up to papa, and he says I may "if I like to."'



Ernest bit his lip in a moment's hesitation. If it had been any ordinary question, he would have pocketed the contradiction of his authority—after all, if it didn't matter to them, it didn't matter to him—and let Lynmouth go wherever they allowed him. But the pigeon-shooting was a question of principle. As long as the boy was still nominally his pupil, he couldn't allow him to take any part in any such wicked and brutal amusement, as he thought it. So he answered back quietly, 'No, Lynmouth, you are not to go. I don't think your father can have understood that I had forbidden you.'

'Oh!' Lynmouth said again, without a word of remonstrance, and went up a second time to the drawing-room.

In a few minutes a servant came down and spoke to Ernest. 'My lord would like to see you upstairs for a few minutes, if you please, sir.'

Ernest followed the man up with a vague foreboding that the deferred explosion was at last about to take place. Lord Exmoor was sitting on the sofa. 'Oh, I say, Le Breton,' he began in his good-humoured way, 'what's this that Lynmouth's been telling me about the pigeon-shooting? He says you won't let him go out with Gerald Talfourd.'

'Yes,' Ernest answered; 'he wanted to miss his morning's work, and I told him I couldn't allow him to do so.'

'But I said he might if he liked, Le Breton. Young Talfourd has called for him to go pigeon-shooting. And now Lynmouth tells me you refuse to let him go, after I've given him leave. Is that so?'

'Certainly,' said Ernest. 'I said he couldn't go, because before he asked you I had refused him permission, and I supposed you didn't know he was asking you to reverse my decision.'

‘Oh, of course,’ Lord Exmoor answered, for he was not an unreasonable man after his lights. ‘You’re quite right, Le Breton, quite right, certainly. Discipline’s discipline, we all know, and must be kept up under any circumstances. You should have told me, Lynmouth, that Mr. Le Breton had forbidden you to go. However, as young Talfourd has made the engagement, I suppose you don’t mind letting him have a holiday now, at my request, Le Breton, do you?’

Here was a dilemma indeed for Ernest. He hardly knew what to answer. He looked by chance at Lady Hilda, seated on the ottoman in the corner; and Lady Hilda, catching his eye, pursed up her lips visibly into the one word, ‘Do.’ But Ernest was inexorable. If he could possibly prevent it, he would not let those innocent pigeons be mangled and slaughtered for a lazy boy’s cruel gratification. That was the one clear duty before him; and

whether he offended Lord Exmoor or not, he had no choice save to pursue it.

'No, Lord Exmoor,' he said resolutely, after a long pause. 'I should have no objection to giving him a holiday, but I can't allow him to go pigeon-shooting.'

'Why not?' asked Lord Exmoor warmly.

Ernest did not answer.

'He says it's a cruel, brutal sport, papa,' Lynmouth put in parenthetically, in spite of an angry glance from Hilda; 'and he won't let me go while I'm his pupil.'

Lord Exmoor's face grew very red indeed, and he rose from the sofa angrily. 'So that's it, Mr. Le Breton!' he said, in a short sharp fashion. 'You think pigeon-shooting cruel and brutal, do you? Will you have the goodness to tell me, sir, do you know that I myself am in the habit of shooting pigeons at matches?'

'Yes,' Ernest answered, without flinching a muscle.

‘ Yes ! ’ cried Lord Exmoor, growing redder and redder. ‘ You knew that, Mr. Le Breton, and yet you told my son you considered the practice brutal and cruel ! Is that the way you teach him to honour his parents ? Who are you, sir, that you dare set yourself up as a judge of me and my conduct ? How dare you speak to him of his father in that manner ? How dare you stir him up to disobedience and insubordination against his elders ? How dare you, sir ; how dare you ? ’

Ernest’s face began to get red in return, and he answered with unwonted heat, ‘ How dare you address me so, yourself, Lord Exmoor ? How dare you speak to me in that imperious manner ? You’re forgetting yourself, I think, and I had better leave you for the present, till you remember how to be more careful in your language. But Lynmouth is not to go pigeon-shooting. I object to his going, because the sport is a cruel and a brutal one, whoever may

practise it. If I have any authority over him, I insist upon it that he shall not go. If he goes, I shall not stop here any longer. You can do as you like about it, of course, but you have my final word upon the matter. Lynmouth, go down to the study.'

'Stop, Lynmouth,' cried his father, boiling over visibly with indignation: 'Stop. Never mind what Mr. Le Breton says to you; do you hear me? Go out if you choose with Gerald Talfourd.'

Lynmouth didn't wait a moment for any further permission. He ran downstairs at once and banged the front door soundly after him with a resounding clatter. Lady Hilda looked imploringly at Ernest, and whispered half-audibly, 'Now you've done it.' Ernest stood a second irresolute, while the Earl tramped angrily up and down the drawing-room, and then he said in a calmer voice, 'When would

it be convenient, Lord Exmoor, that I should leave you?’

‘Whenever you like,’ Lord Exmoor answered violently. ‘To-day if you can manage to get your things together. This is intolerable, absolutely intolerable! Gross and palpable impertinence; in my own house, too! “Cruel and brutal,” indeed! “Cruel and brutal.” Fiddlesticks! Why, it’s not a bit different from partridge shooting!’ And he went out, closely followed by Ernest, leaving Lady Hilda alone and frightened in the drawing-room.

Ernest ran lightly upstairs to his own little study sitting-room. ‘I’ve done it this time, certainly, as Lady Hilda said,’ he thought to himself; ‘but I don’t see how I could possibly have avoided it. Even now, when all’s done, I haven’t succeeded in saving the lives of the poor innocent tortured pigeons. They’ll be mangled and hunted for their poor frightened

lives, anyhow. Well, now I must look out for that imaginary schoolmastership, and see what I can do for dear Edie. I shan't be sorry to get out of this after all, for the place was an impossible one for me from the very beginning. I shall sit down this moment and write to Edie, and after that I shall take out my portmanteau and get the man to help me put my luggage up to go away this very evening. Another day in the house after this would be obviously impossible.'

At that moment there came a knock at the door—a timid, tentative sort of knock, and somebody put her head inquiringly halfway through the doorway. Ernest looked up in sudden surprise. It was Lady Hilda.

'Mr. Le Breton,' she said, coming over towards the table where Ernest had just laid out his blotting-book and writing-paper: 'I couldn't prevent myself from coming up to tell you how much I admire your conduct in



standing up so against papa for what you thought was right and proper. I can't say how greatly I admire it. I'm so glad you did as you did do. You have acted nobly.' And Hilda looked straight into his eyes with the most speaking and most melting of glances. 'Now,' she said to herself, 'according to all correct precedents, he ought to seize my hand fervently with a gentle pressure, and thank me with tears in his eyes for my kind sympathy.'

But Ernest, only looking puzzled and astonished, answered in the quietest of voices, 'Thank you very much, Lady Hilda: but I assure you there was really nothing at all noble, nothing at all to admire, in what I said or did in any way. In fact, I'm rather afraid, now I come to think of it, that I lost my temper with your father dreadfully.'

'Then you won't go away?' Hilda put in quickly. 'You think better of it now, do you? You'll apologise to papa, and go with

us to Dunbude for the autumn? Do say you will, please, Mr. Le Breton.'

'Oh dear, no,' Ernest answered, smiling quietly at the bare idea of his apologising to Lord Exmoor. 'I certainly won't do that, whatever I do. To tell you the truth, Lady Hilda, I have not been very anxious to stop with Lynmouth all along: I've found it a most unprofitable tutorship—no sense of any duty performed, or any work done for society: and I'm not at all sorry that this accident should have broken up the engagement unexpectedly. At the same time, it's very kind of you to come up and speak to me about it, though I'm really quite ashamed you should have thought there was anything particularly praiseworthy or commendable in my standing out against such an obviously cruel sport as pigeon-shooting.'

'Ah, but I do think so, whatever you may say, Mr. Le Breton,' Hilda went on eagerly.

‘I do think so, and I think it was very good of you to fight it out so against papa for what you believe is right and proper. For my own part, you know, I don’t see any particular harm in pigeon-shooting. Of course it’s very dreadful that the poor dear little things should be shot and wounded and winged and so forth; but then everything, almost, gets shot, you see—rabbits, and grouse, and partridges, and everything; so that really it’s hardly worth while, it seems to me, making a fuss about it. Still, that’s not the real question. You think it’s wrong; which is very original and nice and proper of you; and as you think it’s wrong, you won’t countenance it in any way. I don’t care, myself, whether it’s wrong or not—I’m not called upon, thank goodness, to decide the question; but I do care very much that you should suffer for what you think the right course of action.’ And Lady Hilda in her earnestness almost laid her hand upon

his arm, and looked up to him in the most unmistakable and appealing fashion.

'You're very good, I'm sure, Lady Hilda,' Ernest replied, half hesitatingly, wondering much in his own mind what on earth she could be driving at.

There was a moment's pause, and then Hilda said pensively, 'And so we shall never walk together at Dunbude on the Clatter any more, Mr. Le Breton! We shall never climb again among the big boulders on those Devonshire hillsides! We shall never watch the red deer from the big pool on top of the sheep-walk! I'm sorry for it, Mr. Le Breton, very sorry for it. Oh, I do wish you weren't going to leave us!'

Ernest began to feel that this was really growing embarrassing. 'I daresay we shall often see one another,' he said evasively; for simple-minded as he was, a vague suspicion of what Lady Hilda wanted him to say had some-

how forced itself timidly upon him. 'London's a very big place, no doubt; but still, people are always running together unexpectedly in it.'

Hilda sighed and looked at him again intently without speaking. She stood so, face to face with him across the table for fully two minutes; and then, seeming suddenly to awake from a reverie, she started and sighed once more, and turned at last reluctantly to leave the little study. 'I must go,' she said hastily; 'mamma would be very angry indeed with me if she knew I'd come here; but I couldn't let you leave the house without coming up to tell you how greatly I admire your spirit, and how very, very much I shall always miss you, Mr. Le Breton. Will you take this, and keep it as a memento?' As she spoke, she laid an envelope upon the table, and glided quietly out of the room.

Ernest took the envelope up with a smile, and opened it with some curiosity. It con-

tained a photograph, with a brief inscription on the back, ‘E. L. B., from Hilda Tregellis.’

As he did so, Hilda Tregellis, red and pale by turns, had rushed into her own room, locked the door wildly, and flung herself in a perfect tempest of tears on her own bed, where she lay and tossed about in a burning agony of shame and self-pity for twenty minutes. ‘He doesn’t love me,’ she said to herself bitterly; ‘he doesn’t love me, and he doesn’t care to love me, or want to marry me either! I’m sure he understood what I meant, this time; and there was no response in his eyes, no answer, no sympathy. He’s like a block of wood—a cold, impassive, immovable, lifeless creature! And yet I could love him—oh, if only he would say a word to me in answer, how I could love him! I loved him when he stood up there and bearded papa in his own drawing-room, and asked him how dare he speak so, how dare he address him in such a manner; I *knew* then

that I really loved him. If only he would let me! But he won't! To think that I could have half the Algies and Berties in London at my feet for the faintest encouragement, and I can't have this one poor penniless Ernest Le Breton, though I go down on my knees before him and absolutely ask him to marry me! That's the worst of it! I've humiliated myself before him by letting him see, oh, ever so much too plainly, that I wanted him to ask me; and I've been repulsed, rejected, positively refused and slighted by him! And yet I love him! I shall never love any other man as I love Ernest Le Breton.'

Poor Lady Hilda Tregellis! Even she too had, at times, her sentimental moments! And there she lay till her eyes were red and swollen with crying, and till it was quite hopeless to expect she could ever manage to make herself presentable for the Cecil-Faunthorpes' garden-party that afternoon at Twickenham.

## CHAPTER XV.

## EVIL TIDINGS.

ERNEST had packed his portmanteau, and ordered a hansom, meaning to take temporary refuge at Number 28 Epsilon Terrace; and he went down again for a few minutes to wait in the breakfast-room, where he saw the 'Times' lying casually on the little table by the front window. He took it up, half dreamily, by way of having something to do, and was skimming the telegrams in an unconcerned manner, when his attention was suddenly arrested by the name Le Breton, printed in conspicuous type near the bottom of the third column. He looked closer at the paragraph, and saw that it was headed 'Accident to British



Tourists in Switzerland.' A strange tremor seized him immediately. Could anything have happened, then, to Herbert? He read the telegram through at once, and found this bald and concise summary before him of the fatal Pontresina accident:—

‘As Mr. H. Oswald, F.R.S., of Oriel College, Oxford, and Mr. Le Breton, Fellow and Bursar of St. Aldate’s College, along with three guides, were making the ascent of the Piz Margatsch, in the Bernina Alps, this morning, one of the party happened to slip near the great gully known as the Gouffre. Mr. Oswald and two of the guides were precipitated over the edge of the cliff and killed immediately: the breaking of the rope at a critical moment alone saved the lives of Mr. Le Breton and the remaining guide. The bodies have been recovered this evening, and brought back to Pontresina.’

Ernest laid down the paper with a thrill of horror. Poor Edie! How absolutely his own

small difficulties with Lord Exmoor faded out of his memory at once in the face of that terrible, irretrievable calamity. Harry dead! The hope and mainstay of the family—the one great pride and glory of all the Oswalds, on whom their whole lives and affections centred, taken from them unexpectedly, without a chance of respite, without a moment's warning! Worst of all, they would probably learn it, as he did, for the first time by reading it accidentally in the curt language of the daily papers. Pray heaven the shock might not kill poor Edie!

There was only a minute in which to make up his mind, but in that minute Ernest had fully decided what he ought to do, and how to do it. He must go at once down to Calcombe Pomeroy, and try to lighten this great affliction for poor little Edie. Nay, lighten it he could not, but at least he could sympathise with her in it, and that, though little, was still some faint shade better than nothing at all. How fortunate

that his difference with the Exmoors allowed him to go that very evening without a moment's delay! When the hansom arrived at the door, Ernest told the cabman to drive at once to Paddington Station. Almost before he had had time to realise the full meaning of the situation, he had taken a third-class ticket for Calcombe Road, and was rushing out of London by the Plymouth express, in one of the convenient and commodious little wooden horse-boxes which the Great Western Railway Company provide as a wholesome deterrent for economical people minded to save half their fare by going third instead of first or second.

Didcot, Swindon, Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Newton Abbot, all followed one after another, and by the time Ernest had reached Calcombe Road Station he had begun to frame for himself a definite plan of future action. He would stop at the Red Lion Inn that evening, send a telegram from Exeter beforehand to Edie, to

say he was coming next day, and find out as much as possible about the way the family had borne the shock before he ventured actually to see them.

The Calcombe omnibus, drawn by two lean and weary horses, toiled its way slowly up the long steep incline for six miles to the Cross Foxes, and then rattled down the opposite slope, steaming and groaning, till it drew up at last with a sudden jerk and a general collapse in front of the old Red Lion Inn in the middle of the High Street. There Ernest put up for the present, having seen by the shutters at the grocer's shop on his way down that the Oswalds had already heard of Harry's accident. He had dinner by himself, with a sick heart, in the gloomy, close little coffee-room of the village inn, and after dinner he managed to draw in the landlord in person for a glass of sherry and half an hour's conversation.

‘Very sad thing, sir, this ’ere causality in

Switzerland,' said the red-faced landlord, coming round at once to the topic of the day at Calcombe, after a few unimportant preliminary generalities. 'Young Mr. Oswald, as has been killed, he lived here, sir; leastways his parents do. He was a very promising young gentleman up at Oxford, they do tell me—not much of a judge of horses, I should say, but still, I understand, quite the gentleman for all that. Very sad thing, the causality, sir, for all his family. 'Pears he was climbing up some of these 'ere Alps they have over there in them parts, covered with snow from head to foot in the manner of speaking, and there was another gentleman from Oxford with him, a Mr. Le Breton——'

'My brother,' Ernest put in, interrupting him; for he thought it best to let the landlord know at once who he was talking to.

'Oh, your brother, sir!' said the red-faced landlord, with a gleam of recognition, growing

redder and hotter than ever; 'well, now you mention it, sir, I find I remember your face somehow. No offence, sir, but you're the young gentleman as come down in the spring to see young Mr. Oswald, aren't you?'

Ernest nodded assent.

'Ah, well, sir,' the landlord went on more freely—for of course all Calcombe had heard long since that Ernest was engaged to Edie Oswald—'you're one of the family like, in that case, if I may make bold to say so. Well, sir, this is a shocking trouble for poor old Mr. Oswald, and no mistake. The old gentleman was sort of centred on his son, you see, as the saying is: never thought of nobody else hardly, he didn't. Old Mr. Oswald, sir, was always a wonderful hand at figgers hisself, and powerful fond of measurements and such kinds of things. I've heard tell, indeed, as how he knew more mathematics, and trigonometry, and that, than the rector and the schoolmaster both put

together. There's not one in fifty as knows as much mathematics as he do, I'll warrant. Well, you see, he brought up this son of his, little Harry as was—I can remember him now, running to and from the school, and figgerin' away on the slates, doin' the sums in algermer for the other boys when they went a-mitchin'—he brought him up like a gentleman, as you know very well, sir, and sent him to Oxford College: “to develop his mathematical talents, Mr. Legge,” his father says to me here in this very parlour. What's the consequence? He develops that boy's talent sure enough, sir, till he comes to be a Fellow of Oxford College, they tell me, and even admitted into the Royal Society up in London. But this is how he did it, sir: and as you're a friend of the family like, and want to know all about it, no doubt, I don't mind tellin' you on the strict confidential, in the manner of speakin'.' Here the landlord drew his chair closer, and sipped the

last drop in his glass of sherry with a mysterious air of very private and important disclosures. Ernest listened to his roundabout story with painful attention.

‘Well, sir,’ the landlord went on after a short and pensive pause, ‘old Mr. Oswald’s business ain’t never been a prosperous one—though he was such a clever hand at figgers, he never made it renumerative; a bare livin’ for the family, I don’t mind sayin’; and he always spent more’n he ought to ’a done on Mr. Harry, and on the young lady too, sir, savin’ your presence. So when Mr. Harry was goin’ to Oxford to college, he come to me, and he says to me, “Mr. Legge,” says he, “it’s a very expensive thing sending my boy to the University,” says he, “and I’m going to borrow money to send him with.” “Don’t you go a-doin’ that, Mr. Oswald,” says I; “your business don’t justify you in doin’ it, sir,” says I. For you see, I knowed all the ins and outs of



that there business, and I knowed he hadn't never made more'n enough just to keep things goin' decent like, as you may say, without any money saved or put by against a emergence. "Yes, I will, Mr. Legge," says he; "I can trust confidentially in my son's abilities," says he; "and I feel confidential he'll be in a position to repay me before long." So he borrowed the money on an insurance of Mr. Harry's life. Mr. Harry he always acted very honourable, sir; he was a perfect gentleman in every way, as *you* know, sir; and he began repayin' his father the loan as fast as he was able, and I daresay doin' a great deal for the family, and especially for the young lady, sir, out of his own pocket besides. But he still owed his father a couple of hundred pound an' more when this causality happened, while the business, I know, had been a-goin' to rack and ruin for the last three year. To-day I seen the agent of the insurance, and he says to m.,

“Legge,” says he, most private like, “this is a bad job about young Oswald, I’m afeard, worse’n they know for.” “Why, sir?’ says I. “Well, Legge,” says he, “they’ll never get a penny of that there insurance, and the old gentleman’ll have to pay up the defissit on his own account,” says he. “How’s that, Mr. Micklethwaite?” says I. “Because,” says he, “there’s a clause in the policy agin exceptional risks, in which is included naval and military services, furrin residences, topical voyages, and mountain-climbin’,” says he: “and you mark my words,” says he, “they’ll never get a penny of it.” In which case, sir, it’s my opinion that old Mr. Oswald’ll be clean broke, for he can’t never make up the defissit out of his own business, can he now?’

Ernest listened with sad forebodings to the red-faced landlord’s pitiful story, and feared in his heart that it was a bad look-out for the poor Oswalds. He didn’t sleep much that

evening, and next day he went round early to see Edie. The telegram he found would be a useless precaution, for the gossip of Calcombe Pomeroy had recognised him at once, and news had reached the Oswalds almost as soon as he arrived that young Mr. Le Breton was stopping that evening at the Red Lion.

Edie opened the door for him herself, pale of face and with eyes reddened by tears, yet looking beautiful even so in her simple black morning dress—her mourning of course hadn't yet come home—and her deep white linen collar. 'It's very good of you to have come so soon, Mr. Le Breton,' she said, taking his hand quietly—he respected her sorrow too deeply to think of kissing her; 'he will be back with us to-morrow. Your brother is bringing him back to us, to lay him in our little churchyard, and we are all so very very grateful to him for it.'

Ernest was more than half surprised to hear

it. It was an unusual act of kindly thoughtfulness on the part of Herbert.

Next day the body came home as Edie had said, and Ernest helped so lay it reverently to rest in Calcombe churchyard. Poor old Mr. Oswald, standing bowed and broken-hearted by the open grave side, looked as though he could never outlive that solemn burial of all his hopes and aspirations in a single narrow coffin. Yet it was wonderful to Ernest to see how much comfort he took, even in this terrible grief from the leader which appeared in the 'Times' that morning on the subject of the Pontresina accident. It contained only a few of the stock newspaper platitudes of regret at the loss of a distinguished and rising young light of science—the ordinary glib commonplaces of obituary notices which a practised journalist knows so well how to adapt almost mechanically to the passing event of the moment: but they seemed to afford the shattered old country

grocer an amount of consolation and solemn relief that no mere spoken condolences could ever possibly have carried with them. ‘See what a wonderful lot they thought of our boy up in London, Mr. Le Breton,’ he said, looking up from the paper tearfully, and wiping his big gold spectacles, dim with moisture. ‘See what the “Times” says about him: “One of the ablest among our young academical mathematicians, a man who, if his life had been spared to us, might probably have attained the highest distinction in his own department of pure science.” That’s our Harry, Mr. Le Breton; that’s what the “Times” says about our dear, dead Harry! I wish he could have lived to read it himself, Edie—“a scholar of singularly profound attainments, whose abilities had recently secured him a place upon the historic roll of the Royal Society, and whom even the French Academy of Sciences had held worthy out of all the competitors of the

civilised world, to be adjudged the highest mathematical honours of the present season." My poor boy! my poor, dear, lost boy! I wish you could have lived to hear it! We must keep the paper, Edie: we must keep all the papers; they'll show us at least what people who are real judges of these things thought about our dear, loved, lost Harry.'

Ernest dared hardly glance towards poor Edie, with the tears trickling slowly down her face; but he felt thankful that the broken-hearted old father could derive so much incomprehensible consolation from those cold and stereotyped conventional phrases. Truly a wonderful power there is in mere printer's ink properly daubed on plain absorbent white paper. And truly the human heart, full to bursting and just ready to break will allow itself to be cheated and cajoled in marvellous fashions by extraordinary cordials and inexplicable little social palliatives. The concentrated hopes of

that old man's life were blasted and blighted for ever; and he found a temporary relief from that stunning shock in the artificial and insincere condolences of a stock leader-writer on a daily paper!

Walking back by himself in such sad meditations to the Red Lion, and sitting there by the open window, Ernest overheard a tremulous chattering voice mumbling out a few incoherent words at the Rector's doorway opposite. 'Oh, yes,' chirped out the voice in a tone of cheerful resignation, 'it's very sad indeed, very sad and shocking, and I'm naturally very sorry for it, of course. I always knew how it would be: I warned them of it; but they're a pigheaded, heedless, unmannerly family, and they wouldn't be guided by me. I said to him, "Now, Oswald, this is all very wrong and foolish of you. You go and put your son to Oxford, when he ought to be stopping at home, minding the

shop and learning your business. You borrow money foolishly to send him there with. He'll go to Oxford; he'll fall in with a lot of wealthy young gentlemen—people above his own natural station—he'll take up expensive, extravagant ways, and in the end he'll completely ruin himself. He won't pay you back a penny, you may depend upon it—these boys never do, when you make fine gentlemen of them; they think only of their cigars and their horses, and their dog-carts and so forth, and neglect their poor old fathers and mothers, that brought them up and scraped and saved to make fine gentlemen of them. You just take my advice, Oswald, and don't send him to college." But Oswald was always a presumptuous, high-headed, independent sort of man, and instead of listening to me, what does he do but go and send this sharp boy of his up to Oxford. Well, now the boy's gone to Switzerland with one of the young



Le Bretons—brother of the poor young man they've inveigled into what they call an engagement with Miss Edith, or Miss Jemima, or whatever the girl's name is—very well-connected people, the Le Bretons, and personal friends of the Archdeacon's—and there he's thrown himself over a precipice or something of the sort, no doubt to avoid his money-matters and debts and difficulties. At any rate, Micklethwaite tells me the poor old father'll have to pay up a couple of hundred pound to the insurance company: and how on earth he's ever to do it *I* don't know, for to my certain knowledge the rent of the shop is in arrears half-a-year already. But it's no business of mine, thank goodness!—and I only hope this exposure will serve to open that poor young Le Breton's eyes, and to warn him against having anything further to say to Miss Jemima. A designing young minx, if ever there was one! Poor young Le Breton's come down here for

the funeral, I hear, which I must say was very friendly and proper and honourable of him ; but now it's over, I hope he'll go back again, and see Miss Jemima in her true colours.'

Ernest turned back into the stuffy little coffee-room with his face on fire and his ears tingling with mingled shame and indignation. 'Whatever happens,' he thought to himself, 'I can't permit Edie to be subjected any longer to such insolence as this ! Poor, dear, guileless, sorrowing little maiden ! One would have thought her childish innocence and her terrible loss would have softened the heart even of such a cantankerous, virulent old harridan as that, till a few weeks were over, at least. She spoke of the Archdeacon : it must be old Miss Luttrell ! Whoever it is, though, Edie shan't much longer be left where she can possibly come in contact with such a loathsome mass of incredible and unprovoked malice. That Edie should lose her dearly-loved brother is terrible enough ; but

that she should be exposed afterwards to be triumphed over in her most sacred grief by that bad old woman's querulous "I told you so" is simply intolerable!' And he paced up and down the room with a boiling heart, unable to keep down his righteous anger.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## FLAT REBELLION.

FOR the next fortnight Ernest remained at the Red Lion, though painfully conscious that he was sadly wasting his little reserve of funds from his late tutorship, in order to find out exactly what the Oswalds' position would be after the loss of poor Harry. Towards the end of that time he took Edie, pale and pretty in her simple new mourning, out once more into the Bourne Close for half an hour's quiet conversation. Very delicate and sweet and refined that tiny girlish face and figure looked in the plain unostentatious black and white of her great sorrow, and Ernest felt as he walked along by her side that she seemed to lean upon

him naturally now; the loss of her main support and chief adviser in life seemed to draw her closer and closer every day to her one remaining prop and future husband.

‘Edie,’ he said to her, as they rested once more beside the old wooden bridge across the little river, ‘I think it’s time now we should begin to talk definitely over our common plans for the future. I know you’d naturally rather wait a little longer before discussing them; I wish for both our sakes we could have deferred it; but time presses, and I’m afraid from what I hear in the village that things won’t go on henceforth exactly as they used to do with your dear father and mother.’

Edie coloured slightly as she answered, ‘Then you’ve heard of all that already, Ernest’—she was learning to call him ‘Ernest’ now quite naturally. ‘The Calcombe tattle has got round to you so soon! I’m glad of it, though, for it saves me the pain of having to tell you.

Yes, it's quite true, and I'm afraid it will be a terrible, dreadful struggle for poor darling father and mother.' And the tears came up afresh, as she spoke, into her big black eyes—too familiar with them of late to make her even try to brush them away hastily from Ernest's sight with her little handkerchief.

'I'm sorry to know it's true,' Ernest said, taking her hand gently; 'very, very sorry. We must do what we can to lighten the trouble for them.'

'Yes,' Edie replied, looking at him through her tears; 'I mean to try. At any rate, I won't be a burden to them myself any longer. I've written already up to an agency in London to see whether they can manage to get me a place as a nursery-governess.'

'You a governess, Edie!' Ernest exclaimed hastily, with a gesture of deprecation. 'You a governess! Why, my own precious darling, you would never do for it!'

‘Oh yes, indeed,’ Edie answered quickly, ‘I really think I could, Ernest. Of course I don’t know very much—not judged by a standard like yours or our dear Harry’s. Harry used to say all a woman could ever know was to find out how ignorant she was. Dear fellow ! he was so very learned himself he couldn’t understand the complacency of little perky, half-educated schoolmistresses. But still, I know quite as much, I think, in my little way, as a great many girls who get good places in London as governesses. I can speak French fairly well, you know, and read German decently ; and then dear Harry took such a lot of pains to make me get up books that he thought were good for me—history and so forth—and even to teach me a little, a very little, Latin. Of course I know I’m dreadfully ignorant ; but not more so, I really believe, than a great many girls whom people consider quite well-educated enough to teach their

daughters. After all, the daughters themselves are only women, too, you see, Ernest, and don't expect more than a smattering of book-knowledge, and a few showy fashionable accomplishments.'

'My dear Edie,' Ernest answered, smiling at her gently in spite of her tearful earnestness; 'you quite misunderstand me. It wasn't *that* I was thinking of at all. There are very few governesses and very few women anywhere who have half the knowledge and accomplishments and literary taste and artistic culture that you have; very few who have had the advantage of associating daily with such a man as poor Harry; and if you really wanted to get a place of the sort, the mere fact that you're Harry's sister, and that he interested himself in superintending your education, ought, by itself, to ensure your getting a very good one. But what I meant was rather this—I couldn't endure to think that you should be



put to all the petty slights and small humiliations that a governess has always to endure in rich families. You don't know what it is, Edie; you can't imagine the endless devices for making her feel her dependence and her artificial inferiority that these great people have devised in their cleverness and their Christian condescension. You don't know what it is, Edie, and I pray heaven you may never know; but *I* do, for I've seen it—and, darling, I *can't* let you expose yourself to it.'

To say the truth, at that moment there rose very vividly before Ernest's eyes the picture of poor shy Miss Merivale, the governess at Dunbude to little Lady Sybil, Lynmouth's younger sister. Miss Merivale was a rector's daughter—an orphan, and a very nice girl in her way; and Ernest had often thought to himself while he lived at the Exmoors', 'With just the slightest turn of Fortune's wheel that might be my own Edie.' Now, for himself he

had never felt any sense of social inferiority at all at Dunbude ; he was an Oxford man, and by the ordinary courtesy of English society he was always treated accordingly in every way as an equal. But there were galling distinctions made in Miss Merivale's case which he could not think of even at the time without a blush of ingenuous shame, and which he did not like now even to mention to pretty, shrinking, eager little Edie. One thing alone was enough to make his cheeks burn whenever he thought of it—a little thing, and yet how unendurable ! Miss Merivale lunched with the family and with her pupil in the middle of the day, but she did not dine with them in the evening. She had tea by herself instead in Lady Sybil's little school-room. Many a time when Ernest had been out walking with her on the terrace just before dinner, and the dressing-gong sounded, he had felt almost too ashamed to go in at the summons and leave the poor little governess

out there alone with her social disabilities. The gong seemed to raise such a hideous artificial barrier between himself and that delicately-bred, sensitive, cultivated English lady. That Edie should be subjected to such a life of affronts as that was simply unendurable. True, there are social distinctions of the sort which even Ernest Le Breton, communist as he was, could not practically get over; but then they were distinctions familiarised to the sufferers from childhood upward, and so perhaps a little less insupportable. But that Harry Oswald's sister—that Edie, his own precious delicate little Edie, a dainty English wild-flower of the tenderest, should be transplanted from her own appreciative home to such a chilly and ungenial soil as that—the very idea of it was horribly unspeakable.

‘But, Ernest,’ Edie answered, breaking in upon his bitter meditation, ‘I assure you I wouldn't mind it a bit. I know it's very

dreadful, but then,'—and here she blushed one of her pretty apologetic little blushes—'you know I'm used to it. People in business always are. They expect to be treated just like servants—now *that*, I know you'll say, is itself a piece of *hubris*, the expression of a horrid class prejudice. And so it is, no doubt. But they do, for all that. As dear Harry used to say, even the polypes in aristocratic useless sponges at the sea-bottom won't have anything to say to the sponges of commerce. I'm sure nobody I could meet in a governess's place could possibly be worse in that respect than poor old Miss Catherine Luttrell.'

'That may be true, Edie darling,' Ernest answered, not caring to let her know that he had overheard a specimen of the Calcombe squirearchy, 'but in any case I don't want you to be troubled now, either with old Miss Luttrell or any other bitter old busybodies. I want to speak seriously to you about a very

different project. Just look at this advertisement.'

He took a scrap of paper from his pocket and handed it to Edie. It ran thus :—

'WANTED at Pilbury Regis Grammar School, Dorset, a Third Classical Master. Must be a Graduate of Oxford or Cambridge ; University Prizeman preferred. If unmarried, to take house duty. Commence September 20th. Salary, 200*l.* a year. Apply, as above, to the Rev. J. Greatrex, D.D., Head Master.'

Edie read it through slowly. 'Well, Ernest?' she said, looking up from it into his face. 'Do you think of taking this mastership?'

'If I can get it,' Ernest answered. 'You see, I'm not a University Prizeman, and that may be a difficulty in the way ; but otherwise I'm not unlikely to suit the requirements. Herbert knows something of the school—he's been down there to examine : and Mrs. Greatrex

had a sort of distant bowing acquaintance with my mother ; so I hope their influence might help me into it.'

'Well, Ernest?' Edie cried again, feeling pretty certain in her own heart what was coming next, and reddening accordingly.

'Well, Edie, in that case, would you care to marry at once, and try the experiment of beginning life with me upon two hundred a year? I know it's very little, darling, for our wants and necessities, brought up as you and I have been : but Herr Max says, you know, it's as much as any one family ought ever to spend upon its own gratifications ; and at any rate I daresay you and I could manage to be very happy upon it, at least for the present. In any case it would be better than being a governess. Will you risk it, Edie?'

'To me, Ernest,' Edie answered with her unaffected simplicity, 'it really seems quite a magnificent income. I don't suppose any of

our friends or neighbours in Calcombe spend nearly as much as two hundred a year upon their own families.'

' Ah, yes, they do, darling. But that isn't the only thing. Two hundred a year is a very different matter in quiet, old-world, little Calcombe and in a fashionable modern watering-place like Pilbury Regis. We shall have to live in lodgings, Edie, and live very quietly indeed: but even so I think it will be better than for you to go out and endure the humiliation of becoming a governess. Then I may understand that if I can get this mastership, you'll consent to be married, Edie, before the end of September? '

' Oh, Ernest, that's dreadfully soon! '

' Yes, it is, darling; but you must have a very quiet wedding; and I can't bear to leave you here now any longer without Harry to cheer and protect you. Shall we look upon it as settled? '

Eddie blushed and looked down as she answered almost inaudibly, 'As you think best, dear Ernest.'

So that very evening Ernest sent off an application to Pilbury Regis, together with such testimonials as he had by him, mentioning at the same time his intention to marry, and his recent engagement at Lord Exmoor's. 'I hope they won't make a point about the University Prize, Eddie,' he said timidly; 'but I rather think they don't mean to insist upon it. I'm afraid it may be put in to some extent mainly as a bait to attract parents. Advertisements are often so very dishonest. At any rate, we can only try; and if I get it, I shall be able to call you my little wife in September.'

So soon after poor Harry's death he hardly liked to say much about how happy that consciousness would make him; but he sent off the letter with a beating heart, and waited anxiously for the head master's answer.



‘Maria,’ said Dr. Greatrex to his wife next morning, turning over the pile of letters at the breakfast table, ‘who do you think has applied for the third mastership? Very lucky, really, isn’t it?’

‘Considering that there are some thirty millions of people in England, I believe, Dr. Greatrex,’ said his wife with dignity, ‘that some seventy of those have answered your advertisement, and that you haven’t yet given me an opportunity even of guessing which i is of them all, I’m sure I can’t say so far whether it’s lucky or otherwise.’

‘You’re pleased to be satirical, my dear,’ the doctor answered blandly; he was in too good a humour to pursue the opening further. ‘But no matter. Well, I’ll tell you, then; it’s young Le Breton.’

‘Not Lady Le Breton’s son!’ cried Mrs. Greatrex, forgetting her dignity in her surprise. ‘Well, that certainly is very lucky. Now, if

we could only get her to come down and stay with us for a week sometimes, after he's been here a little while, what a splendid advertisement it would be for the place, to be sure, Joseph !'

'Capital !' the head master said, eyeing the letter complacently as he sipped his coffee. 'A perfect jewel of a master, I should say, from every possible point of view. Just the sort of person to attract parents and pupils. "Allow me to introduce you to our third master, Mr. Le Breton ; I hope Lady Le Breton was quite well when you heard from her last, Le Breton ?"' and all that sort of thing. Depend upon it, Maria, there's nothing in the world that makes a middle-class parent—and our parents are unfortunately all middle-class—prick up his ears like the faintest suspicion or echo of a title. "Very good school," he goes back and says to his wife immediately ; "we'll send Tommy there ; they have a master who's an

honourable or something of the sort ; sure to give the boys a thoroughly high gentlemanly tone." It's snobbery, I admit, sheer snobbery : but between ourselves, Maria, most people are snobs, and we have to live, professionally, by accommodating ourselves to their foolish prejudices.'

'At the same time, doctor,' said his wife severely, 'I don't think we ought to allow it too freely, at least with the door open.'

'You're quite right, my dear,' the head master answered submissively, rising at the same time to shut the door. 'But what makes this particular application all the better is that young Le Breton would come here straight from the Earl of Exmoor's where he has been acting as tutor to the son and heir, Viscount Lynmouth. That's really admirable, now, isn't it? Just consider the advantages of the situation. A doubtful parent comes to inspect the arrangements ; sniffs at the dormitories, takes the

gauge of the studies, snorts over the playground, condescends to approve of the fives courts. Then, after doing the usual Christian principles business and working in the high moral tone a little, we invite him to lunch, and young Le Breton to meet him. You remark casually in the most unconscious and natural fashion—I admit, my dear, that you do these little things much better than I do—“Oh, talking of cricket, Mr. Le Breton, your old pupil, Lord Lynmouth, made a splendid score the other day at the Eton and Harrow.” Fixes the wavering parent like a shot. “Third master something or other in the peerage, and has been tutor to a son of Lord Exmoor’s. Place to send your boys to if you want to make perfect gentlemen of them.” I think we’d better close at once with this young man’s offer, Maria. He’s got a very decent degree, too; a first in Mods and Greats; really very decent.’

‘But will he take a house-mastership do you think, doctor?’ asked the careful lady.

‘No, he won’t; he’s married or soon going to be. We must let him off the house duty.’

‘Married!’ said Mrs. Greatrex, turning it over cautiously. ‘Who’s he going to marry, I wonder? I hope somebody presentable.’

‘Why, of course!’ Dr. Greatrex, answered, as who should feel shocked at the bare suggestion that a young man of Ernest Le Breton’s antecedents could conceivably marry otherwise.

‘His wife, or rather his wife that is to be, is a sister, he tells me, of that poor Mr. Oswald—the famous mathematician, you know, of Oriel—who got killed, you remember, by falling off the Matterhorn or somewhere, just the other day. You must have seen about it in the “Times.”’

‘I remember,’ Mrs. Greatrex answered, in placid contentment; ‘and I should say you can’t do better than take him immediately.’

It'd be an excellent thing for the school, certainly. As the third mastership's worth only two hundred a year, of course he can't intend to marry upon *that*; so he must have means of his own, which is always a good thing to encourage in an under-master: or if his wife has money, that comes in the end to the same thing. They'll take a house of their own, no doubt; and she'll probably entertain — very quietly, I daresay; still, a small dinner now and then gives a very excellent tone to the school in its own way. Social considerations, as I always say, Joseph, are all-important in school management; and I think we may take it for granted that Mr. Le Breton would be socially a real acquisition.'

So it was shortly settled that Dr. Greatrex should write back accepting Ernest Le Breton as third master; and Mrs. Greatrex began immediately dropping stray allusions to 'Lady Le Breton, our new master's mother, you know,'

among her various acquaintance, especially those with rising young families. The doctor and she thought a good deal of this catch they were making in the person of Ernest Le Breton. Poor souls, they little knew what sort of social qualities they were letting themselves in for. A firebrand or a bombshell would really have been a less remarkable guest to drop down straight into the prim and proper orthodox society of Pilbury Regis.

When Ernest received the letter in which Dr. Greatrex informed him that he might have the third mastership, he hardly knew how to contain his joy. He kissed Edie a dozen times over in his excitement, and sat up late making plans with her which would have been delightful but for poor Edie's lasting sorrow. In a short time it was all duly arranged, and Ernest began to think that he must go back to London for a day or two, to let Lady Le Breton hear of his change of plans, and get everything in order

for their quiet wedding. He grudged the journey sadly, for he was beginning to understand now that he must take care of the pence for Edie's sake as well as for humanity's—his abstraction was individualising itself in concrete form—but he felt so much at least was demanded of him by filial duty, and, besides, he had one or two little matters to settle at Epsilon Terrace which could not so well be managed in his absence even by his trusty deputy, Ronald. So he ran up to town once more in a hurry, and dropped in as if nothing had happened, at his mother's house. It was no unusual matter for him to pass a fortnight at Wilton Place without finding time to call round at Epsilon Terrace to see Ronald, and his mother had not heard at all as yet of his recent change of engagement.

Lady Le Breton listened with severe displeasure to Ernest's account of his quarrel with Lord Exmoor. It was quite unnecessary



and wrong, she said, to prevent Lynmouth from his innocent boyish amusements. Pigeon-shooting was practised by the very best people, and she was quite sure, therefore, there could be no harm of any sort in it. She believed the sport was countenanced, not only by bishops, but even by princes. Pigeons, she supposed, had been specially created by Providence for our use and enjoyment—‘their final cause being apparently the manufacture of pigeon-pie,’ Ronald suggested parenthetically: but we couldn’t use them without killing them, unfortunately; and shooting was probably as painless a form of killing as any other. Peter or somebody, she distinctly remembered, had been specially commanded to arise, kill, and eat. To object to pigeon-shooting indeed, in Lady Le Breton’s opinion, was clearly flying in the face of Providence. Of Ronald’s muttered reference to five sparrows being sold for two farthings, and yet not one of them being

forgotten, she would not condescend to take any notice. However, thank goodness, the fault was none of hers; she could wash her hands entirely of all responsibility in the matter. She had done her best to secure Ernest a good place in a thoroughly nice family, and if he chose to throw it up at a moment's notice for one of his own absurd communitical fads, it was happily none of her business. She was glad, at any rate, that he 'd got another berth, with a conscientious, earnest, Christian man like Dr. Greatrex. 'And indeed, Ernest,' she said, returning once more to the pigeon-shooting question, 'even your poor dear papa, who was full of such absurd religious fancies, didn't think that sport was unchristian, I'm certain; for I remember once, when we were quartered at Moozuffernugger in the North-West Provinces, he went out into a nullah near our compound one day, and with his own hand shot a man-eating tiger, which

had carried off three little native children from the thanah ; so that shows that he couldn't really object to sport ; and I hope you don't mean to cast disrespect upon the memory of your own poor father !' All of which profound moral and religious observations Ernest, as in duty bound, received with the most respectful and acquiescent silence.

And now he had to approach the more difficult task of breaking to his mother his approaching marriage with Edie Oswald. He began the subject as delicately as he could, dwelling strongly upon poor Harry Oswald's excellent position as an Oxford tutor, and upon Herbert's visit with him to Switzerland—he knew his mother too well to suppose that the real merits of the Oswald family would impress her in any way, as compared with their accidental social status ; and then he went on to speak as gently as possible about his engagement with little Edie. At this point, to

his exceeding discomfiture, Lady Le Breton adopted the unusual tactics of bursting suddenly into a flood of tears.

‘Oh, Ernest,’ she sobbed out inarticulately through her scented cambric handkerchief, ‘for heaven’s sake don’t tell me that you’ve gone and engaged yourself to that designing girl! Oh, my poor, poor misguided boy! Is there really no way to save you?’

‘No way to save me!’ exclaimed Ernest, astonished and disconcerted by this unexpected outburst.

‘Yes, yes!’ Lady Le Breton went on, almost passionately. ‘Can’t you manage somehow to get yourself out of it? I hope you haven’t utterly compromised yourself! Couldn’t dear Herbert go down to What’s-his-name Pomeroy, and induce the father—a grocer, if I remember right—induce him, somehow or other, to compromise the matter?’

‘Compromise!’ cried Ernest, uncertain whether to laugh or be angry.

‘Yes, compromise it!’ Lady Le Breton answered, endeavouring to calm herself. ‘Of course that Machiavellian girl has tried to drag you into it; and the family have aided and abetted her; and you’ve been weak and foolish—though not, I trust, wicked—and allowed them to get their net closed almost imperceptibly around you. But it isn’t too late to withdraw even now, my poor, dear, deluded Ernest. It isn’t too late to withdraw even now. Think of the disgrace and shame to the family! Think of your dear brothers and their blighted prospects! Don’t allow this designing girl to draw you helplessly into such an ill-assorted marriage! Reflect upon your own future happiness! Consider what it will be to drag on years of your life with a woman, no longer perhaps externally attractive, whom you could never possibly respect or love for

her own internal qualities! Don't go and wreck your own life, and your brothers' lives, for any mistaken and Quixotic notions of false honour! You mayn't like to throw her over, after you've once been inveigled into saying "Yes" (and the feeling, though foolish, does your heart credit); but reflect, my dear boy, such a promise, so obtained, can hardly be considered binding upon your conscience! I've no doubt dear Herbert, who's a capital man of business, would get them readily enough to agree to a compromise or a compensation.'

'My dear mother,' said Ernest white with indignation, but speaking very quietly, as soon as he could edge in a word, 'you quite misunderstand the whole question. Edie Oswald is a lady by nature, with all a lady's best feelings—I hate the word because of its false implications, but I can't use any other that will convey to you my meaning—and I love and admire and respect and worship her with all my heart and

with all my soul. She hasn't inveigled me or set her cap at me, as you call it, in any way; she's the sweetest, timidest, most shrinking little thing that ever existed; on the contrary, it is I who have humbly asked her to accept me, because I know no other woman to whom I could give my whole heart so unreservedly. To tell you the truth, mother, with my ideas and opinions, I could hardly be happy with any girl of the class that you would call distinctively ladies: their class prejudices and their social predilections would jar and grate upon me at every turn. But Edie Oswald's a girl whom I could worship and love without any reserve—whom I can reverence for her beautiful character, her goodness, and her delicacy of feeling. She has honoured me by accepting me, and I'm going to marry her at the end of this month, and I want, if possible, to get your consent to the marriage before I do so. She's a wife of whom I shall be

proud in every way ; I wish I could think she would have equal cause to be proud of her husband.'

Lady Le Breton threw herself once more into a paroxysm of tears. 'Oh, Ernest,' she cried, 'do spare me! do spare me! This is too wicked, too unfeeling, too cruel of you altogether! I knew already you were very selfish and heartless and headstrong, but I didn't know you were quite so unmanageable and so unkind as this. I appeal to your better nature—for you *have* a better nature—I'm sure you have a better nature : you're *my* son, and you can't be utterly devoid of good impulses. I appeal confidently to your better nature to throw off this unhappy, designing, wicked girl before it is too late! She has made you forget your duty to your mother, but not, I hope, irrevocably. Oh, my poor, dear, wandering boy, won't you listen to the voice of reason? won't you return once more like the



prodigal son, to your neglected mother and your forgotten duty?’

‘My dear mother,’ Ernest said, hardly knowing how to answer, ‘you *will* persist in completely misunderstanding me. I love Edie Oswald with all my heart; I have promised to marry her, because she has done me the great and undeserved honour of accepting me as her future husband; and even if I wanted to break off the engagement (which it would break my own heart to do), I certainly couldn’t break it off now without the most disgraceful and dishonourable wickedness. That is quite fixed and certain, and I can’t go back upon it in any way.’

‘Then you insist, you unnatural boy,’ said Lady Le Breton, wiping her eyes, and assuming the air of an injured parent, ‘you insist, against my express wish, in marrying this girl Osborne, or whatever you call her?’

‘Yes, I do, mother,’ Ernest answered quietly.

‘In that case,’ said Lady Le Breton, coldly, ‘I must beg of you that you won’t bring this lady, whether as your wife or otherwise, under my roof. I haven’t been accustomed to associate with the daughters of tradesmen, and I don’t wish to associate with them now in any way.’

‘If so,’ Ernest said, very softly, ‘I can’t remain under your roof myself any longer. I can go nowhere at all where my future wife will not be received on exactly the same terms that I am.’

‘Then you had better go,’ said Lady Le Breton, in her chilliest manner. ‘Ronald, do me the favour to ring the bell for a cab for your brother Ernest.’

‘I shall walk, thank you, mother,’ said Ernest quietly. ‘Good morning, dear Ronald.’

Ronald rose solemnly and opened the door for him. ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother,’ he said in his clear, soft

voice, 'and shall cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh. Amen.'

Lady Le Breton darted a withering glance at her younger son as Ernest shut the door after him, and burst once more into a sudden flood of uncontrollable tears.

## CHAPTER XVII.

‘COME YE OUT AND BE YE SEPARATE.’

ARTHUR BERKELEY'S London lodgings were wonderfully snug and comfortable for the second floor of a second-rate house in a small retired side street near the Embankment at Chelsea. He had made the most of the four modest little rooms, with his quick taste and his deft, cunning fingers:—four rooms, or rather boxes, one might almost call them; a bedroom each for himself and the Progenitor; a wee sitting-room for meals and music—the two Berkeleys would doubtless as soon have gone without the one as the other; and a tiny study where Arthur might work undisturbed at his own desk upon his new and original

*magnum opus*, destined to form the great attraction of the coming season at the lately-opened Ambiguities Theatre. Things had prospered well with the former Oxford curate during the last twelvemonth. His cantata at Leeds had proved a wonderful success, and had finally induced him to remove to London, and take to composing as a regular profession. He had his qualms about it, to be sure, as one who had put his hand to the plough and then turned back ; he did not feel quite certain in his own mind how far he was justified in giving up the more spiritual for the more worldly calling ; but natures like Arthur Berkeley's move rather upon passing feeling than upon deeper sentiment ; and had he not ample ground, he asked himself, for this reconsideration of the monetary position ? He had the Progenitor's happiness to insure before thinking of the possible injury to his non-existent parishioners. If he was doing Whippingham Parva

or Norton-cum-Sutton out of an eloquent and valuable potential rector, if he was depriving the Church in the next half-century of a dignified and portly prospective archdeacon, he was at least making his father's last days brighter and more comfortable than his early ones had ever been. And then, was not music, too, in its own way, a service, a liturgy, a worship? Surely he could do higher good to men's souls—as they call them—to whatever little spark of nobler and better fire there might lurk within those dull clods of common clay he saw all around him—by writing such a work as his Leeds cantata, than by stringing together for ever those pretty centos of seventeenth-century conceits and nineteenth-century doubts or hesitations which he was accustomed to call his sermons! Whatever came of it, he must give up the miserable pittance of a curacy, and embrace the career open to the musical talents.

So he fitted up his little Chelsea rooms in his own economically sumptuous fashion with some bits of wall paper, a few jugs and vases, and an etching or two after Meissonier ; planted the Progenitor down comfortably in a large easy-chair, with a melodious fiddle before him ; and set to work himself to do what he could towards elevating the British stage and pocketing a reasonable profit on his own account from that familiar and ever-rejuvenescent process. He was quite in earnest, now, about producing a totally new effect of his own ; and believing in his work, as a good workman ought to do, he wrought at it indefatigably and well in the retirement of a second-pair back, overlooking a yardful of fluttering clothes, and a fine skyline vista of bare, yellowish brick chimneys.

‘What part are you working at to-day, Artie?’ said the old shoemaker, looking over his son’s shoulder at the blank music paper

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before him. 'Quartette of Biological Professors, eh?'

'Yes, father,' Berkeley answered with a smile. 'How do you think it runs now?' and he hummed over a few lines of his own words, set with a quaint lilt to his own inimitable and irresistible music:—

And though in unanimous chorus  
We mourn that from ages before us  
No single enaliosaurus  
To-day should survive,

Yet joyfully may we bethink us,  
With the earliest mammal to link us,  
We still have the ornithorhyncus  
Extant and alive!

'How do you think the score does for that, father, eh? Catching air rather, isn't it?'

'Not a better air in the whole piece, Artie; but, my boy, who do you think will ever understand the meaning of the words? The gods themselves won't know what you're driving at.'



‘But I’m going to strike out a new line, Daddie dear. I’m not going to play to the gallery; I mean to play to the stalls and boxes.’

‘Was there ever such a born aristocrat as this young parson is!’ cried the old man, lifting up both his hands with a playful gesture of mock-deprecation. ‘He’s hopeless! He’s terrible! He’s incorrigible! Why, you unworthy son of a respectable Paddington shoemaker, if even the intelligent British artizans in the gallery don’t understand you, how the dickens do you suppose the oiled and curled Assyrian bulls in the stalls and boxes will have a glimmering idea of what you’re driving at? The supposition’s an insult to the popular intelligence—in other words, to me, sir, your Progenitor.’

Berkeley laughed. ‘I don’t know about that, father,’ he said, holding up the page of manuscript music at arm’s length admiringly

before him ; 'but I do know one thing : this comic opera of mine is going to be a triumphant success.'

'So I've thought ever since you began it, Artie. You see, my boy, there's a great many points in its favour. In the first place you can write your own libretto, or whatever you call it ; and you know I've always held that though that Wagner man was wrong in practice—a most inflated thunder-bomb, his Lohengrin—yet he was right in theory, right in theory, Artie ; every composer ought to be his own poet. Well then, again, you've got a certain peculiar vein of humour of your own, a kind of delicate semi-serious burlesque turn about you that's quite original, both in writing and in composing ; you're a humourist in verse and a humourist in music, that's the long and the short of it. Now, you've hit upon a fresh lode of dramatic ore in this opera of yours, and if my judgment goes for anything, it'll bring the house

down the first evening. I'm a bit of a critic, Artie ; by hook or by crook, you know, paper or money, I've heard every good opera, comic or serious, that's been given in London these last thirty years, and I flatter myself I know something by this time about operatic criticism.'

'You're wrong about Wagner, father,' said Arthur, still glancing with paternal partiality at his sheet of manuscript : 'Lohengrin's a very fine work, a grand work, I assure you. I won't let you run it down. But, barring that, I think you're pretty nearly right in your main judgment. I'm not modest, and it strikes me somehow that I've invented a *genre*. That's about what it comes to.'

'If you'd confine yourself to your native tongue, Mr. Parson, your ignorant old father might have some chance of agreeing or disagreeing with you ; but as he doesn't even know what the thingumbob you say you've invented may happen to be, he can't profitably continue

the discussion of that subject. However, my only fear is that you may perhaps be writing above the heads of the audience. Not in the music, Artie; they can't fail to catch that; it rings in one's head like the song of a hedge warbler—tirree, tirree, lu-lu-lu, la-la, tirree, tu-whit, tu-who, tra-la-la—but in the words and the action. I'm half afraid that'll be over their heads, even in the gallery. What do you think you'll finally call it?'

I'm hesitating, Daddy, between "Evolution" and "The Primate of Fiji." Which do you recommend—tell me?'

'The Primate, by all means,' said the old man gaily. 'And you still mean to open with the debate in the Fijian Parliament on the Deceased Grandmother's Second Cousin Bill?'

'No, I don't, Daddy. I've written a new first scene this week, in which the President of the Board of Trade remonstrates with the mermaids on their remissness in sending their little

ones to the Fijian Board Schools, in order to receive primary instruction in the art of swimming. I've got a capital chorus of mermaids to balance the other chorus of Biological Professors on the Challenger Expedition. I consider it's a happy cross between Ariosto and Aristophanes. If you like, I'll give you the score, and read over the words to you.' 'Do,' said the old man, settling himself down in comfort in his son's easy-chair, and assuming the sternest air of an impartial critic. Arthur Berkeley read on dramatically, in his own clever airy fashion, suiting accent and gesture to the subject matter through the whole first three acts of that exquisitely humorous opera, the Primate of Fiji. Sometimes he hummed the tune over to himself as he went; sometimes he played a few notes upon his flute by way of striking the key-note; sometimes he rose from his seat in his animation, and half acted the part he was reading with almost unconscious and

spontaneous mimicry. He read through the famous song of the President of the Local Government Board, that everybody has since heard played by every German band at the street corners; through the marvellously catching chorus of the superannuated tide-waiters; through the culminating dialogue between the London Missionary Society's Agent and the Hereditary Grand Sacrificer to the King of Fiji. Of course the recital lacked everything of the scenery and dresses that give it so much vogue upon the stage; but it had at least the charmingly suggestive music, the wonderful linking of sound to sense, the droll and inimitable intermixture of the plausible and the impossible which everybody has admired and laughed at in the acted piece.

The old shoemaker listened in breathless silence, keeping his eye fixed steadily all the time upon the clean copy of the score. Only once he made a wry face to himself, and that

was in the chorus to the debate in the Fijian Parliament on the proposal to leave off the practice of obligatory cannibalism. The conservative party were of opinion that if you began by burying instead of eating your deceased wife, you might end by the atrocious practice of marrying your deceased wife's sister; and they opposed the revolutionary measure in that well-known refrain:—

Of change like this we're naturally chary,  
Nolumus leges Fijie mutari.

That passage evidently gave the Progenitor deep pain.

‘Stick to your own language, my boy,’ he murmured; ‘stick to your own language. The Latin may be very fine, but the gallery will never understand it.’ However, when Arthur finished at last, he drew a long breath, and laid down the roll of manuscript with an involuntary little cry of half-stifled applause.

‘Artie,’ he said rising from the chair slowly,

'Artie, that's not so bad for a parson, I can tell you. I hope the Archbishop won't be tempted to cite you for displaying an amount of originality unworthy of your cloth.'

'Father,' said Arthur, suddenly, after a short pause, with a tinge of pensiveness in his tone that was not usual with him, in speaking at least; 'Father, I often think I ought never to have become a parson at all.'

'Well, my boy,' said the old man, looking up at him sharply with his keen eyes, 'I knew that long ago. You've never really believed in the thing, and you oughtn't to have gone in for it from the very beginning. It was the music, and the dresses, and the decorations that enticed you, Artie, and not the doctrine.'

Arthur turned towards him with a pained expression. 'Father,' he said, half reproachfully, 'Father, dear father, don't talk to me like that. Don't think I'm so shallow or so



dishonest as to subscribe to opinions I don't believe in. It's a curious thing to say, a curious thing in this unbelieving age, and I'm half ashamed to say it, even to you ; but do you know, father, I really do believe it: in my very heart of hearts, I fancy I believe every word of it.'

The old man listened to him compassionately and tenderly, as a woman listens to the fears and troubles of a little child. To him, that plain confession of faith was, in truth, a wonder and a stumbling-block. Good, simple-hearted, easy-going, logical-minded, sceptical shoemaker that he was, with his head all stuffed full of Malthus, and John Stuart Mill, and political economy, and the hard facts of life and science, how could he hope to understand the complex labyrinth of metaphysical thinking, and childlike faith, and æsthetic attraction, and historical authority, which made a sensitive man like Arthur Berkeley, in his

wayward, half-serious, emotional fashion, turn back lovingly and regretfully to the fair old creed that his father had so long deserted? How strange that Artie, a full-grown male person, with all the learning of the schools behind him, should relapse at last into these childish and exploded mediæval superstitions! How incredible that, after having been brought up from his babyhood upward on the strong meat of the agnostic philosophers, he should fall back in his manhood on the milk for babes administered to him by orthodox theology! The simple-minded old sceptic could hardly credit it, now that Arther told him so with his own lips, though he had more than once suspected it when he heard him playing sacred music with that last touch of earnestness in his execution which only the sincerest conviction and most intimate realisation of its import can ever give. Ah well, ah well, good sceptical old shoemaker; there are perhaps more

things in heaven and earth and in the deep soul of man than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Still, though the avowal shocked and disappointed him a little, the old man could not find it in his heart to say one word of sorrow or disapproval, far less of ridicule or banter, to his dearly loved boy. He felt instinctively, what Herbert Le Breton could not feel, that this sentimental tendency of his son's, as he thought it, lay far too deep and seemed far too sacred for mere argument or common discussion. 'Perhaps,' he said to himself softly, 'Artie's emotional side has got the better of his intellectual. I brought him up without telling him anything of these things, except negatively, and by way of warning against superstitious tendencies; and when he went to Oxford, and saw the doctrines tricked out in all the authority of a great hierarchy, with its cathedrals, and chapels, and choirs, and altars,

and robes, and fal-lal finery, it got the better of him ; got the better of him, very naturally. Artie's a cleverer fellow than his old father—had more education, and so on ; and I'm fond of him, very fond of him ; but his logical faculty isn't quite straight, somehow : he lets his feelings have too much weight and prominence against his calmer reason ! I can easily understand how, with his tastes and leanings, the clericals should have managed to get a hold over him. The clericals are such insinuating cunning fellows. A very impressionable boy Artie was, always ; the poetical temperament and the artistic temperament always is impressionable, I suppose ; but shoemaking certainly does develop the logical faculties. Seems as though the logical faculties were situated in the fore-part of the brain, as they mark them out on the phrenological heads ; and the leaning forward that gives us the shoemaker's forehead must tend to enlarge

them—give them plenty of room to expand and develop!’ Saying which thing to himself musingly, the father took his son’s hand gently in his, and only smoothed it quietly as he looked deep into Arthur’s eyes, without uttering a single word.

As for Arthur Berkeley, he sat silent, too, half averting his face from his father’s gaze, and feeling a little blush of shame upon his cheek at having been surprised unexpectedly into such an unwonted avowal. How could he ever expect his father to understand the nature of his feelings! To him, good old man that he was, all these things were just matters of priestcraft and obscurantism—fables invented by the ecclesiastical mind as a means of getting fat livings and comfortable deaneries out of the public pocket. And, indeed, Arthur was well accustomed at Oxford to keeping his own opinions to himself on such subjects. What chance of sympathy or response was there for

such a man as he in that coldly critical and calmly deliberative learned society? Not, of course, that all Oxford was wholly given over even then to extreme agnosticism. There were High Churchmen, and Low Churchmen, and Broad Churchmen enough, to be sure: men learned in the Fathers, and the Canons, and the Acts of the General Councils; men ready to argue on the intermediate state, or on the three witnesses, or on the heretical nature of the Old Catholic schism; men prepared with minute dogmatic opinions upon every conceivable or inconceivable point of abstract theology. There were people who could trace the Apostolic succession of the old Cornish bishops, and people who could pronounce authoritatively upon the exact distinction between justification and remission of sins. But for all these things Arthur Berkeley cared nothing. Where, then, among those learned exegetical theologians, was there room for one whose belief was a matter, not of

reason and argument, but of feeling and of sympathy? He did not want to learn what the Council of Trent had said about such and such a dogma; he wanted to be conscious of an inner truth, to find the world permeated by an informing righteousness, to know himself at one with the inner essence of the entire universe. And though he could never feel sure whether it was all illusion or not, he had hungered and thirsted after believing it, till, as he told his father timidly that day, he actually did believe it somehow in his heart of hearts. Let us not seek to probe too deeply into those inner recesses, whose abysmal secrets are never perfectly clear even to the introspective eyes of the conscious self-dissector himself.

After a pause Arthur spoke again. He spoke this time in a very low voice, as one afraid to open his soul too much, even to his father. 'Dear, dear father,' he said, releasing his hand softly, 'you don't quite understand

what I mean about it. It isn't because I don't believe, or try to believe, or hope I believe, that I think I ought never to have become a parson. In my way, as in a glass, darkly, I do strive my best to believe, though perhaps my belief is hardly more in its way than Ernest Le Breton's unbelieving. I do want to think that this great universe we see around us isn't all a mistake and an abortion. I want to find a mind and an order and a purpose in it; and, perhaps because I want it, I make myself believe that I have really found it. In that hope and belief, with the ultimate object of helping on whatever is best and truest in the world, I took orders. But I feel now that it was an error for me. I'm not the right man to make a parson. There are men who are born for that rôle; men who know how to conduct themselves in it decently and in seemly fashion; men who can quietly endure all its restraints, and can fairly rise to the



height of all its duties. But I can't. I was intended for something lighter and less onerous than that. If I stop in the Church I shall do no good to myself or to it; if I come out of it, I shall make both parties freer, and shall be able to do more good in my own generation. And so, father, for the very same reasons that made me go into it, I mean to come out again. Not in any quarrel with it, nor as turning my back upon it, but just as the simple acknowledgment of a mistaken calling. It wouldn't be seemly, for example, for a parson to write comic operas. But I feel I can do more good by writing comic operas than by talking dogmatically about things I hardly understand to people who hardly understand me. So before I get this opera acted I mean to leave off my white tie, and be known in future, henceforth and for ever, as plain Arthur Berkeley.'

The old shoemaker listened in respectful silence. 'It isn't for me, Artie,' he said, as his

son finished, 'to stand between a man and his conscience. As John Stuart Mill says in his essay on Liberty, we must allow full play to every man's individuality. Wonderful man, John Stuart Mill; I understand his grandfather was a shoemaker. Well, I won't talk with you about the matter of conviction; but I never wanted you to be a parson, and I shall feel all the happier myself when you've ceased to be one.'

'And I,' said Arthur, 'shall feel all the freer; but if I had been able to remain where I was, I should have felt all the worthier, for all that.'

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## A QUIET WEDDING.

FATE was adverse for the moment to Arthur Berkeley's well meant designs for shuffling off the trammels of his ecclesiastical habit. He was destined to appear in public at least once more, not only in the black coat and white tie of his everyday professional costume, but even in the flowing snowy surplice of a solemn and decorous spiritual function. The very next morning's post brought him a little note from Ernest Le Breton specially begging him, in his own name and Edie's, to come down to Calcombe Pomeroy, and officiate as parson at their approaching wedding. The note had cost Ernest a conscientious struggle, for he would

have personally preferred to be married at a Registry Office, as being more in accordance with the duties of a good citizen, and savouring less of effete ecclesiastical superstition ; but he felt he couldn't even propose such a step to Edie ; she wouldn't have considered herself married at all, unless she were married quite regularly by a duly qualified clerk in holy orders of the Church of England as by law established. Already, indeed, Ernest was beginning to recognise with a sigh that if he was going to live in the world at all, he must do so by making at least a partial sacrifice of political consistency. You may step out of your own century, if you choose, yourself, but you can't get all the men and women with whom you come in contact to step out of it also in unison just to please you.

So Ernest had sat down reluctantly to his desk, and consented to ask Arthur Berkeley to assist at the important ceremony in his pro-

fessional clerical capacity. If he was going to have a medicine man or a priest at all to marry him to the girl of his choice—a barbaric survival, at the best, he thought it—he would, at any rate, prefer having his friend Arthur—a good man and true—to having the fat, easy-going, purse-proud rector of the parish; the younger son of a wealthy family who had gone into the Church for the sake of the living, and who rolled sumptuously down the long hilly High Street every day in his comfortable carriage, leaning back with his fat hands folded complacently over his ample knees, and gazing abstractedly, with his little pigs'-eyes half buried in his cheek, at the beautiful prospect afforded him by the broad livery-covered backs of his coachman and his footman. Ernest could never have consented to let that lazy, over-fed, useless encumbrance on a long-suffering commonwealth, that idle gorging of dainty meats and choice wines from the tithes of the

toiling, suffering people, bear any part in what was after all the most solemn and serious contract of his whole lifetime. And, to say the truth, Edie quite agreed with him on that point, too. Though her moral indignation against poor, useless, empty-headed old Mr. Walters didn't burn quite so fierce or so clear as Ernest's—she regarded the fat old parson, indeed, rather from the social point of view, as a ludicrously self-satisfied specimen of the lower stages of humanity, than from the political point of view, as a greedy swallower of large revenues for small work inefficiently performed—she would still have felt that his presence at her wedding jarred and grated on all the finer sensibilities of her nature, as out of accord with the solemn and tender associations of that supreme moment. To have been married by prosy old Mr. Walters, to have taken the final benediction on the greatest act of her life from those big white fat fingers, would have spoilt

the reminiscence of the wedding day for her as long as she lived. But when Ernest suggested Arthur Berkeley's name to her, she acquiesced with all her heart in the happy selection. She liked Berkeley better than anybody else she had ever met, except Ernest ; and she knew that his presence would rather add one more bright association to the day than detract from it in the coming years. Her poor little wedding would want all the additions that friends could make to its cheerfulness, to get over the lasting gloom and blank of dear Harry's absence.

'You will come and help us, I know, Berkeley,' Ernest wrote to Arthur in his serious fashion. 'We feel there is nobody else we should so like to have present at our wedding as yourself. Come soon, too, for there are lots of things I want to talk over with you. It's a very solemn responsibility, getting married : you have to take upon yourself the duty of raising up future citizens for the state ; and

with our present knowledge of how nature works through the laws of heredity, you have to think whether you two who contemplate marriage are well fitted to act as parents to the generations that are to be. When I remember that all my own faults and failings may be handed on relentlessly to those that come after us—built up in the very fibre of their being—I am half appalled at my own temerity. Then, again, there is the inexorable question of money; is it prudent or is it wrong of us to marry on such an uncertainty? I'm afraid that Schurz and Malthus would tell us—very wrong. I have turned over these things by myself till I'm tired of arguing them out in my own head, and I want you to come down beforehand, so as to cheer me up a bit with your lighter and brighter philosophy. On the very eve of my marriage, I'm somehow getting dreadfully pessimistic.'

Arthur read the letter through impatiently



and crumpled it up in his hands with a gesture of despondency. 'Poor little Miss Butterfly,' he said to himself, pityingly, 'was there ever such an abstraction of an ethical unit as this good, solemn, self-torturing Ernest! How will she ever live with him? How will he ever live with her? Poor little soul! Harry is gone like the sunshine out of her life; and now this well-meaning, gloomy, conscientious cloud comes caressingly to overspread her with the shadowing pall of its endless serious doubts and hesitations. Fancy a man who has won little Miss Butterfly's heart—dear little Miss Butterfly's gay, laughing, tender little heart—writing such a letter as that to the friend who's going to marry them! Upon my word, I've half a mind to go into the conscientious scruples business on my own account! Have I any right to be a party to fettering poor airy fairy little Miss Butterfly, with a heavy iron chain for life and always, to this great lumber-

ing elephantine moral Ernest? Am I justified in tying the cable round her dainty little neck with a silken thread, and then fastening it round his big leg with rivets of hardened steel on the patent Bessemer process? If a couple of persons, duly called by banns in their own respective parishes, or furnished with the right reverend's perquisite, a licence, come to me, a clerk in holy orders, and ask me to marry them, I've a vague idea that unless I comply I lay myself open to the penalties of *præmunire*, or something else equally awful and mysterious. But if the couple write and ask me to come down into Devonshire and marry them, that's quite another matter. I can lawfully answer, 'Non possumus.' There's a fine ecclesiastical ring, by the way, about answering 'Non possumus;' it sums up the entire position of the Church in a nutshell! Well, I doubt whether I ought to go; but as a matter of friendship, I'll throw overboard my poor conscience. It's

used to the process by this time, no doubt, like eels to skinning; and as Hudibras says,

However tender it may be,  
'Tis passing blind where 'twill not see.

If she'd only have taken *me*, now, who knows but I might in time have risen to be a Prebendary or even a Dean? 'They that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree,' Paul wrote to Timothy once; but it's not so now, it's not so now; preferment goes by favour, and the deacon must e'en shift as best he can on his own account.' So, in the end, Arthur packed up his surplice in his little handbag, and took his way peacefully down to Calcombe Pomeroy.

It was a very quiet, almost a sombre wedding, for the poor Oswalds were still enveloped in the lasting gloom of their great loss, and not much outward show or preparation, such as the female heart naturally delights in, could possibly be made under

these painful circumstances. Still, all the world of Calcombe came to see little Miss Oswald married to the grave gentleman from Oxford; and most of them gave her their hearty good wishes, for Edie was a general favourite with gentle and simple throughout the whole borough. Herbert was there, like a decorous gentleman, to represent the bridegroom's family, and so was Ronald, who had slipped away from London without telling Lady Le Breton, for fear of another distressful scene at the last moment. Arthur Berkeley read the service in his beautiful impressive manner, and looked his part well in his flowing white surplice. But as he uttered the solemn words, 'Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,' the musical ring of his own voice sounded to his heart like the knell of his own one love—the funeral service over the only romance he could ever mix in throughout his whole lifetime. Poor

fellow, he had taken the duty upon him with all friendly heartiness ; but he felt an awful and lonely feeling steal over him when it was all finished, and when he knew that his little Miss Butterfly was now Ernest Le Breton's lawful wife for ever and ever.

In the vestry, after signing the books, Herbert and Ronald and some of the others insisted on their ancient right of kissing the bride in good old English fashion. But Arthur did not. It would not have been loyal. He felt in his heart that he had loved little Miss Butterfly too deeply himself for that ; to claim a kiss would be abusing the formal dues of his momentary position. Henceforth he would not even think of her to himself in that little pet name of his brief Oxford dream : he would call her nothing in his own mind but Mrs. Le Breton.

Eddie's simple little presents were all arranged in the tiny parlour behind the shop.

Most of them were from her own personal friends: a few were from the gentry of the surrounding neighbourhood: but there were two handsomer than the rest: they came from outside the narrow little circle of Calcombe Pomeroy society. One was a plain gold bracelet from Arthur Berkeley; and on the gold of the inner face, though neither Edie nor Ernest noticed it, he had lightly cut with his knife on the soft metal the one word, 'Frustra.' The other was a dressing-case, with a little card inside, 'Miss Oswald, from Lady Hilda Tregellis.' Hilda had heard of Ernest's approaching wedding from Herbert (who took an early opportunity of casually lunching at Dunbude, in order to show that he mustn't be identified with his socialistic brother); and the news had strangely proved a slight salve to poor Hilda's wounded vanity—or, perhaps it would be fairer to say, to her slighted higher instincts. 'A country grocer's

daughter!' she said to herself: 'the sister of a great mathematical scholar! How very original of him to think of marrying a grocer's daughter! Why, of course, he must have been engaged to her all along before he came here! And even if he hadn't been, one might have known at once that such a man as he is would never go and marry a girl whose name's in the peerage, when he could strike out a line for himself by marrying a grocer's daughter. I really like him better than ever for it. I must positively send her a little present. They'll be as poor as church mice, I've no doubt. I ought to send her something that'll be practically useful.' And by way of sending something practically useful, Lady Hilda chose at last a handsome silver-topped Russia leather dressing-case.

It was not such a wedding as Edie had pictured to herself in her first sweet maidenly fancies; but still, when they drove away alone

in the landau from the side-door of the Red Lion to Calcombe Road Station, she felt a quiet pride and security in her heart from the fact that she was now the wedded wife of a man she loved so dearly as Ernest Le Breton. And even Ernest so far conquered his social scruples that he took first-class tickets, for the first time in his life, to Ilfracombe, where they were to spend their brief and hasty fragment of a poor little honeymoon. It's so extremely hard to be a consistent socialist where women are concerned, especially on the very day of your own wedding!



## CHAPTER XIX.

## INTO THE FIRE.

‘LET me see, Le Breton,’ Dr. Greatrex observed to the new master, ‘you’ve taken rooms for yourself in West Street for the present—you’ll take a house on the Parade by-and-by, no doubt. Now, which church do you mean to go to?’

‘Well, really,’ Ernest answered, taken a little aback at the suddenness of the question, ‘I haven’t had time to think about it yet.’

The doctor frowned slightly. ‘Not had time to think about it,’ he repeated, rather severely. ‘Not had time to think about such a serious question as your particular place of worship! You quite surprise me. Well, if you’ll

allow me to make a suggestion in the matter, it would be that you and Mrs. Le Breton should take seats, for the present at least, at St. Martha's. The parish church is high, decidedly high, and I wouldn't recommend you to go there; most of our parents don't approve of it. You're an Oxford man, I know, and so I suppose you're rather high yourself; but in this particular matter I would strongly advise you to subordinate your own personal feelings to the parents' wishes. Then there's St. Jude's: St. Jude's is distinctly low—quite Evangelical in fact: indeed, I may say, scarcely what I should consider sound church principles at all in any way; and I think you ought most certainly to avoid it sedulously. Evangelicism is on the decline at present in Pilbury Regis. As to St. Barnabas—Barabbas they call it generally, a most irreverent joke, but, of course, inevitable—Barabbas is absolutely Ritualistic. Many of our parents object

to it most strongly. But St. Martha's is a quiet, moderate, inoffensive church in every respect—sound and sensible, and free from all extremes. You can give no umbrage to anybody, even the most cantankerous, by going to St. Martha's. The High Church people fraternise with it on the one hand, and the moderate church people fraternise with it on the other, while as to the Evangelicals and the dissenters, they hardly contribute any boys to the school, or if they do, they don't object to unobtrusive church principles. Indeed, my experience has been, Le Breton, that even the most rabid dissenters prefer to have their sons educated by a sound, moderate, high-principled, and, if I may say so, neutral-tinted church clergyman.' And the doctor complacently pulled his white tie straight before the big gilt-framed drawing-room mirror.

'Then, again,' the doctor went on placidly in a bland tone of mild persuasion, 'there's

the question of politics. Politics are a very ticklish matter, I can assure you, in Pilbury Regis. Have you any fixed political opinions of your own, Le Breton, or are you waiting to form them till you've had some little experience in your profession?'

'My opinions,' Ernest answered timidly, 'so far as they can be classed under any of the existing political formulas at all, are decidedly Liberal—I may even say Radical.'

The doctor bit his lip and frowned severely. 'Radical,' he said, slowly, with a certain delicate tinge of acerbity in his tone. 'That's bad. If you will allow me to interpose in the matter, I should strongly advise you, for your own sake, to change them at once and entirely. I don't object to moderate Liberalism—perhaps as many as one-third of our parents are moderate Liberals; but decidedly the most desirable form of political belief for a successful schoolmaster is a quiet and gentlemanly,

but unswerving Conservatism. I don't say you ought to be an uncompromising old-fashioned Tory—far from it: that alienates not only the dissenters, but even the respectable middle-class Liberals. What is above all things expected in a schoolmaster is a central position in politics, so to speak—a careful avoidance of all extremes—a readiness to welcome all reasonable progress, while opposing in a conciliatory spirit all revolutionary or excessive changes—in short, an attitude of studied moderation. That, if you will allow me to advise you, Le Breton, is the sort of thing, you may depend upon it, that most usually meets the wishes of the largest possible number of pupils' parents.'

'I'm afraid,' Ernest answered, as respectfully as possible, 'my political convictions are too deeply seated to be subordinated to my professional interests.'

'Eh! What!' the doctor cried sharply.

‘Subordinate your principles to your personal interests! Oh, pray don’t mistake me so utterly as that! Not at all, not at all, my dear Le Breton. I don’t mean that for the shadow of a second. What I mean is rather this,’ and here the doctor cleared his throat and pulled round his white tie a second time, ‘that a schoolmaster, considering attentively what is best for his pupils, mark you—we all exist for our pupils, you know, my dear fellow, don’t we?—a schoolmaster should avoid such action as may give any unnecessary scandal, you see, or seem to clash with the ordinary opinion of the pupils’ parents. Of course, if your views are fully formed, and are of a mildly Liberal complexion (put it so, I beg of you, and don’t use that distressful word Radical), I wouldn’t for the world have you act contrary to them. But I wouldn’t have you obtrude them too ostentatiously—for your own sake, Le Breton, for your own sake, I assure you. Remember,

you're a very young man yet : you have plenty of time before you to modify your opinions in : as you go on, you'll modify them—moderate them—bring them into harmony with the average opinions of ordinary parents. Don't commit yourself at present—that's all I would say to you—don't commit yourself at present. When you're as old as I am, my dear fellow, you'll see through all these youthful extravagances.'

'And as to the church, Mr. Le Breton,' said Mrs. Greatrex, with bland suggestiveness from the ottoman, 'of course, we regard the present very unsatisfactory arrangement as only temporary. The doctor hopes in time to get a chapel built, which is much nicer for the boys, and also more convenient for the masters and their families—they all have seats, of course, in the chancel. At Charlton College, where the doctor was an assistant for some years, before we came to Pilbury, there was

one of the under-masters, a young man of very good family, who took such an interest in the place that he not only contributed a hundred pounds out of his own pocket towards building a chapel, but also got ever so many of his wealthy friends elsewhere to subscribe, first to that, and then to the organ and stained-glass window. We've got up a small building fund here ourselves already, of which the doctor's treasurer, and we hope before many years to have a really nice chapel, with good music and service well done—the kind of thing that'll be of use to the school, and have an excellent moral effect upon the boys in the way of religious training.'

'No doubt,' Ernest answered evasively, 'you'll soon manage to raise the money in such a place as Pilbury.'

'No doubt,' the doctor replied, looking at him with a searching glance, and evidently harbouring an uncomfortable suspicion, already,



that this young man had not got the moral and religious welfare of the boys quite so deeply at heart as was desirable in a model junior assistant master. 'Well, well, we shall see you at school to-morrow morning, Le Breton : till then I hope you'll find yourselves quite comfortable in your new lodgings.'

Ernest went back from this visit of ceremony with a doubtful heart, and left Dr. and Mrs. Greatrex alone to discuss their new acquisition.

'Well, Maria,' said the doctor, in a dubious tone of voice, as soon as Ernest was fairly out of hearing, 'what do you think of him?'

'Think!' answered Mrs. Greatrex, energetically. 'Why, I don't think at all. I feel sure he'll never, never, never make a schoolmaster!'

'I'm afraid not,' the doctor responded, pensively. 'I'm afraid not, Maria. He's got

ideas of his own, I regret to say; and, what's worse, they're not the right ones.'

'Oh, he'll never do,' Mrs. Greatrex continued, scornfully. 'Nothing at all professional about him in any way. No interest or enthusiasm in the matter of the chapel; not a spark of responsiveness even about the stained-glass window; hardly a trace of moral or religious earnestness, of care for the welfare and happiness of the dear boys. He wouldn't in the least impress intending parents—or, rather, I feel sure he'd impress them most unfavourably. The best thing we can do, now we've got him, is to play off his name on relations in society, but to keep the young man himself as far as possible in the background. I confess he's a disappointment—a very great and distressing disappointment.'

'He is, he is certainly,' the doctor acquiesced, with a sigh of regretfulness. 'I'm afraid we shall never be able to make much of

him. But we must do our best—for his own sake, and the sake of the boys and parents, it's our duty, Maria, to do our best with him.'

'Oh, of course,' Mrs. Greatrex replied, languidly: 'but I'm bound to say, I'm sure it'll prove a very thankless piece of duty. Young men of his sort have never any proper sense of gratitude.'

Meanwhile, Edie, in the little lodgings in a side street near the school-house, had run out quickly to open the door for Ernest, and waited anxiously to hear his report upon their new employers.

'Well, Ernest dear,' she asked, with something of the old childish brightness in her eager manner, 'and what do you think of them?'

'Why, Edie,' Ernest answered, kissing her white forehead gently, 'I don't want to judge them too hastily, but I'm inclined to fancy, on first sight, that both the doctor and his wife

are most egregious and unmitigated humbugs.'

'Humbugs, Ernest! why, how do you mean?'

'Well, Edie, they've got the moral and religious welfare of the boys at their very finger ends; and, do you know—I don't want to be uncharitable—but I somehow imagine they haven't got it at heart as well. However, we must do our best, and try to fall in with them.'

And for a whole year Ernest and Edie did try to fall in with them to the best of their ability. It was hard work, for though the doctor himself was really at bottom a kind-hearted man, with a mere thick veneer of professional humbug inseparable from his unhappy calling, Mrs. Greatrex was a veritable thorn in the flesh to poor little natural honest-hearted Edie. When she found that the Le Bretons didn't mean to take a house on the Parade or elsewhere, but were to live in-

gloriously in wee side street lodgings, her disappointment was severe and extreme; but when she incidentally discovered that Mrs. Le Breton was positively a grocer's daughter from a small country town, her moral indignation against the baseness of mankind rose almost to white heat. To think that young Le Breton should have insinuated himself into the position of third master under false pretences—should have held out as qualifications for the post his respectable connections, when he knew perfectly well all the time that he was going to marry somebody who was not in Society—it was really quite too awfully wicked and deceptive and unprincipled of him! A very bad, dishonest young man, she was very much afraid; a young man with no sense of truth or honour about him, though, of course, she wouldn't say so for the world before any of the parents, or do anything to injure the poor young fellow's future prospects if she could

possibly help it. But Mrs. Greatrex felt sure that Ernest had come to Pilbury of malice prepense, as part of a deep-laid scheme to injure and ruin the doctor by his horrid revolutionary notions. 'He does it on purpose,' she used to say; 'he talks in that way because he knows it positively shocks and annoys us. He pretends to be very innocent all the time; but at heart he's a malignant, jealous, uncharitable creature. I'm sure I wish he had never come to Pilbury Regis! And to go quarrelling with his own mother, too—the unnatural man! The only respectable relation he had, and the only one at all likely to produce any good or salutary effect upon intending parents!'

'My dear,' the doctor would answer apologetically, 'you're really quite too hard upon young Le Breton. As far as school-work goes, he's a capital master, I assure you—so conscientious, and hard-working, and systematic.

He does his very best with the boys, even with that stupid lout, Blenkinsopp major; and he has managed to din something into them in mathematics somehow, so that I'm sure the fifth form will pass a better examination this term than any term since we first came here. Now that, you know, is really a great thing, even if he doesn't quite fall in with our preconceived social requirements.'

'I'm sure I don't know about the mathematics or the fifth form, Joseph,' Mrs. Greatrex used to reply; with great dignity. 'That sort of thing falls under your department, I'm aware, not under mine. But I'm sure that for all social purposes, Mr. Le Breton is really a great deal worse than useless. A more unchristian, disagreeable, self-opinionated, wrong-headed, objectionable young man I never came across in the whole course of my experience. However, you wouldn't listen to my advice upon the subject, so it's no use talking any

longer about it. I always advised you not to take him without further enquiry into his antecedents; and you overbore me: you said he was so well-connected, and so forth, and would hear nothing against him; so I wish you joy now of your precious bargain. The only thing left for us is to find some good opportunity of getting rid of him.'

'I like the young man, as far as he goes,' Dr. Greatrex replied once, with unwonted spirit, 'and I won't get rid of him at all, my dear, unless he obliges me to. He's really well meaning, in spite of all his absurdities, and upon my word, Maria, I believe he's thoroughly honest in his opinions.'

Mrs. Greatrex only met this flat rebellion by an indirect remark to the effect that some people seemed absolutely destitute of the very faintest glimmering power of judging human character.



## CHAPTER XX.

## LITERATURE, MUSIC, AND THE DRAMA.

‘THE PRIMATE OF FIJI’ was duly accepted and put into rehearsal by the astute and enterprising manager of the Ambiguities Theatre. ‘It’s a risk,’ he said candidly, when he read the manuscript over, ‘a decided risk, Mr. Berkeley; I acknowledge the riskiness, but I don’t mind trying it for all that. You see, you’ve staked everything upon the doubtful supposition that the Public possesses a certain amount of elementary intelligence, and a certain appreciation of genuine original wit and humour. Your play’s literature, good literature; and that’s rather a speculative element to introduce into the regular theatre nowadays. Illegitimate,

I should call it; decidedly illegitimate—but still, perhaps, worth trying. Do you know the story about old Simon Burbury, the horse-dealer? Young Simon says to him one morning, “Father, don’t you think we might manage to conduct this business of ours without always telling quite so many downright lies about it?” The old man looks back at him reproachfully, and says with a solemn shake of the head, “Ah, Simon, Simon, little did I ever think I should live to see a son of mine go in for speculation!” Well, my dear sir, that’s pretty much how a modern manager feels about the literary element in the drama. The Public isn’t accustomed to it, and there’s no knowing how they may take it. Shakespeare, now, they stand readily enough, because he’s an old-established and perfectly respectable family purveyor. Sheridan, too, of course, and one play of Goldsmith’s, and a trifle or so of George Colman — all recognised and all tolerated

because of their old prescriptive respectability. But for a new author to aim at being literary's rather presumptuous; now tell me yourself, isn't it? Seems as if he was setting himself up for a heaven-sent genius, and trying to sit upon the older dramatists of the present generation. Melodrama, sensation, burlesque — that's all right enough—perfectly legitimate; but a real literary comic opera, with good words and good music—it *is* a little strong, for a beginner, Mr. Berkeley, you *will* acknowledge.'

'But don't you think,' Arthur answered, smiling good-humouredly at his cynical frankness, 'an educated and cultured Public is beginning to grow up that may, perhaps, really prefer a little literature, provided it's made light enough and attractive enough for their rapid digestion? Don't you think intelligent people are beginning to get just a trifle sick of burlesque, and spectacle, and sensation, and melodrama?'

‘Why, my dear sir,’ the manager answered promptly, ‘that’s the exact chance on which I’m calculating when I venture to accept your comic opera from an unknown beginner. It’s clever, there’s no denying that, and I hope the fact won’t be allowed to tell against it: but the music’s bright and lively; the songs are quaint and catching; the dialogue’s brisk and not too witty; and there’s plenty of business—plenty of business in it. I incline to think we can get together a house at the Ambiguities that’ll enter into the humour of the thing, and see what your play’s driving at. How did you learn all about stage requirements, though? I never saw a beginner’s play with so little in it that was absolutely impossible.’

‘I was a Shooting Star at Oxford,’ Berkeley answered simply, ‘so that I know something—like a despised amateur—about stage necessities; and I’ve written one or two little pieces before for private acting. Besides, Watkiss has

helped me with all the technical arrangements of the little opera.'

'It'll do,' the manager answered, more confidently; 'I won't predict a success, because you know a manager should never prophesy unless he knows; but I think there's a Public in London that'll take it in, just as they took in "Caste" and "Society," twenty years back, at the Prince of Wales's. Anyhow, I'm quite prepared to give it a fair trial.'

On the first night, Arthur Berkeley and the Progenitor went down in fear and trembling to the stage door of the Ambiguities. There was a full house, and the critics were all present, in some surprise at the temerity of this new man; for it was noised abroad already by those who had seen the rehearsals that 'The Primate of Fiji' was a fresh departure, after its own fashion, in the matter of English comic opera. The curtain rose upon the chorus of mermaids, and the first song was a decided hit. Still the

Public, as becomes a first night, maintained a dignified and critical reserve. When the President of the Board of Trade, in full court costume, appeared upon the scene, in the midst of the very realistic long-haired sea-ladies, the audience was half shocked for a moment by the utter incongruity of the situation; but after a while they began to discover that the incongruity was part of the joke, and they laughed quietly a sedate and moderate laugh of suspended judgment. As the Progenitor had predicted, the gods were the first to enter into the spirit of the fun, and to give a hand to the Primate's first sermon. The scientific professors on the Challenger Expedition took the fancy of the house a little more decidedly; and even the stalls thawed visibly when the professor of biology delivered his famous exposition of the evolution hypothesis to the assembled chiefs of Raratonga. But it was the one feeble second-hand old

joke of the piece that really brought pit and boxes down together in a sudden fit of inextinguishable laughter. The professor of political economy enquired diligently, with note-book in hand, of the Princess of Fiji, whether she thought the influence of the missionaries beneficial or otherwise; whether she considered these preachers of a new religion really good or not; to which the unsophisticated child of nature responded naïvely, 'Good, very good—roasted; but not quite so good boiled,' and the professor gravely entered the answer in his philosophic note-book. It was a very ancient jest indeed, but it tickled the ribs of the house mightily, as ancient jests usually do, and they burst forth with into a hearty roar of genuine approval. Then Arthur began to breathe more freely. After that the house toned down again quietly, and gave no decided token of approbation till the end of the piece. When the curtain

dropped there was a lull of hushed expectation for poor Arthur Berkeley; and at its close the house broke out into a storm of applause, and 'The Primate of Fiji' had firmly secured its position as the one great theatrical success of the present generation.

There was a loud cry of 'Author! Author!' and Arthur Berkeley, hardly knowing how he got there, or what he was standing on, found himself pushed from behind by friendly hands, on to the narrow space between the curtain and the footlights. He became aware that a very hot and red body, presumably himself, was bowing mechanically to a seething and clapping mass of hands and faces over the whole theatre. Backing out again, in the same semi-conscious fashion, with the universe generally reeling on more than one distinct axis all around him, he was seized and hand-shaken violently, first by the Progenitor, then by the manager, and then by half a dozen other miscellaneous and un-



known persons. At last, after a lot more revolutions of the universe, he found himself comfortably pitched into a convenient hansom, with the Progenitor by his side ; and hardly knew anything further till he discovered his own quiet supper table at the Chelsea lodgings, and saw his father mixing a strong glass of brandy and seltzer for him, to counteract the strength of the excitement.

Next morning Arthur Berkeley 'awoke, and found himself famous.' 'The Primate of Fiji' was the rage of the moment. Everybody went to hear it—everybody played its tunes at their own pianos—everybody quoted it, and adapted it, and used its clever catchwords as the pet fashionable slang expressions of the next three seasons. Arthur Berkeley was the lion of the hour ; and the mantelpiece of the quiet little Chelsea study was ranged three rows deep with cards of invitation from people whose very names Arthur had never heard of six months

before, and whom the Progenitor declared it was a sin and shame for any respectable young man of sound economical education even to countenance. There were countesses, and marchionesses, too, among the senders of those coronetted parallelograms of waste pasteboard, as the Progenitor called them—nay, there was even one invitation on the mantelpiece that bore the three strawberry leaves and other insignia of Her Grace the Duchess of Leicestershire.

‘Can’t you give us just *one* evening, Mr. Berkeley,’ said Lady Hilda Tregellis, as she sat on the centre ottoman in Mrs. Campbell Moncrieff’s drawing-room with Arthur Berkeley talking lightly to her about the nothings which constitute polite conversation in the nineteenth century. ‘Just one evening, any day after the next fortnight? We should be *so* delighted if you could manage to favour us.’

‘No, I’m afraid I can’t, Lady Hilda,’ Arthur

answered. 'My evenings are so dreadfully full just now; and besides, you know, I'm not accustomed to so much society, and it unsettles me for my daily work. After all, you see, I'm a journeyman playwright now, and I have to labour at my unholy calling just like the theatrical carpenter.'

'How delightfully frank,' thought Lady Hilda. 'Really I like him quite immensely.—Not even the afternoon on Wednesday fortnight?' she went on aloud. 'You might come to our garden party on Wednesday fortnight.'

'Quite impossible,' Arthur Berkeley answered. 'That's my regular day at Pilbury Regis.'

'Pilbury Regis!' cried Lady Hilda, starting a little. 'You don't mean to say you have engagements, and in the thick of the season, too, at Pilbury Regis?'

'Yes, I have, every Wednesday fortnight,' Berkeley answered, with a smile. 'I go there

regularly. You see, Lady Hilda, Wednesday's a half-holiday at Pilbury Grammar School; so every second week I run down for the day to visit an old friend of mine, who's also an acquaintance of yours, I believe,—Ernest Le Breton. He's married now, you know, and has got a mastership at the Pilbury Grammar School.'

'Then you know Mr. Le Breton!' cried Lady Hilda, charmed at this *rapprochement* of two delightfully original men. 'He *is* so nice. I like him immensely, and I'm so glad you're a friend of his. And Mrs. Le Breton, too; wasn't it nice of him? Tell me, Mr. Berkeley, was she really and truly a grocer's daughter?'

Berkeley's voice grew a little stiffer and colder as he answered, 'She was a sister of Oswald of Oriel, the great mathematician, who was killed last year by falling from the summit of a peak in the Bernina.'

'Oh, yes, yes, I know all about that, of

course,' said Lady Hilda, quickly and carelessly. 'I know her brother was very clever and all that sort of thing; but then there are so many men who are very clever, aren't there? The really original thing about it all, you know, was that he actually married a grocer's daughter. That was really quite too delightfully original. I was charmed when I heard about it: I thought it was so exactly like dear Mr. Le Breton. He's so deliciously unconventional in every way. He was Lynmouth's tutor for a while, as you've heard, of course; and then he went away from us, at a moment's notice, so nicely, because he wouldn't stand papa's abominable behaviour, and quite right, too, when it was a matter of conscience—I dare say he's told you all about it, that horrid pigeon-shooting business. Well, and so you know Mrs. Le Breton—do tell me, what sort of person is she?'

'She's very nice, and very good, and very

pretty, and very clever,' Arthur answered, a little constrainedly. 'I don't know that I can tell you anything more about her than that.'

'Then you really like her?' said Lady Hilda, warmly. 'You think her a fit wife for Mr. Le Breton, do you?'

'I think him a very lucky fellow indeed to have married such a charming and beautiful woman,' Arthur answered, quietly.

Lady Hilda noticed his manner, and read through it at once with a woman's quickness. 'Aha!' she said to herself: 'the wind blows that way, does it? What a very remarkable girl she must be, really, to have attracted two such men as Mr. Berkeley and Mr. Le Breton. I've lost one of them to her; I can't very well lose the other, too: for after Ernest Le Breton, I've never seen any man I should care to marry so much as Mr. Arthur Berkeley.'

'Lady Hilda,' said the hostess, coming up to her at that moment, 'you'll play us some-

thing, won't you? You know you promised to bring your music.'

Hilda rose at once with stately alacrity. Nothing could have pleased her better. She went to the piano, and, to the awe and astonishment of Mrs. Campbell Moncrieff, took out an arrangement of the Fijian war-dance from 'The Primate of Fiji.' It suited her brilliant slap-dash style of execution admirably; and she felt she had never played so well in her life before. The presence of the composer, which would have frightened and unnerved most girls of her age, only made Hilda Tregellis the bolder and the more ambitious. Here was somebody at least who knew something about it; none of your ordinary fashionable amateurs and mere soulless professional performers, but the very man who had made the music—the man in whose brain the notes had first gathered themselves together into speaking melody, and who could

really judge the comparative merits of her rapid execution. She played with wonderful verve and spirit, so that Lady Exmoor, seated on the side sofa opposite, though shocked at first at Hilda's choice of a piece, glanced more than once at the wealthiest young commoner present (she had long since mentally resigned herself to the prospect of a commoner for that poor dear foolish Hilda), and closely watched his face to see what effect this unwonted outburst of musical talent might succeed in producing upon his latent susceptibilities. But Lady Hilda herself wasn't thinking of the wealthy commoner; she was playing straight at Arthur Berkeley: and when she saw that Arthur Berkeley's mouth had melted slowly into an approving smile, she played even more brilliantly and better than ever, after her bold, smart, vehement fashion. As she left the piano, Arthur said, 'Thank you; I have never heard the piece better



rendered.' And Lady Hilda felt that that was a triumph which far outweighed any number of inane compliments from a whole regiment of simpering Algies, Monties, and Berties.

'You can't say any evening, then, Mr. Berkeley?' she said once more, as she held out her hand to him to say 'Good-night' a little later: 'not any evening at all, or part of an evening? You might really reconsider your engagements.'

Arthur hesitated visibly. 'Well, possibly I might manage it,' he said, wavering, 'though, I assure you, my evenings are very much more than full already.'

'Then don't make it an evening,' said Lady Hilda, pressingly. 'Make it lunch. After all, Mr. Berkeley, it's we ourselves who want to see you; not to show you off as a curiosity to all the rest of London. We have silly people enough in the evenings; but if you'll come to lunch with us alone one day, we shall have an

opportunity of talking to you on our own account.'

Lady Hilda was tall and beautiful, and Lady Hilda spoke, as she always used to speak, with manifest sincerity. Now, it is not in human nature not to feel flattered when a beautiful woman pays one genuine homage; and Arthur Berkeley was quite as human, after all, as most other people. 'You're very kind,' he said, smiling. 'I must make it lunch, then, though I really ought to be working in the mornings instead of running about merely to amuse myself. What day will suit you best?'

'Oh, not to amuse yourself, Mr. Berkeley,' Hilda answered pointedly, 'but to gratify us. That, you know, is a work of benevolence. Say Monday next, then, at two o'clock. Will that do for you?'

'Perfectly,' Berkeley answered, taking her proffered hand extended to him with just that

indefinable air of frankness which Lady Hilda knew so well how to throw into all her actions. ‘Good evening. Wilton Place, isn’t it?—Gracious heavens!’ he thought to himself, as he glanced after her satin train sweeping slowly down the grand staircase, ‘what on earth would the dear old Progenitor say if only he saw me in the midst of these meaningless aristocratic orgies. I am positively half-wheedled, it seems, into making love to an earl’s daughter! If this sort of thing continues, I shall find myself, before I know it, connected by marriage with two-thirds of the British peerage. A beautiful woman, really, and quite queen-like in her manner when she doesn’t choose rather to be unaffectedly gracious. How she sat upon that tall young man with the brown moustaches over by the mantelpiece! I didn’t hear what she said to him, but I could see he was utterly crushed by the way he slunk away with his tail between his legs, like a whipped

spaniel. A splendid woman—and no doubt about it; looks as if she'd stepped straight out of the canvas of Titian, with the pearls in her hair and everything else exactly as he painted them. The handsomest girl I ever saw in my life—but not like Edie Le Breton. They say a man can only fall in love once in a lifetime. I wonder whether there's any truth in it! Well, well, you won't often see a finer woman in her own style than Lady Hilda Tregellis. Monday next, at two precisely; I needn't make a note of it—no fear of my forgetting.'

'I really do think,' Lady Hilda said to herself as she unrolled the pearls from her thick hair in her own room that winter evening, 'I almost like him better than I did Ernest Le Breton. The very first night I saw him at Lady Mary's I fell quite in love with his appearance, before I knew even who he was; and now that I've found out all about him, I never did hear anything so absolutely

and delightfully original. His father a common shoemaker! That, to begin with, throws Ernest Le Breton quite into the shade! *His* father was a general in the Indian army—nothing could be more *banal*. Then Mr. Berkeley began life as a clergyman; but now he's taken off his white choker, and wears a suit of grey tweed like any ordinary English gentleman. So delightfully unconventional, isn't it? At last, to crown it all, he not only composes delicious music, but goes and writes a comic opera—such a comic opera! And the best of it is, success hasn't turned his head one atom. He doesn't run with vulgar eagerness after the great people, like your ordinary everyday successful nobody. He took no more notice of me, myself, at first, because I was Lady Hilda Tregellis, than if I'd been a common milkmaid; and he wouldn't come to our garden party because he wanted to go down to Pilbury Regis to visit the Le Bretons

at their charity school or something! It was only after I played the war-dance arrangement so well—I never played so brilliantly in my life before—that he began to alter and soften a little. Certainly, these pearls do thoroughly become me. I think he looked after me when I was leaving the room just a tiny bit, as if he was really pleased with me for my own sake, and not merely because I happen to be called Lady Hilda Tregellis.'

## CHAPTER XXI.

## OFF WITH THE OLD LOVE.

‘It’s really very annoying, this letter from Selah,’ Herbert Le Breton murmured to himself, as he carefully burnt the compromising document, envelope and all, with a fusee from his oriental silver pocket match-case. ‘I had hoped the thing had all been forgotten by this time, after her long silence, and my last two judiciously chilly letters—a sort of slow refrigerating process for poor shivering naked little Cupid. But here, just at the very moment when I fancied the affair had quite blown over, comes this most objectionable letter, telling me that Selah has actually betaken herself to London to meet me; and

what makes it more annoying still, I wanted to go up myself this week to dine at home with Ethel Faucit. Mother's plan about Ethel Faucit is exceedingly commendable; a girl with eight hundred a year, cultivated tastes, and no father or other encumbrances dragging after her. I always said I should like to marry a poor orphan. A very desirable young woman to annex in every way! And now, here's Selah Briggs—ugh! how could I ever have gone and entangled myself in my foolish days with a young woman burdened by such a cognomen!—here's Selah Briggs must needs run away from Hastings, and try to hunt me up on her own account in London. If I dared, I wouldn't go up to see her at all, and would let the thing die a natural death of inanition—*sine Cerere et Baccho*, and so forth—(I'm afraid, poor girl, she'll be more likely to find Bacchus than Ceres if she sticks in London); but the plain fact is, I don't dare—that's the



long and the short of it. If I did, Selah'd be tracking me to earth here in Oxford, and a nice mess that'd make of it! She doesn't know my name, to be sure; but as soon as she called at college and found nobody of the name of Walters was known there, she'd lie in wait for me about the gates, as sure as my name's Herbert Le Breton, and sooner or later she'd take it out of me, one way or the other. Selah has as many devils in her as the Gergesene who dwelt among the tombs, I'll be sworn to it; and if she's provoked, she'll let them all loose in a legion to crush me. I'd better see her and have it out quietly, once for all, than try to shirk it here in Oxford and let myself in at the end for the worse condemnation.'

Under this impression, Herbert Le Breton, leaning back in his well-padded oak armchair, ordered his scout to pack his portmanteau, and set off by the very first fast train for

Paddington station. He would get over his interview with Selah Briggs in the afternoon, and return to Epsilon Terrace in good time for Lady Le Breton's dinner. Say what you like of it, Ethel Faucit and eight hundred a year, *certe redditum*, was a thing in no wise to be sneezed at by a judicious and discriminating person.

Herbert left his portmanteau in the cloak room at Paddington, and drove off in a hansom to the queer address which Selah had given him. It was a fishy lodging of the commoner sort in a back street at Notting Hill, not far from the Portobello Road. At the top of the stairs, Selah stood waiting to meet him, and seemed much astonished when, instead of kissing her, as was his wont, he only shook her hand somewhat coolly. But she thought to herself that probably he didn't wish to be too demonstrative before the eyes of the lodging-house people, and so took no further notice of it.

‘Well, Selah,’ Herbert said, as soon as he entered the room, and seated himself quietly on one of the straight-backed wooden chairs, ‘why on earth have you come to London?’

‘Goodness gracious, Herbert,’ Selah answered, letting loose the floodgates of her rapid speech after a week’s silence, ‘don’t you go and ask me why I’ve done it. Ask me rather why I didn’t go and do it long ago. Father, he’s got more and more aggravating every day for the last twelvemonth, till at last I couldn’t stand him any longer. Prayer meetings, missionary meetings, convention meetings, all that sort of thing I could put up with somehow; but when it came to private exhortations and prayer over me with three or four of the godliest neighbours, I made up my mind not to put up with it one day longer. So last week I packed up two or three little things hurriedly, and left a note behind to say I felt I was too unregenerate to

live in such spiritual company any longer ; and came straight up here to London, and took these lodgings. Emily Lucas, she wrote to me from Hastings—she's the daughter of the hair-dresser in our street, you know, and I told her to write to me to the Post-office. Emily Lucas wrote to me that there was weeping and gnashing of teeth, and swearing almost, when they found out I'd really left them. And well there might be, indeed, for I did more work for them (mostly just to get away for a while from the privileges) than they'll ever get a hired servant to do for them in this world, Herbert.' Herbert moved uneasily on his chair, as he noticed how glibly she called him now by his Christian name instead of saying 'Mr. Walters.' 'And Emily says,' Selah went on, without stopping to take breath for a second, 'that father put an advertisement at once into the "Christian Mirror"—pah, as if it was likely I should go buying or reading

the "Christian Mirror," indeed—to say that if "S. B." would return at once to her affectionate and injured parents, the whole past would be forgotten and forgiven. Forgotten and forgiven! I should think it would, indeed! But he didn't ask me whether their eternal bothering and plaguing of me about my precious soul for twenty years past would also be forgotten and forgiven! He didn't ask me whether all their meetings, and conventions, and prayers, and all the rest of it, would be forgotten and forgiven! My precious soul! In Turkey they say the women have no souls'! I often wished it had been my happy lot to be born in Turkey, and then, perhaps, they wouldn't have worried me so much about it. I'm sure I often said to them, "Oh don't bother on account of my poor unfortunate misguided little soul any longer. It's lost altogether, I don't doubt, and it doesn't in the least trouble me. If it was somebody else's, I

could understand your being in such a fearful state of mind about it ; but as it's only mine, you know, I'm sure it really doesn't matter." And then they'd only go off worse than ever, —mother doing hysterics, and so forth—and say I was a wicked, bad, abominable scoffer, and that it made them horribly frightened even to listen to me. As if I wasn't more likely to know the real value of my own soul than anybody else was !'

Herbert looked at her curiously and anxiously as she delivered this long harangue in a voluble stream, without a single pause or break ; and then he said, in his quiet voice, ' How old are you, Selah ?'

' Twenty-two,' Selah answered, carelessly. ' Why, Herbert ?'

' Oh, nothing,' Herbert replied, turning away his eyes from her keen, searching gaze uncomfortably. He congratulated himself inwardly on the lucky fact that she was fully

of age, for then at least he could only get into a row with her, and not with her parents. ‘And now, Selah, do you know what I strongly advise you?’

‘To get married at once,’ Selah put in promptly.

Herbert drew himself up stiffly, and looked at her cautiously out of the corner of his eyes. ‘No,’ he said slowly, ‘not to get married, but to go back again for the present to your people at Hastings. Consider, Selah, you’ve done a very foolish thing indeed by coming here alone in this way. You’ve compromised yourself, and you’ve compromised me. Indeed, if it weren’t for the lasting affection I bear you’—he put this in awkwardly, but he felt it necessary to do so, for the flash of Selah’s eyes fairly cowed him for the moment—‘I wouldn’t have come here at all this afternoon to see you. It might get us both into very serious trouble, and—and—and delay the prospect of our marriage.’

You see, everything depends upon my keeping my fellowship until I can get an appointment to marry on. Anything that risks loss of the fellowship is really a measurable danger for both of us.'

Selah looked at him very steadily with her big eyes, and Herbert felt that he was quailing a little under their piercing, withering inquisition. By Jove, what a splendid woman she was, though, when she was angry! 'Herbert,' she said, rising from her chair and standing her full height imperiously before him, 'Herbert, you're deceiving me. I almost believe you're shilly-shallying with me. I almost believe you don't ever really mean to marry me.'

Herbert moved uneasily upon his wooden seat. What was he to do? Should he make a clean breast of it forthwith, and answer boldly, 'Well, Selah, you have exactly diagnosed my mental attitude'? Or should he try to put her off a little with some



meaningless explanatory platitudes? Or should he—by Jove, she was a very splendid woman!—should he take her in his arms that moment, kiss her doubts and fears away like a donkey, and boldly and sincerely promise to marry her? Pooh! not such a fool as all that comes to! not even with Selah before him now; for he was no boy any longer, and not to be caught by the mere vulgar charms of a flashy, self-asserting greengrocer's daughter.

‘Selah,’ he said at last, after a long pause, ‘I strongly advise you once more to return to Hastings for the present. You'll find it better for you in the end. If your people are quite unendurable—as I don't doubt they are from what you tell me—you could look about meanwhile for a temporary appointment, say as’—he checked himself from uttering the word ‘shop girl,’ and substituted for it, ‘draper's assistant.’

Selah looked at him angrily. ‘What fools

you men are about such things!' she said in a voice of utter scorn. 'When do you suppose I ever learnt the drapery? Or who do you suppose would ever give me a place in a shop of that sort without having learnt the drapery? I dare say you think it takes ten years to make one of you fine gentlemen at college, with your Greek and your Latin, but that the drapery, or the millinery, or the confectionery, comes by nature! However, that's not the question now. The question's simply this—Herbert Walters, do you or don't you mean to marry me?'

'I must temporise,' Herbert thought to himself, placidly. 'This girl's quite too unreservedly categorical! She eliminates modality with a vengeance!' 'Well, Selah,' he said in his calmest and most deliberate manner, 'we must take a great many points into consideration before deciding on that matter.' And then he went on to tell her what seemed to him

the pros and cons of an immediate marriage. Couldn't she get a place meanwhile of some sort? Couldn't she let him have time to look about him? Couldn't she go back just for a few days to Hastings, until he could hear of something feasible for either of them? Selah interrupted him more than once with forcible interjectional observations such as 'bosh!' and 'rubbish!' and when he had finished she burst out once more into a long and voluble statement.

For more than an hour Herbert Le Breton and Selah Briggs fenced with one another, each after their own fashion, in the little fishy lodgings; and at every fresh thrust, Herbert parried so much the worse that at last Selah lost patience utterly, and rose in the end to the dignity of the situation. 'Herbert Walters,' she said, looking at him with unspeakable contempt, 'I see through your flimsy excuses now, and I feel certain you don't mean to

marry me! You never did mean to marry me! You wanted to amuse yourself by making love to a poor girl in a country town, and now you'd like to throw her overboard and leave her alone to her own devices. I knew you meant that when you didn't write to me; but I wouldn't condemn you unheard; I gave you a chance to clear yourself. I see now you were trying to drop the acquaintance quietly, and make it seem as if I had backed out of it as well as you.'

Herbert felt the moment for breaking through all reserve had finally arrived. 'You admirably interpret my motives in the matter, Selah,' he said coldly. 'I don't think it would be just of me to interfere with your prospects in life any longer. I can't say how long it may be before I am able to afford marriage; and, meanwhile, I'm preventing you from forming a natural alliance with some respectable and estimable young man in your own

station. I should be sorry to stand in your way any further ; but if I could offer you any small pecuniary assistance at any time, either now or hereafter, you know I'd be very happy indeed to do so, Selah.'

The angry girl turned upon him fiercely. 'Selah!' she cried in a tone of crushing contempt. 'What do you mean by calling me Selah, sir? How dare you speak to me by my Christian name in the same breath you tell me you don't mean to marry me? How dare you have the insolence and impertinence to offer me money? Never say another word to me as long as you live, Herbert Walters; and leave me now, for I don't want to have anything more to say to you or your money for ever.'

Herbert took up his hat doubtfully. 'Selah!—Selah!—Miss Briggs, I mean,' he said, falteringly, for at that moment Selah's face was terrible to look at. 'I'm very sorry,

I can assure you, that this interview—and our pleasant acquaintance—should unfortunately have had such a disagreeable termination. For my own part—Herbert was always politic—‘I should have wished to part from you in no unfriendly spirit. I should have wished to learn your plans for the future, and to aid you in forming a suitable settlement in life hereafter. May I venture to ask, before I go, whether you mean to remain in London or to return to Hastings? As one who has been your sincere friend, I should at least like to know what are your movements for the immediate present. How long do you mean to stop here, and when you leave these rooms where do you think you will next go to?’—‘Confoundedly awkward,’ he thought to himself, ‘to have her prowling about and dogging one’s footsteps here in London.’

Selah read through his miserable transparent little pretences at once with a woman’s

quick instinctive insight. 'Ugh!' she cried, pushing him away from her, figuratively, with a gesture of disgust, 'do you think, you poor suspicious creature, I want to go spying you or following you all over London? Are you afraid, in your sordid little respectable way, that I'll come up to Oxford to pry and peep into that snug comfortable fellowship of yours? Do you suppose I'm so much in love with you, Herbert Walters, that I can't let you go without wanting to fawn upon you and run after you ever afterwards! Pah! you miserable, pitiable, contemptible cur and coward, are you afraid even of a woman! Go away, and don't be frightened. I never want to see you or speak to you again as long as I live, you wretched, lying, shuffling hypocrite. I'd rather go back to my own people at Hastings a thousand times over than have anything more to do with you. They may be narrow-minded, and bigoted, and ignorant, and stupid, but at

least they're honest—they're not liars and hypocrites. Go this minute, Herbert Walters, go away this minute, and don't stand there fiddling and quivering with your hat like a whipped schoolboy, but go at once, and take my eternal loathing and contempt for a parting present with you !'

Herbert held the door gingerly ajar for half a second, trying to think of a neat and appropriate epigram, but at that particular moment, for the life of him, he couldn't hit on one. So he closed the door after him quietly, and walking out alone into the street, immediately hailed a passing hansom. 'I didn't come out of that di emma very creditably to myself, I must admit,' he thought with a burning face, as he rolled along quickly in the hansom ; 'but anyhow, now I'm well out of it. The coast's all clear at last for Ethel Faucit. It's well to be off with the old love before you're on with the new, as that horrid vulgar practical



proverb justly though somewhat coarsely puts it. Still, she's a perfectly magnificent creature, is Selah ; and by Jove, when she got into that towering rage (and no wonder, for I won't be unjust to her in that respect), her tone and attitude would have done credit to any theatre. I should think Mrs. Siddons must have looked like that, say as Constance. Poor girl, I'm really sorry for her ; from the very bottom of my heart, I'm really sorry for her. If it rested with me alone, hang me if I don't think I would positively have married her. But after all, the environment, you know, the environment is always too strong for us !'

Meanwhile, in the shabby lodgings near the Portobello Road, poor Selah, the excitement once over, was lying with her proud face buried in the pillows, and crying her very life out in great sobs of utter misery. The daydream of her whole existence was gone for ever ; the bubble was burst ; and nothing stood before her

but a future of utter drudgery. 'The brute, the cur, the mean wretch,' she said aloud between her sobs; 'and yet I loved him. How beautifully he talked, and how he made me love him. If it had only been a common everyday Methodist sweetheart, now! but Herbert Walters! Oh, God, how I hate him, and how I did love him!'

When Herbert reached his mother's house in Epsilon Terrace, Lady Le Breton met him anxiously at the door. 'Herbert,' she said, almost weeping, 'my dear boy, what on earth should I do if it were not for you! You're the one comfort I have in all my children. Would you believe it—no, you won't believe it—as I was walking back here this afternoon with Mrs. Faucit (Ethel's aunt, of all people in the world), what do you think I saw, in our own main street, too, but a young man, decently dressed, in his shirt sleeves. No coat, I assure you, but only his shirt sleeves. Imagine my horror when

he came up to us—Mrs. Faucit, too, you know—and said to me out loud, in the most unconcerned voice, “Well, mother!” I couldn’t believe my eyes, Herbert, but I solemnly declare to you it was positively Ronald! You really could have knocked me down with a feather. Disgraceful, wasn’t it, perfectly disgraceful!’

‘How on earth did he come so?’ asked Herbert, almost smiling in spite of himself.

‘Why, do you know, Herbert,’ Lady Le Breton answered somewhat obliquely, ‘a few days since, I met him wheeling along a barrow full of coals for a dirty, grimy, ragged little girl from some alley or gutter somewhere. I believe they call the place the Mews—at the back of the terrace, you remember. He pretended the child wasn’t big enough to wheel the coals, which was absurd, of course, or else her parents wouldn’t have sent her; but I’m sure he really did it on purpose to annoy me.’

He never does these things when I'm not by to see ; or if he does, I never see him. Now, that was bad enough in all conscience, wasn't it? but to-day what he did was still more outrageous. He met a poor man, as he calls him, in Westbourne Grove, who was one of his Christian Brethren (is that the right expression?) and who declared he was next door to starving. So what must Ronald do, but run into a pawnbroker's—I shouldn't have thought he could ever have heard of such a place—and sell his coat, or something of the sort, and give the man (who was doubtless an impostor) all the money. Then he positively walked home in his shirt sleeves. I call it a most unchristian thing to do—and to walk straight into my very arms, too, as I was coming along with Mrs. Faucit.'

Herbert offered at once such condolences as were in his power. 'And are the Faucits coming to-night?' he asked eagerly.

Lady Le Breton kissed him again gently on

the forehead. 'Oh, Herbert,' she said warmly, 'I can't tell you what a comfort you always are to me. Oh yes, the Faucits are coming; and do you know, Herbert, my dear boy, I'm quite sure that old Mr. Faucit, the uncle, wouldn't at all object to the match, and that Ethel's really very much disposed indeed to like you immensely. You've only to follow up the advantage, my dear boy, and I don't for a moment think she'd ever refuse you. And I've been talking to Sir Sydney Weatherhead about your future, too, and he tells me (quite privately, of course) that, with your position and honours at Oxford, he fully believes he can easily push you into the first good vacant post at the Education Office; only you must be careful to say nothing about it beforehand, or the others will say it's a job, as they call it. Oh, Herbert, I really and truly can't tell you what a joy and a comfort you always are to me!'

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE PHILISTINES TRIUMPH.

‘My dear,’ said Dr. Greatrex, looking up in alarm from the lunch table one morning, in the third term of Ernest Le Breton’s stay at Pilbury, ‘what an awful apparition! Do you know, I positively see Mr Blenkinsopp, father of that odious boy Blenkinsopp major, distinctly visible to the naked eye, walking across the front lawn—on the grass too—to our doorway. The pupil’s parent is really the very greatest bane of all the banes that beset a poor harassed overdriven schoolmaster’s unfortunate existence!’

‘Blenkinsopp?’ Mrs. Greatrex said reflectively. ‘Blenkinsopp? Who is he? Oh,

I remember, a tobacco-pipe manufacturer somewhere in the midland counties, isn't he? Mr. Blenkinsopp, of Staffordshire. I always say to other parents—not Brosely—Brosely sounds decidedly commercial and unpresentable. No nice people would naturally like their sons to mix with miscellaneous boys from a place called Brosely. Now, what on earth can he be coming here for, I wonder, Joseph?'

'Oh, *I* know,' the doctor answered with a deep-drawn sigh. 'I know, Maria, only too well. It's the way of all parents. He's come to inquire after Blenkinsopp major's health and progress. They all do it. They seem to think the sole object of a head master's existence is to look after the comfort and morals of their own particular Tommy, or Bobby, or Dicky, or Harry. For heaven's sake, what form is Blenkinsopp major in? For heaven's sake, what's his Christian name, and age last birthday, and place in French and mathematics,

and general state of health for past quarter? Where's the prompt-book, with house-master's and form-master's report, Maria? Oh, here it is, thank goodness! Let me see; let me see—he's ringing at the door this very instant. "Blenkinsopp . . . major . . . Charles Warrington . . . fifteen . . . fifth form . . . average, twelfth boy of twelve . . . idle, inattentive, naturally stupid; bad disposition . . . health invariably excellent . . . second eleven . . . bats well." That'll do. Run my eye down once again, and I shall remember all about him. How about the other? "Blenkinsopp . . . minor . . . Cyril Anastasius Guy Waterbury Macfarlane"—heavens, what a name! . . . "thirteen . . . fourth form . . . average, seventh boy of eighteen . . . industrious and well-meaning, but heavy and ineffective . . . health good . . . fourth eleven . . . fields badly." Ah, that's the most important one. Now I'm primed. Blen-



kinsopp major I remember something about, for he's one of the worst and most hopelessly stupid boys in the whole school—I've caned him frequently this term, and that keeps a boy green in one's memory; but Blenkinsopp minor, Cyril Anastasius Guy Thingumbob Whatyoumaycallit,—I don't remember *him* a bit. I suppose he's one of those inoffensive, mildly mediocre sort of boys who fail to impress their individuality upon one in any way. My experience is that you can always bear in mind the three cleverest boys at the top of each form, and the three stupidest or most mischievous boys at the bottom; but the nine or a dozen meritorious nobodies in the middle of the class are all so like one another in every way that you might as well try to discriminate between every individual sheep of a flock in a pasture. And yet, such is the natural contradictiousness and vexatious disposition of the British parent, that you'll

always find him coming to inquire after just one of those very particular Tommies or Bobbies. Charles Warrington:—Cyril Anastasius Guy Whatyoumaycallit: that'll do: I shall remember now all about them.' And the doctor arranged his hair before the looking glass into the most professional stiffness, as a preparatory step to facing Mr. Blenkinsopp's parental inquiries in the head master's study.

'What! Mr. Blenkinsopp! Yes, it is really. My dear sir, how *do* you do? This is a most unexpected pleasure. We hadn't the least idea you were in Pilbury. When did you come here?'

'I came last night, Dr. Greatrex,' answered the dreaded parent respectfully: 'we've come down from Staffordshire for a week at the seaside, and we thought we might as well be within hail of Guy and Charlie.'

'Quite right, quite right, my dear sir,' said

the doctor, mentally noting that Blenkinsopp minor was familiarly known as Guy, not Cyril ; ‘we’re delighted to see you. And now you want to know all about our two young friends, don’t you?’

‘Well, yes, Dr. Greatrex ; I *should* like to know how they are getting on.’

‘Ah, of course, of course. Very right. It’s such a pleasure to us when parents give us their active and hearty co-operation ! You’d hardly believe, Mr. Blenkinsopp, how little interest some parents seem to feel in their boys’ progress. To us, you know, who devote our whole time and energy assiduously to their ultimate welfare, it’s sometimes quite discouraging to see how very little the parents themselves seem to care about it. But your boys are both doing capitally. The eldest—Blenkinsopp major, we call him ; Charles Warrington, isn’t it ? (His home name’s Charlie, if I recollect right. Ah, quite so.) Well,

Charlie's the very picture of perfect health, as usual.' ('Health is his only strong point, it seems to me,' the doctor thought to himself instinctively. 'We must put that first and foremost.') 'In excellent health and very good spirits. He's in the second eleven now, and a capital batter: I've no doubt he'll go into the first eleven next term, if we lose Biddlecomb Tertius to the university. In work, as you know, he's not very great; doesn't do his abilities full justice, Mr. Blenkinsopp, through his dreadful inattention. He's generally near the bottom of the form, I'm sorry to say; generally near the bottom of the form.'

'Well, I dare say there's no harm in that, sir,' said Mr. Blenkinsopp, senior, warmly. 'I was always at the bottom of the form at school myself, Doctor, but I've picked it up in after life; I've picked it up, sir, as you see, and I'm fully equal with most other people nowadays, as you'll find if you inquire of any

town councilman or man of position down our way, at Brosely.'

'Ah, I dare say you were, Mr. Blenkinsopp,' the doctor answered blandly, with just the faintest tinge of unconscious satire, peering at his square unintelligent features as a fancier peers at the face of a bull-dog; 'I dare say you were now. After all, however clever a set of boys may be, one of them *must* be at the bottom of the form, in the nature of things, mustn't he? And your Charlie, I think, is only fifteen. Ah, yes; well, well; he'll do better, no doubt, if we keep him here a year or two longer. So then there's the second: Guy, you call him, if I remember right—Cyril Anastasius Guy—our Blenkinsopp minor. Guy's a good boy; an excellent boy: to tell you the plain truth, Mr. Blenkinsopp, I don't know much of him personally myself, which is a fact that tells greatly in his favour. Charlie I must admit I have to call up some

times for reproof: Guy, never. Charlie's in the fifth form: Guy's seventh in the fourth. A capital place for a boy of his age! He's very industrious, you know—what we call a plodder. They call it a plodder, you see, at thirteen, Mr. Blenkinsopp, but a man of ability at forty.' Dr. Greatrex delivered that last effective shot point-blank at the eyes of the inquiring parent, and felt in a moment that its delicate generalised flattery had gone home straight to the parent's susceptible heart.

'But there's one thing, Doctor,' Mr. Blenkinsopp began, after a few minutes' further conversation on the merits and failings of Guy and Charlie, 'there's one other thing I feel I should like to speak to you about, and that's the teaching of your fifth form master, Mr. Le Breton. From what Charlie tells me, I don't quite like that young man's political ideas and opinions. He's said things to his form sometimes that are quite horrifying, I assure you ;

things about Property, and about our duty to the poor, and so on, that are positively enough to appal you. Now, for example, he told them—I don't quite like to repeat it, for it's sheer blasphemy I call it—but he told them in a Greek Testament lesson that the Apostles themselves were a sort of Republicans—Socialists, I think Charlie said, or else Chartists, or dynamiters. I'm not sure he didn't say St. Peter himself was a regular communist!

Dr. Greatrex drew a long breath. 'I should think, Mr. Blenkinsopp,' he suggested blandly, 'Charlie must really have misunderstood Mr. Le Breton. You see, they've been reading the Acts of the Apostles in their Greek Testament this term. Now, of course, you remember that, during the first days of the infant Church, while its necessities were yet so great, as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down

at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. You see, here's the passage, Mr. Blenkinsopp, in the authorised version. I won't trouble you with the original. You've forgotten most of your Greek, I dare say: ah, I thought so. It doesn't stick to us like the Latin, does it? Now, perhaps, in expounding that passage, Mr. Le Breton may have referred in passing—as an illustration merely—to the unhappily prevalent modern doctrines of socialism and communism. He may have warned his boys, for example, against confounding a Christian communism like this, if I may so style it, with the rapacious, aggressive, immoral forms of communism now proposed to us, which are based upon the forcible disregard of all Property and all vested interests of every sort. I don't say he did, you know, for I haven't conferred with him upon the subject: but he may have done so; and he may even have



used, as I have used, the phrase 'Christian communism,' to define the temporary attitude of the apostles and the early Church in this matter. That, perhaps, my dear sir, may be the origin of the misapprehension.'

Mr. Blenkinsopp looked hard at the three verses in the big Bible the doctor had handed him, with a somewhat suspicious glare. He was a self-made man, with land and houses of his own in plenty, and he didn't quite like this suggestive talk about selling them and laying the prices at the apostles' feet. It savoured to him both of communism and priestcraft. 'That's an awkward text, you know,' he said, looking up curiously from the Bible in his hand into the doctor's face, 'a very awkward text; and I should say it was rather a dangerous one to set too fully before young people. It seems to me to make too little altogether of Property. You know, Dr. Greatrex, at first sight it *does* look just a little like communism.'

‘Precisely what Mr. Le Breton probably said,’ the doctor answered, following up his advantage quickly. ‘At first sight, no doubt, but at first sight only, I assure you, Mr. Blenkinsopp. If you look on to the fourth verse of the next chapter, you’ll see that St. Peter, at least, was no communist,—which is perhaps what Mr. Le Breton really said. St. Peter there argues in favour of purely voluntary beneficence, you observe; as when you, Mr. Blenkinsopp, contribute a guinea to our chapel window:—you see, we’re grateful to our kind benefactors: we don’t forget them. And if you’ll look at the Thirty-eighth Article of the Church of England, my dear sir, you’ll find that the riches and goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same as certain Anabaptists—(Gracious heavens, is he a Baptist, I wonder—if so, I’ve put my foot in it)—certain Anabaptists do falsely boast—referring, of

course, to sundry German fanatics of the time—followers of one Kniperdoling, a crazy enthusiast, not to the respectable English Baptist denomination; but that nevertheless every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor. That, you see, is the doctrine of the Church of England, and that, I've no doubt, is the doctrine that Mr. Le Breton pointed out to your boys as the true Christian communism of St. Peter and the apostles.'

'Well, I hope so, Dr. Greatrex,' Mr. Blenkinsopp answered resignedly. 'I'm sure I hope so, for his own sake, as well as for his pupils'. Still, in these days, you know, when infidelity and Radicalism are so rife, one ought to be on one's guard against atheism and revolution, and attacks on Property in every form; oughtn't one, Doctor? These opinions are getting so rampant all around us, Property itself isn't safe. One really hardly

knows what people are coming to nowadays. Why, last night I came down here and stopped at the Royal Marine, on the Parade, and having nothing else to do, while my wife was looking after the little ones, I turned into a hall down in Combe Street, where I saw a lot of placards up about a Grand National Social Democratic meeting. Well, I turned in, Dr. Greatrex, and there I heard a German refugee fellow from London—a white-haired man of the name of Schurts, or something of the sort’—Mr. Blenkinsopp pronounced it to rhyme with ‘hurts’—‘who was declaiming away in a fashion to make your hair stand on end and frighten you half out of your wits with his dreadful communistic notions. I assure you, he positively took my breath away. I ran out of the hall at last, while he was still speaking, for fear the roof should fall in upon our heads and crush us to pieces. I declare to you, sir, I quite expected a visible judgment!’

‘ Did you really now ? ’ said Dr. Greatrex, languidly. ‘ Well, I dare say, for I know there’s a sad prevalence of revolutionary feeling among our workmen here, Mr. Blenkinsopp. Now, what was this man Schurz talking about ? ’

‘ Why, sheer communism, sir, ’ said Mr. Blenkinsopp, severely : ‘ sheer communism, I can tell you. Co-operation of workmen to rob their employers of profits ; gross denunciation of capital and capitalists ; and regular inciting of them against the Property of the landlords, by quoting Scripture, too, Doctor, by quoting the very words of Scripture. They say the devil can quote Scripture to his own destruction, don’t they, Doctor ? Well, he quoted something out of the Bible about woe unto them that join field to field, or words to that effect, to make themselves a solitude in the midst of the earth. Do you know, it strikes me that it’s a very dangerous book, the Bible — in the hands of these socialistic damagogues.

I mean. Look now, at that passage, and at what Mr. Le Breton said about Christian communism !’

‘ But, my dear Mr. Blenkinsopp,’ the doctor cried, in a tone of gentle deprecation, ‘ I hope you don’t confound a person like this man Schurz, a German refugee of the worst type, with our Mr. Le Breton, an Oxford graduate and an English gentleman of excellent family. I know Schurz by name through the papers : he’s the author of a dreadful book called ‘ Gold and the Proletariate,’ or something of that sort—a revolutionary work like Tom Paine’s “ Age of Reason,” I believe—and he goes about the country now and then, lecturing and agitating, to make money, no doubt, out of the poor, misguided, credulous workmen. You quite pain me when you mention him in the same breath with a hard-working, conscientious, able teacher like our Mr. Le Breton ’

‘ Oh, ’ Mr. Blenkinsopp went on, a little mollified, ‘ then Mr. Le Breton’s of a good family, is he? That’s a great safeguard, at any rate, for you don’t find people of good family running recklessly after these bloodthirsty doctrines, and disregarding the claims of Property.’

‘ My dear sir, ’ the doctor continued, ‘ we know his mother, Lady Le Breton, personally. His father, Sir Owen, was a distinguished officer—general in the Indian army in fact; and all his people are extremely well connected with some of our best county families. Nothing wrong about him in any way, I can answer for it. He came here direct from Lord Exmoor’s, where he’d been acting as tutor to Viscount Lynmouth, the eldest son of the Tregellis family: and you may be sure *they* wouldn’t have anybody about them in any capacity who wasn’t thoroughly and perfectly responsible, and free from any prejudice against the just rights of property.’

At each successive step of this collective guarantee to Ernest Le Breton's perfect respectability, Mr. Blenkinsopp's square face beamed brighter and brighter, till at last when the name of Lord Exmoor was finally reached, his mouth relaxed slowly into a broad smile, and he felt that he might implicitly trust the education of his boys to a person so intimately bound up with the best and highest interests of religion and Property in this kingdom. 'Of course,' he said placidly, 'that puts quite a different complexion upon the matter, Dr. Greatrex. I'm very glad to hear young Mr. Le Breton's such an excellent and trustworthy person. But the fact is, that Schurts man gave me quite a turn for the moment, with his sanguinary notions. I wish you could see the man, sir; a long white-haired, savage-bearded, fierce-eyed old revolutionist if ever there was one. It made me shudder to look at him, not raving and ranting like a madman—I shouldn't have minded so



much if he'd a done that; but talking as cool and calm and collected, Doctor, about "eliminating the capitalist"—cutting off my head, in fact—as we two are talking here together at this moment. His very words were, sir, "we must eliminate the capitalist." Why, bless my soul,—and here Mr. Blenkinsopp rushed to the window excitedly—'who on earth's this coming across your lawn, here, arm in arm with Mr. Le Breton, into the school-house? Man alive, Dr. Greatrex, whatever you choose to say, hanged if it isn't really that German cut-throat fellow himself, and no mistake at all about it!'

Dr. Greatrex rose from his magisterial chair and glanced with dignified composure out of the window. Yes, there was positively no denying it! Ernest Le Breton, in cap and gown, with Edie by his side, was walking arm in arm up to the school-house with a long-bearded, large-headed German-looking man, whose placid powerful face the Doctor im-

mediately recognised as the one he had seen in the illustrated papers above the name of Max Schurz, the defendant in the coming state trial for unlawfully uttering a seditious libel ! He could hardly believe his eyes. Though he knew Ernest's opinions were dreadfully advanced, he could not have suspected him of thus consorting with positive murderous political criminals. In spite of his natural and kindly desire to screen his own junior master, he felt that this public exhibition of irreconcilable views was quite unpardonable and irretrievable. 'Mr. Blenkinsopp,' he said gravely, turning to the awe-struck tobacco-pipe manufacturer with an expression of sympathetic dismay upon his practised face, 'I must retract all I have just been saying to you about our junior master. I was not aware of this. Mr. Le Breton must no longer retain his post as an assistant at Pilbury Regis Grammar School.'

Mr. Blenkinsopp sank amazed into an easy-

chair, and sat in dumb astonishment to see the end of this extraordinary and unprecedented adventure. The Doctor walked out severely to the school porch, and stood there in solemn state to await the approach of the unsuspecting offender.

‘It’s so delightful, dear Herr Max,’ Ernest was saying at that exact moment, ‘to have you down here with us even for a single night. You can’t imagine what an oasis your coming has been to us both. I’m sure Edie has enjoyed it just as much as I have, and is just as anxious you should stop a little time here with us as I myself could possibly be.’

‘Oh, yes, Herr Schurz,’ Edie put in persuasively with her sweet little pleading manner; ‘do stay a little longer. I don’t know when dear Ernest has enjoyed anything in the world so much as he has enjoyed seeing you. You’ve no idea how dull it is down here for him, and for me too, for that matter; everybody here is

so *borné*, and narrow-minded and self-centred ; nothing expansive or sympathetic about them, as there used to be about Ernest's set in dear, quiet, peaceable old Oxford. It's been such a pleasure to us to hear some conversation again that wasn't about the school, and the rector, and the Haigh Park people, and the flower show, and old Mrs. Jenkins's quarrel with the vicar of St. Barnabas. Except when Mr. Berkeley runs down sometimes for a Saturday to Monday trip to see us, and takes Ernest out for a good blow with him on the top of the breezy downs over yonder, we really never hear anything at all except the gossip and the small-talk of Pilbury Regis.'

'And what makes it worse, Herr Max,' said Ernest, looking up in the old man's calm strong face with the same reverent almost filial love and respect as ever, 'is the fact that I can't feel any real interest and enthusiasm in the work that's set before me. I try to do it

as well as I can, and I believe Dr. Greatrex, who's a kind-hearted good sort of man in his way, is perfectly satisfied with it; but my heart isn't in it, you see, and can't be in it. What sort of good is one doing the world by dinning the same foolish round of Horace and Livy and Latin elegiacs into the heads of all these useless, eat-all, do-nothing young fellows, who'll only be fit to fight or preach or idle as soon as we've finished cramming them with our indigestible unserviceable nostrums!

'Ah, Ernest, Ernest,' said Herr Max, nodding his heavy head gravely, 'you always *will* look too seriously altogether at your social duties. I can't get other people to do it enough; and I can't get you not to do it too much entirely. Remember, my dear boy, my pet old saying about a little leaven. You're doing more good by just unobtrusively holding your own opinions here at Pilbury, and getting in the thin end of the wedge by slowly

influencing the minds of a few middle-class boys in your form, than you could possibly be doing by making shoes or weaving clothes for the fractional benefit of general humanity. Don't be so abstract, Ernest; concrete yourself a little; isn't it enough that you're earning a livelihood for your dear little wife here, whom I'm glad to know at last and to receive as a worthy daughter? I may call you, Edie, mayn't I, my daughter? So this is your school, is it? A pleasant building! And that stern-looking old gentleman yonder, I suppose, is your head master?'

'Dr. Greatrex,' said Edie innocently, stepping up to him in her bright elastic fashion, 'let me introduce you to our friend Herr Schurz, whose name I dare say you know—the German political economist. He's come down to Pilbury to deliver a lecture here, and we've been fortunate enough to put him up at our little lodging.'

The doctor bowed very stiffly. 'I have heard of Herr Schurz's reputation already,' he said with as much diplomatic politeness as he could command, fortunately bethinking himself at the right moment of the exact phrase that would cover the situation without committing him to any further courtesy towards the terrible stranger. 'Will you excuse my saying, Mrs. Le Breton, that we're very busy this afternoon, and I want to have a few words with your husband in private immediately? Perhaps you'd better take Herr Schurz on to the downs' ('safer there than on the Parade, at any rate,' he thought to himself quickly), 'and Le Breton will join you in the combe a little later in the afternoon. I'll take the fifth form myself, and let him have a holiday with his friend here if he'd like one. Le Breton, will you step this way please?' And lifting his square cap with stern solemnity to Edie, the doctor disappeared under the porch into the

corridor, closely followed by poor frightened and wondering Ernest.

Eddie looked at Herr Max in dismay, for she saw clearly there was something serious the matter with the doctor. The old man shook his head sadly. 'It was very wrong of me,' he said bitterly: 'very wrong and very thoughtless. I ought to have remembered it and stopped away. I'm a *caput lupinum*, it seems, in Pilbury Regis, a sort of moral scarecrow or political leper, to be carefully avoided like some horrid contagion by a respectable, prosperous head-master. I might have known it, I might have known it, Eddie; and now I'm afraid by my stupidity I've got dear Ernest unintentionally into a pack of troubles. Come on, my child, my poor dear child, come on to the downs, as he told us; I won't compromise you any longer by being seen with you in the streets, in the decent decorous whited sepulchres of Pilbury Regis.' And the grey old



apostle, with two tears trickling unreprieved down his wrinkled cheek, took Edie's arm tenderly in his, and led her like a father up to the green grassy slope that overlooks the little seaward combe by the nestling village of Nether Pilbury.

Meanwhile, Dr. Greatrex had taken Ernest into the breakfast-room—the study was already monopolised by Mr. Blenkinsopp—and had seated himself nervously, with his hands folded before him, on a straight-backed chair. There was a long and awkward pause, for the Doctor didn't care to begin the interview; but at last he sighed deeply and said in a tone of genuine disappointment and difficulty, 'My dear Le Breton, this is really very unpleasant.'

Ernest looked at him, and said nothing.

'Do you know,' the doctor went on kindly after a minute, 'I really do like you and sympathise with you. But what am I to do after this? I can't keep you at the school any

longer, can I now? I put it to your own common-sense. I'm afraid, Le Breton—it gives me sincere pain to say so—but I'm afraid we must part at the end of the quarter.'

Ernest only muttered that he was very sorry.

'But what are we to do about it, Le Breton?' the doctor continued more kindly than ever. 'What are we ever to do about it? For my own sake, and for the boys' sake, and for respectability's sake, it's quite impossible to let you remain here any longer. The first thing you must do is to send away this Schurz creature'—Ernest started a little—'and then we must try to let it blow over as best we can. Everybody'll be talking about it; you know the man's become quite notorious lately; and it'll be quite necessary to say distinctly, Le Breton, before the whole of Pilbury, that we've been obliged to dismiss you summarily. So much we positively *must* do for our own

protection. But what on earth are we to do for you, my poor fellow? I'm afraid you've cut your own throat, and I don't see any way on earth out of it.'

'How so?' asked Ernest, half stunned by the suddenness of this unexpected dismissal.

'Why, just look the thing in the face yourself, Le Breton. I can't very well give you a recommendation to any other head master without mentioning to him why I had to ask you for your resignation. And I'm afraid if I told them, nobody else would ever take you.'

'Indeed?' said Ernest, very softly. 'Is it such a heinous offence to know so good a man as Herr Schurz—the best follower of the apostles I ever knew?'

'My dear fellow,' said the doctor, confidentially, with an unusual burst of outspoken frankness, 'so far as my own private feelings are concerned, I don't in the least object to your knowing Herr Schurz or any other

socialist whatsoever. To tell you the truth, I dare say he really is an excellent and most well-meaning person at bottom. Between ourselves, I've always thought that there was nothing very heterodox in socialism; in fact, I often think, Le Breton, the Bible's the most thoroughly democratic book that ever was written. But we haven't got to deal in practice with first principles; we have to deal with Society—with men and women as we find them. Now, Society doesn't like your Herr Schurz, objects to him, anathematises him, wants to imprison him. If you walk about with him in public, Society won't send its sons to your school. Therefore, you should disguise your affection, and if you want to visit him, you should visit him, like Nicodemus, by night only.'

'I'm afraid,' said Ernest very fixedly, 'I shall never be able so far to accommodate myself to the wishes of Society.'

‘I’m afraid not, myself, Le Breton,’ the doctor went on with imperturbable good temper. ‘I’m afraid not, and I’m sorry for it. The fact is, you’ve chosen the wrong profession. You haven’t pliability enough for a school-master; you’re too isolated, too much out of the common run; your ideas are too peculiar. Now, you’ve got me to-day into a dreadful pickle, and I might very easily be angry with you about it, and part with you in bad blood; but I really like you, Le Breton, and I don’t want to do that; so I only tell you plainly, you’ve mistaken your natural calling. What it can be I don’t know; but we must put our two heads together, and see what we can do for you before the end of the quarter. Now, go up to the combe to your wife, and try to get that terrible bugbear of a German out of Pilbury as quickly and as quietly as possible. Good-bye for to-day, Le Breton; no coolness between us, for this, I hope, my dear fellow.’

Ernest grasped his hand warmly. 'You're very kind, Dr. Greatrex,' he said with genuine feeling. 'I see you mean well by me, and I'm very, very sorry if I've unintentionally caused you any embarrassment.'

'Not at all, not at all, my dear fellow. Don't mention it. We'll tide it over somehow, and I'll see whether I can get you anything else to do that you're better fitted for.'

As the door closed on Ernest, the doctor just gently wiped a certain unusual dew off his gold spectacles with a corner of his spotless handkerchief. 'He's a good fellow,' he murmured to himself, 'an excellent fellow; but he doesn't manage to combine with the innocence of the dove the wisdom of the serpent. Poor boy, poor boy, I'm afraid he'll sink, but we must do what we can to keep his chin floating above the water. And now I must go back to the study to have out my explanation with that detestable thick-headed old pig of a Blen-

kinsopp! “Your views about young Le Breton,” I must say to him, “are unfortunately only too well founded; and I have been compelled to dismiss him this very hour from Pilbury Grammar School.” Ugh—how humiliating! the profession’s really enough to give one a perfect sickening of life altogether!’

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE STREETS OF ASKELON.

BEFORE the end of the quarter, two things occurred which made almost as serious a difference to Ernest's and Edie's lives as the dismissal from Pilbury Regis Grammar School. It was about a week or ten days after Herr Max's unfortunate visit that Ernest awoke one morning with a very curious and unpleasant taste in his mouth, accompanied by a violent fit of coughing. He knew what the taste was well enough; and he mentioned the matter casually to Edie a little later in the morning. Edie was naturally frightened at the symptoms, and made him go to see the school doctor. The doctor felt his pulse attentively, listened



with his stethoscope at the chest, punched and pummelled the patient all over in the most orthodox fashion, and asked the usual inquisitorial personal questions about all the other members of his family. When he heard about Ronald's predisposition, he shook his head seriously, and feared there was really something in it. Increased vocal resonance at the top of the left lung, he must admit. Some tendency to tubercular deposit there, and perhaps even a slight deep-seated cavity. Ernest must take care of himself for the present, and keep himself as free as possible from all kind of worry or anxiety.

'Is it consumption, do you think, Dr. Sanders?' Edie asked breathlessly.

'Well, consumption, Mrs. Le Breton, is a very vague and indefinite expression,' said the doctor, tapping his white shirtcuff with his nail in his slowest and most deliberate manner. 'It may mean a great deal, or it may mean very

little. I don't want in any way to alarm you, or to alarm your husband ; but there's certainly a marked incipient tendency towards tubercular deposit. Yes, tubercular deposit . . . . Well, if you ask me the question point-blank, I should say so . . . . certainly . . . . I should say it was phthisis, very little doubt of it. . . . In short, what some people would call consumption.'

Ernest went home with Edie, comforting her all the way as well as he was able, and trying to make light of it, but feeling in his own heart that the look-out was decidedly beginning to gather blacker and darker than ever before them. Through the rest of that term he worked as well as he could ; but Edie noticed every morning that the cough was getting worse and worse ; and long before the time came for them to leave Pilbury he had begun to look distinctly delicate. Care for Edie and for the future was telling on him :

his frame had never been very robust, and the anxieties of the last year had brought out the same latent hereditary tendency which had shown itself earlier and more markedly in the case of his brother Ronald.

Meanwhile, Dr. Greatrex was assiduous in looking about for something or other that Ernest could turn his hand to, and writing letters with indefatigable kindness to all his colleagues and correspondents: for though he was, as Ernest said, a most unmitigated humbug, that was really his only fault; and when his sympathies were once really aroused, as the Le Bretons had aroused them, there was no stone he would leave unturned if only his energy could be of any service to those whom he wished to benefit. But unfortunately in this case it couldn't. 'I'm at my wit's end what to do with you, Le Breton,' he said kindly one morning to Ernest: 'but how on earth I'm to manage anything, I can't imagine. For my

own part, you know, though your conduct about that poor man Schurz (a well-meaning harmless fanatic, I dare say) was really a public scandal—from the point of view of parents I mean, my dear fellow, from the point of view of parents—I should almost be inclined to keep you on here in spite of it, and brave the public opinion of Pilbury Regis, if it depended entirely upon my own judgment. But in the management of a school, my dear boy, as you yourself must be aware, a head master isn't the sole and only authority; there are the governors, for example, Le Breton, and—and—and, ur, there's Mrs. Greatrex. Now, in all matters of social discipline and attitude, Mrs. Greatrex is justly of equal authority with me; and Mrs. Greatrex thinks it would never do to keep you at Pilbury. So, of course, that practically settles the question. I'm awfully sorry, Le Breton, dreadfully sorry, but I don't see my way out of it. The mischief's done

already, to some extent, for all Pilbury knows now that Schurz came down here to stop with you at your lodgings: but if I were to keep you on they'd say I didn't disapprove of Schurz's opinions, and that would naturally be simple ruination for the school—simple ruination.'

Ernest thanked him sincerely for the trouble he had taken, but wondered desperately in his own heart what sort of future could ever be in store for them.

The second event was less unexpected, though quite equally embarrassing under existing circumstances. Hardly more than a month before the end of the quarter, a little black-eyed baby daughter came to add to the prospective burdens of the Le Breton family. She was a wee, fat, round-faced, dimpled Devonshire lass to look at, as far surpassing every previous baby in personal appearance as each of those previous babies, by universal admission, had

surpassed all their earlier predecessors,—a fact which, as Mr. Sanders remarked, ought to be of most gratifying import both to evolutionists and to philanthropists in general, as proving the continuous and progressive amelioration of the human race: and Edie was very proud of her indeed, as she lay placidly in her very plain little white robes on the pillow of her simple wickerwork cradle. But Ernest, though he learned to love the tiny intruder dearly afterwards, had no heart just then to bear the conventional congratulations of his friends and fellow-masters. Another mouth to feed, another life dependent upon him, and little enough, as it seemed, for him to feed it with. When Edie asked him what they should name the baby—he had just received an adverse answer to his application for a vacant secretaryship—he crumpled up the envelope bitterly in his hand, and cried out in his misery, ‘Call her Pandora, Edie, call her Pandora; for we’ve got

to the very bottom of the casket, and there is nothing at all left for us now but hope—and even of that very little !’

So they duly registered her name as Pandora ; but her mother shortened it familiarly into Dot ; and as little Dot she was practically known ever after.

Almost as soon as poor Edie was able to get about again, the time came when they would have to leave Pilbury Regis. The doctor’s search had been quite ineffectual, and he had heard of absolutely nothing that was at all likely to suit Ernest Le Breton. He had tried Government offices, Members of Parliament, colonial friends, everybody he knew in any way who might possibly know of vacant posts or appointments, but each answer was only a fresh disappointment for him and for Ernest. In the end, he was fain to advise his peccant under-master, since nothing else remained for it, that he had better go up to London for the

present, take lodgings, and engage in the precarious occupation known as 'looking about for something to turn up.' On the morning when Edie and he were to leave the town, Dr. Greatrex saw Ernest privately in his own study.

'I wish very much I could have gone to the station to see you off, Le Breton,' he said, pressing his hand warmly; 'but it wouldn't do, you know, it wouldn't do, and Mrs. Greatrex wouldn't like it. People would say I sympathised secretly with your political opinions, which might offend Sir Matthew Ogle and others of our governors. But I'm sorry to get rid of you, really and sincerely sorry, my dear fellow; and apart from personal feeling, I'm sure you'd have made a good master in most ways, if it weren't for your most unfortunate socialistic notions. Get rid of them, Le Breton, I beg of you; do get rid of them. Well, the only thing I can advise you now is to try your hand, for the present only—till something



turns up, you know—at literature and journalism. I shall be on the look-out for you still, and shall tell you at once of anything I may happen to hear of. But meanwhile, you must try to be earning something. And if at any time, my dear friend, you should be temporarily in want of money,—the doctor said this in a shame-faced, hesitating sort of way, with not a little humming and hawing—‘in want of money for immediate necessities merely, if you’ll only be so kind as to write and tell me, I should consider it a pleasure and a privilege to lend you a ten pound note, you know—just for a short time, till you saw your way clear before you. Don’t hesitate to ask me now, be sure; and I may as well say, write to me at the school, Le Breton, not at the school-house, so that even Mrs. Greatrex need never know anything about it. In fact, if you’ll excuse me, I’ve put a small sum into this envelope—only twenty pounds—which may be of ser-

vice to you, as a loan, as a loan merely : if you'll take it—only till something turns up, you know—you'll really be conferring a great favour upon me. There, there, my dear boy ; now don't be offended : I've borrowed money myself at times, when I was a young man like you, and I hadn't a wife and family then as an excuse for it either. Put it in your pocket, there's a good fellow ; you'll need it for Mrs. Le Breton and the baby, you see ; now do please put it in your pocket.'

The tears rose fast and hot in Ernest's eyes, and he grasped the doctor's other hand with grateful fervour. 'Dear Dr. Greatrex,' he said as well as he was able, 'it's too kind of you, too kind of you altogether. But I really can't take the money. Even after the expenses of Edie's illness and of baby Dot's wardrobe, we have a little sum, a very little sum laid by, that'll help us to tide over the immediate present. It's too good of you, too good of you alto-

gether. I shall remember your kindness for ever with the most sincere and heartfelt gratitude.'

As Ernest looked into the doctor's half-averted eyes, swimming and glistening just a little with sympathetic moisture, his heart smote him when he thought that he had ever described that good, kindly, generous man as an unmitigated humbug. 'It shows how little one can trust the mere outside shell of human beings,' he said to Edie, self-reproachfully, as they sat together in their bare third-class carriage an hour later. 'The humbug's just the conventional mask of his profession—necessary enough, I suppose, for people who are really going to live successfully in the world as we find it: the heart within him's a thousand times warmer and truer and more unspoiled than one could ever have imagined from the outer covering. He offered me his twenty pounds so delicately and considerately that but for my father's

blood in me, Edie, for your sake, I believe I could almost have taken it.'

When they got to London, Ernest wished to leave Edie and Dot at Arthur Berkeley's rooms (he knew nowhere else to leave them), while he went out by himself to look about for cheap lodgings. Edie was still too weak, he said, to carry her baby about the streets of London in search of apartments. But Edie wouldn't hear of this arrangement: she didn't quite like going to Arthur's, and she felt sure she could bargain with the London landladies a great deal more effectually than a man like Ernest—which was an important matter in the present very reduced condition of the family finances. In the end it was agreed that they should both go out on the hunt together, but that Ernest should be permitted to relieve Edie by turns in taking care of the precious baby.

'They're dreadful people, I believe, London

landladies,' said Edie, in her most housewifely manner; 'regular cheats and skinflints, I've always heard, who try to take you in on every conceivable point and item. We must be very careful not to let them get the better of us, Ernest; and to make full inquiries about all extras, and so forth, beforehand.'

They turned towards Holloway and the northern district, to look for cheap rooms, and they saw a great many, more or less dear, and more or less dirty and unsuitable, until their poor hearts really began to sink within them. At last, in despair, Edie turned up a small side street in Holloway, and stopped at a tiny house with a clean white curtain in its wee front bay window. 'This is awfully small, Ernest,' she said, despondently, 'but perhaps, after all, it might really suit us.'

The door was opened for them by a tall, raw-boned, hard-faced woman, the very embodiment and personification of Edie's ideal

skinflint London landlady. Might they see the lodgings, Edie asked dubiously. Yes, they might, indeed, mum, answered the hard-faced woman. Edie glanced at Ernest significantly, as who should say that these would really never do.

The lodgings were very small, but they were as clean as a new pin. Edie began to relent, and thought, perhaps in spite of the landlady, they might somehow manage to put up with them. What was the rent?

The hard-faced landlady looked at Edie steadily, and then answered 'Fifteen shillings, mum.'

'Oh, that's too much for us, I'm afraid,' said Edie ruefully. 'We don't want to go as high as that. We're very poor and quiet people.'

'Well, mum,' the landlady assented quickly, 'it *is* 'igh for the rooms, perhaps, mum, though I've 'ad more; but it *is* 'igh, mum. I won't

deny it. Still, for you, mum, and the baby, I wouldn't mind making it twelve and sixpence.'

'Couldn't you say half-a-sovereign?' Edie asked timidly, emboldened by success.

'Arf a suvveran, mum? Well, I 'ardly rightly know,' said the hard-faced landlady deliberately. 'I can't say without askin' of my 'usband whether he'll let me. Excuse me a minnit, mum; I'll just run down and ask 'im.'

Edie glanced at Ernest, and whispered doubtfully, 'They'll do, but I'm afraid she's a dreadful person.'

Meanwhile, the hard-faced landlady had run downstairs quickly, and called out in a pleasant voice of childish excitement to her husband. 'John, John,' she cried—'drat that man, where's he gone to. Oh, a-smokin' of course, in the back kitching. Oh, John, there's the sweetest little lady you ever set eyes on, all in black, with a dear baby, a dear

little speechless infant, and a invalid 'usband, I should say by the look of 'im, 'as come to ask the price of the ground floor lodgin's. And seein' she was so nice and kindlike, I told her fifteen shillings, instead of a suvveran; and she says, can't you let 'em for less? says she; and she was that pretty and engagin' that I says, well, for you I'll make it twelve and sixpence, mum, says I: and says she, you couldn't say 'arf a suvveran, could you? and says I, I'll ask my 'usband: and oh, John, I *do* wish you'd let me take 'em at that, for a kinder, sweeter-lookin' dearer family I never did, an' that I tell you.'

John drew his pipe slowly out of his mouth—he was a big, heavy, coachman-built sort of person, in waistcoat and shirt-sleeves—and answered with a kindly smile, 'Why, Martha, if you want to take 'em for 'arf a suvveran, in course you'd ought to do it. Got a baby, pore thing, 'ave she now? Well, there, there, you



just go this very minnit, and tell 'em as you'll take 'em.'

The hard-faced landlady went up the stairs again, only stopping a moment to observe parenthetically that a sweeter little lady she never did, and what was 'arf-a-crown a week to you and me, John? and then, holding the corner of her apron in her hand, she informed Edie that her 'usband was prepared to accept the ten shillings weekly.

'I'll try to make you and the gentleman comfortable, mum,' she said, eagerly; 'the gentleman don't look strong, now do he? We must try to feed 'im up and keep 'im cheerful. And we've got plenty of flowers to make the room bright, you see: I'm very fond of flowers myself, mum: seems to me as if they was sort of company to one, like, and when you water 'em and tend 'em always, I feel as if they was alive, and got to know one again, I do, and that makes one love 'em, now don't it, mum?'

To see 'em brighten up after you've watered 'em, like that there maiden-'air fern there, why it's enough to make one love 'em the same as if they was Christians, mum.' There was a melting tenderness in her voice when she talked about the flowers that half won over Edie's heart, even in spite of her hard features.

'I'm glad you're so fond of flowers, Mrs. ——. Oh, you haven't told us your name yet,' Edie said, beginning vaguely to suspect that perhaps the hard-faced landlady wasn't quite as bad as she looked to a casual observer.

'Alliss, mum,' the landlady answered, filling up Edie's interrogatory blank. 'My name is 'Alliss.

'Alice what?' Edie asked again.

'Oh, no, mum, you don't rightly understand me,' the landlady replied, getting very red, and muddling up her aspirates more decidedly than ever, as people with her failing always do when they want to be specially deliberate and

emphatic: 'not Halice, but 'Alliss; haitch, hay, hell, hell, hi, double hess—'Alliss: my full name's Martha 'Alliss, mum; my 'usband's John 'Alliss. When would you like to come in?"

'At once,' Edie answered. 'We've left our luggage at the cloak-room at Waterloo, and my husband will go back and fetch it, while I stop here with the baby.'

'Not that, he shan't, indeed, mum,' cried the hard-faced landlady, hastily; 'beggin' your pardon for sayin' so. Our John shall go—that's my 'usband, mum; and you shall give 'im the ticket. I wouldn't let your good gentleman there go, and 'im so tired, too, not for the world, I wouldn't. Just you give me the ticket, mum, and John shall go this very minnit and fetch it.'

'But perhaps your husband's busy,' said Ernest, reflecting upon the probable cost of cab hire; 'and he'll want a cab to fetch it in.'

'Bless your 'eart, sir,' said the landlady,

busily arranging things all round the room meanwhile for the better accommodation of the baby, 'e ain't nowadays busy, 'e ain't. 'E's a lazy man, nowadays, John is: retired from business, 'e says, sir, and ain't got nothink to do but clean the knives, and lay the fires, and split the firewood, and such like. John were a coachman, sir, in a gentleman's family for most of 'is life, man and boy, these forty year, come Christmas; and we've saved a bit o' money between us, so as we don't need for nothink: and 'e don't want the cab, puttin' you to expense, sir, onnecessary, to bring the luggage round in. 'E'll just borrar the handbarrer from the livery in the mews, sir, and wheel it round 'isself, in 'arf an hour, and make nothink of it. Just you give me the ticket, and set you right down there, and I'll make you and the lady a cup of tea at once, and John'll bring round the luggage by the time you've got your things off.'

Ernest looked at Edie, and Edie looked at Ernest. Could they have judged too hastily once more, after their determination to be lenient in first judgments for the future? So Ernest gave Mrs. Halliss the cloak-room ticket, and Mrs. Halliss ran downstairs with it immediately. 'John,' she cried again, '—drat that man, where's 'e gone to? Oh, there you are, dearie! Just you put on your coat an' 'at as fast as ever you can, and borry Tom Wood's barrer, and run down to Waterloo, and fetch up them two portmanteaus, will you? And you drop in on the way at the Waterfield dairy—not Jenkins's: Jenkins's milk ain't good enough for them—and tell 'em to send round two penn'orth of fresh this very minnit, do y'ear, John, this very minnit, as it's extremely pertickler. And a good thing I didn't give you them two eggs for your dinner, as is fresh-laid by our own 'ens this mornin', and no others like 'em to be 'ad in London for love or

money; and they shall 'ave 'em boiled light for their tea this very evenin'. And you look sharp John,—drat the man, 'ow long 'e is—for I tell you, these is reel gentlefolk, and them pore too, which makes it all the 'arder; and they've got to be treated the same in every respect as if they was paying a 'ole suvverin, bless their 'earts, the pore creechurs.'

'Pore,' said John, vainly endeavouring to tear on his coat with becoming rapidity under the influence of Mrs. Halliss's voluble exhortations. 'Pore are they, pore things? and so they may be. I've knowed the sons of country gentlemen, and that baronights too, Martha, as 'ad kep' their 'ounds, redooced to be that pore as they couldn't have afforded to a took our lodgings, even 'umble as they may be. Pore ain't nothink to do with it nowadays, as respects gentility. I've lived forty years in gentlemen's families, up an' down, Martha, and I think I'd ought to know somethink about the 'abits and

manners of the aristocracy. Pore ain't in the quest'ion at all, it ain't, as far as breedin' goes : and if they're pore, and got to be gentlefolks too all the same'—John spoke of this last serious disability in a tone of unfeigned pity— 'Why, Martha, wot I says is, we'd ought to do the very best we can for 'em any 'ow, now, oughtn't we?'

'Drat the man,' cried Mrs. Halliss again, impatiently, 'don't stand talkin' and sermonin' about it there no longer like a poll parrot, but just you run along and send in the milk, like a dear, will you, or that dear little lady'll have to be waitin' for her tea—and her with a month-old baby, too, the pretty thing, just to think of it!'

And indeed, long before John Halliss had got back again with the two wee portmanteaus—'I could 'a carried that lot on my 'ead,' he soliloquised when he saw them, 'without 'avin' troubled to wheel round a onnecessary encum-

brance in the way of a barrer'—Mrs. Halliss had put the room tidy, and laid the baby carefully in a borrowed cradle in the corner, and brought up Edie and Ernest a big square tray covered by a snow-white napkin,—‘My own washin’ mum,’—and conveying a good cup of tea, a couple of crisp rolls, and two such delicious milky eggs as were never before known in the whole previous history of the county of Middlesex. And while they drank their tea, Mrs. Halliss insisted upon taking the baby down into the kitchen, so that they mightn’t be bothered, pore things; for the pore lady must be tired with nursin’ of it herself the livelong day, that she must: and when she got it into the kitchen, she was compelled to call over the back yard wall to Mrs. Bollond, the greengrocer’s wife next door, with an ultimate view to getting a hare’s brain for the dear baby to suck at through a handkerchief. And Mrs. Bollond, being specially so invited, came



in by the area door, and inspected the dear baby; and both together arrived at the unanimous conclusion that little Dot was the very prettiest and sweetest child that ever sucked its fat little fingers, Lord bless her.

And in the neat wee parlour upstairs, Edie, pouring out tea from the glittering tin teapot into one of the scrupulously clean small whitey-gold tea cups, was saying meanwhile to Ernest, 'Well, after all, Ernest dear, perhaps London landladies aren't all quite as black as they're usually painted.' A conclusion which neither Edie nor Ernest had ever after any occasion for altering in any way.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE CLOUDS BEGIN TO BREAK.

AND now, what were Ernest and Edie to do for a living? That was the practical difficulty that stared them at last plainly in the face—no mere abstract question of right and justice, of socialistic ideals or of political economy, but the stern, uncompromising, pressing domestic question of daily bread. They had come from Pilbury Regis with a very small reserve indeed in their poor lean little purses; and though Mrs. Halliss's lodgings might be cheap enough as London lodgings go, their means wouldn't allow them to stop there for many weeks together unless that hypothetical something of which they were in search should happen to

turn up with most extraordinary and unprecedented rapidity. As soon as they were settled in at their tiny rooms, therefore, Ernest began a series of weary journeys into town, in search of work of some sort or another; and he hunted up all his old Oxford acquaintances in the Temple or elsewhere, to see if they could give him any suggestions towards a possible means of earning a livelihood. Most of them, he found to his surprise, though they had been great chums of his at college, seemed a little shy of him nowadays: one old Oxford friend in particular, an impeccable man in close-cut frock coat and hat of shiny perfection, he overheard saying to another as he followed him accidentally up a long staircase in King's Bench Walk, 'Ah, yes, I met Le Breton in the Strand yesterday, when I was walking with a Q.C., too, he's married badly, got no employment, and looks awfully seedy; so very embarrassing, you know, now wasn't

it?' And the other answered lightly, in the same unconcerned tone, 'Oh, of course, dreadfully embarrassing, really.' Ernest slunk down the staircase again with a sinking heart, and tried to get no further hints from the respectabilities of King's Bench Walk, at least in this his utmost extremity.

Night after night, as the dusk was beginning to throw its pall over the great lonely desert of London—one vast frigid expanse of living souls that knew and cared nothing about him—Ernest turned back, foot-sore and heart-sick, to the cheery little lodgings in the short side-street at Holloway. There good Mrs. Halliss, whose hard face seemed to grow softer the longer you looked at it, had a warm cup of tea always ready against his coming: and Edie with wee Dot sleeping placidly on her arm, stood at the door to welcome him back again in wife-like fashion. The flowers in the window bloomed bright and gay in the

tiny parlour: and Edie, with her motherly cares for little Dot, seemed more like herself than ever she had done before since poor Harry's death had clouded the morning of her happy lifetime. But to Ernest, even that pretty picture of the young mother and her sleeping baby looked only like one more reminder of the terrible burden he had unavoidably yet too lightly taken upon him. Those two dear lives depended wholly upon him for their daily bread, and where that daily bread was ever to come from he had absolutely not the slightest notion.

There is no place in which it is more utterly dreary to be quite friendless than in teeming London. Still, they were not absolutely friendless even in that great lurid throng of jarring humanity, all eagerly intent on its own business, and none of it troubling its collective head about two such nonentities as Ernest and Edie. Ronald used to come round

daily to see them and cheer them up with his quiet confidence in the Disposer of all things : and Arthur Berkeley, neglecting his West End invitations and his lady admirers, used to drop in often of an evening for a friendly chat and a rational suggestion or two.

‘Why don’t you try journalism, Le Breton?’ he said to Ernest one night, as they sat discussing possibilities for the future in the little parlour together. ‘Literature in some form or other’s clearly the best thing for a man like you to turn his hand to. It demands less compliance with conventional rules than any other profession. No editor or publisher would ever dream of dismissing you, for example, because you invited your firebrand friend Max Schurz to dinner. On the contrary, if it comes to that, he’d ask you what Herr Max thought about the future of trades unions and the socialist movement in Germany, and he’d advise you to turn it into a column

and a half of copy, with a large type sensational heading, "A Communistic Leader Interviewed. From our Special Correspondent."'

'But it's such a very useless, unsocialistic trade,' Ernest answered doubtfully. 'Do you think it would be quite right, Arthur, for a man to try and earn money by it? Of course it isn't much worse than school-mastering, I dare say; nobody can say he's performing a very useful function for the world by hammering a few lines of Ovid into the skull of poor stupid Blenkinsopp major, who after all will only use what he calls his education, if he uses it in any way at all, to enable him to make rather more money than any other tobacco-pipe manufacturer in the entire trade. Still, one does fee for all that, that mere writing of books and papers is a very unsatisfactory kind of work for an ethical being to perform for humanity. How much better, now, if one could only be a farm-labourer or a shoemaker!'

Arthur Berkeley looked across at him half angrily. 'My dear Ernest,' he said, in a severer voice than he often used, 'the time has gone by now for this economical puritanism of yours. It won't do any longer. You have to think of your child and of Mrs. Le Breton. Your first duty is to earn a livelihood for them and yourself; when you've done that satisfactorily, you may begin to think of the claims of humanity. Don't be vexed with me, my dear fellow, if I speak to you very plainly. You've lost your place at Pilbury because you wouldn't be practical. You might have known they wouldn't let you go hobnobbing publicly before the very eyes of boys and parents with a firebrand German Socialist. Mind, I don't say anything against Herr Schurz myself—what little I know about him is all in his favour—that he's a thorn in the side of those odious prigs, the political economists. I've often noticed that when a man wants to



dogmatise to his heart's content without fear of contradiction, he invariably calls himself a political economist. Then if people differ from him, he smiles at them the benign smile of superior wisdom, and says superciliously, " Ah, I see you don't understand political economy ! " Now, your Herr Schurz is a dissenter among economists, I believe—a sort of embryo Luther come to tilt with a German toy lance against their economical infallibilities ; and I'm told he knows more about the subject than all the rest of them put together. Of course, if you like him and respect him—and I know you have one superstition left, my dear fellow—there's no reason on earth why you shouldn't do so ; but you mustn't parade him too openly before the scandalised faces of respectable Pilbury. In future, you must be practical. Turn your hand to whatever you can get to do, and leave humanity at large to settle the debtor and creditor account with you hereafter.'

‘I’ll do my best, Berkeley,’ Ernest answered submissively ; ‘and if you like, I’ll strangle my conscience and try my hand at journalism.’

‘Do, there’s a good man,’ Arthur Berkeley said, delighted at his late conversion. ‘I know two or three editor fellows pretty well, and if you’ll only turn off something, I’ll ask them to have a look at it.’

Next morning, at breakfast, Ernest discussed the possibilities of this new venture very seriously with sympathising Edie. ‘It’s a great risk,’ he said, turning it over dubiously in his mind ; ‘a great risk, and a great expense too, for nothing certain. Let me see, there’ll be a quire of white foolscap to start with ; that’ll be a shilling—a lot of money as things go at present, Edie, isn’t it?’

‘Why not begin with half a quire, Ernest,’ said his little wife, cautiously. ‘That’d be only sixpence, you see.’

‘Do they halve quires at the stationer’s, I

wonder?' Ernest went on still mentally reckoning. 'Well, suppose we put it at sixpence. Then we've got pens already by us, but not any ink—that's a penny—and there's postage, say about twopence; total ninepence. That's a lot of money, isn't it, now, for a pure uncertainty?'

'I'd try it, Ernest dear, if I were you,' Edie answered. 'We must do something, mustn't we, dear, to earn our living.'

'We must,' Ernest said, sighing. 'I wish it were anything but that; but I suppose what must be must be. Well, I'll go out a walk by myself in the quietest streets I can find, and try if I can think of anything on earth a man can write about. Arthur Berkeley says I ought to begin with a social article for a paper; he knows the "Morning Intelligence" people, and he'll try to get them to take something if I can manage to write it. I wonder what on earth would do as a social article for

the "Morning Intelligence"! If only they'd let me write about socialism now! but Arthur says they won't take that; the times aren't yet ripe for it. I wish they were, Edie, I wish they were; and then perhaps you and I would find some way to earn ourselves a decent living.'

So Ernest went out, and ruminated quietly by himself, as well as he was able, in the least frequented streets of Holloway and Highgate. After about half an hour's excogitation, a brilliant idea at last flashed across him; he had found in a tobacconist's window something to write about! Your practised journalist doesn't need to think at all; he writes whatever comes uppermost without the unnecessarily troublesome preliminary of deliberate thinking. But Ernest Le Breton was only making his first experiment in the queer craft, and he looked upon himself as a veritable Watt or Columbus when he had actually discovered that hitherto unknown object, a thing to write about. He

went straight back to good Mrs. Halliss's with his discovery whirling in his head, stopping only by the way at the stationer's, to invest in half a quire of white foolscap. 'The best's a shilling a quire, mister,' said the shopman; 'second best, tenpence.' Communist as he was, Ernest couldn't help noticing the unusual mode of address; but he took the cheaper quality quietly, and congratulated himself on his good luck in saving a penny upon the original estimate.

When he got home, he sat down at the plain wooden table by the window, and began with nervous haste to write away rapidly at his first literary venture. Edie sat by in her little low chair and watched him closely with breathless interest. Would it be a success or a failure? That was the question they were both every moment intently asking themselves. It was not a very important piece of literary workmanship, to be sure; only a social leader

for a newspaper, to be carelessly skimmed to-day and used to light the fire to-morrow, if even that; and yet had it been the greatest master-piece ever produced by the human intellect Ernest could not have worked at it with more conscientious care, or Edie watched him with profounder admiration. When Shakespeare sat down to write 'Hamlet,' it may be confidently asserted that neither Mistress Anne Shakespeare nor anybody else awaited the result of his literary labours with such unbounded and feverish anxiety. By the time Ernest had finished his second sheet of white foolscap—much erased and interlined with interminable additions and corrections—Edie ventured for a moment briefly to interrupt his creative efforts. 'Don't you think you've written as much as makes an ordinary leader now, Ernest?' she asked, apologetically. 'I'm afraid you're making it a good deal longer than it ought to be by rights.'

‘I’m sure I don’t know, Edie,’ Ernest answered, gazing at the two laboured sheets with infinite dubitation and searching of spirit. ‘I suppose one ought properly to count the words in an average leader, and make it the same length as they always are in the “Morning Intelligence.” I think they generally run to just a column.’

‘Of course you ought, dear,’ Edie answered. ‘Run out this minute and buy one before you go a single line further.’

Ernest looked back at his two pages of foolscap somewhat ruefully. ‘That’s a dreadful bore,’ he said, with a sigh: ‘it’ll just run away with the whole penny I thought I’d managed to save in getting the second quality of foolscap for fivepence. However, I suppose it can’t be helped, and after all, if the thing succeeds, one can look upon the penny in the light of an investment. It’s throwing a sprat to catch a whale, as the proverb says; though

I'm afraid Herr Max would say that that was a very immoral capitalist proverb. How horribly low we must be sinking, Edie, when we come to use the anti-social language of those dreadful capitalists !'

'I don't think capitalists deal much in proverbs, dear,' said Edie, smiling in spite of herself; 'but you needn't go to the expense of buying a "Morning Intelligence," I dare say, for perhaps Mrs Halliss may have an old one in the house; or if not, she might be able to borrow one from a neighbour. She has a perfect genius for borrowing, Mrs. Halliss; she borrows everything I want from somebody or other. I'll just run down to the kitchen this minute and ask her.'

In a few seconds Edie returned in triumph with an old soiled and torn copy of the 'Morning Intelligence,' duly procured by the ingenious Mrs. Halliss from the dairy opposite. It was a decidedly antiquated copy, and it had



only too obviously been employed by its late possessor to wrap up a couple of kippered herrings; but it was still entire, so far as regarded the leaders at least, and it was perfectly legible in spite of its ancient and fish-like smell. To ensure accuracy, Ernest and Edie took a leader apiece, and carefully counted up the number of words that went to the column. They came on an average to fifteen hundred. Then Ernest counted his own manuscript with equal care—no easy task when one took into consideration the interlined or erased passages—and, to his infinite disgust, discovered that it only extended to seven hundred and fifty words. ‘Why, Edie,’ he said, in a very disappointed tone, ‘how little it prints into! I should certainly have thought I’d written at least a whole column. And the worst of it is, I believe I’ve really said all I have to say about the subject.’

‘What is it, Ernest dear?’ asked Edie.

‘Italian organ-boys,’ Ernest answered. ‘I saw on a placard in the news shop that one of them had been taken to a hospital in a starving condition.’ He hardly liked to tell even Edie that he had stood for ten minutes at a tobacconist’s window and read the case in a sheet of “Lloyd’s News” conspicuously hung up there for public perusal.

‘Well, let me hear what you have written, Ernest dear, and then see if you couldn’t expand it.’

Ernest read it over most seriously and solemnly—it was only a social leader, of the ordinary commonplace talky-talky sort; but to those two poor young people it was a very serious and solemn matter indeed—no less a matter than their own two lives and little Dot’s into the bargain. It began with the particular case of the particular organ-boy who formed the peg on which the whole article was to be hung; it went on to discourse on the

lives and manners of organ-boys in general ; it digressed into the natural history of the common guinea pig, with an excursus on the scenery of the Lower Apennines ; and it finished off with sundry abstract observations on the musical aspect of the barrel-organ and the æsthetic value of hurdygurdy performances. Edie listened to it all with deep attention.

‘ It’s very good, Ernest dear,’ she said, with wifely admiration, as soon as he had finished. ‘ Just like a real leader exactly : only, do you know, there aren’t any anecdotes in it. I think a social leader of that sort ought always to have a lot of anecdotes. Couldn’t you manag to bring in something about Fox and Sheridan, or about George IV. and Beau Brummel ? They always do, you know, in most of the papers.’

Ernest gazed at her in silent admiration. ‘ How clever of you, Edie,’ he said ‘ to think of

that! Why, of course there ought to be some anecdotes. They're the very breath of life to this sort of meaningless writing. Only, somehow, George IV. and Beau Brummel don't seem exactly relevant to Italian organ-grinders, now do they?'

'I thought,' said Edie, with hardly a touch of unintentional satire, 'that the best thing about anecdotes of that kind in a newspaper was their utter irrelevancy. But if Beau Brummel won't do, couldn't you manage to work in Guicciardini and the galleys? That's strictly Italian, you know, and therefore relevant; and I'm sure the newspaper leaders are extremely fond of that story about Guicciardini.'

'They are,' Ernest answered, 'most undoubtedly; but perhaps for that very reason readers may be beginning to get just a little tired of it by this time.'

'I don't think the readers matter much

said Edie, with a brilliant flash of practical common-sense; 'at least, not nearly half as much, Ernest, as the editor.'

'Quite true,' Ernest replied, with another admiring look; 'but probably the editor more or less consults the taste and feelings of the readers. Well, I'll try to expand it a bit, and I'll manage to drag in an anecdote or two somehow—if not Guicciardini, at least something or other else Italian. You see Italy's a tolerably rich subject, because you can do any amount about Raffael, and Michael Angelo, and Leonardo, and so forth, not to mention Botticelli. The papers have made a dreadful run lately on Botticelli.'

So Ernest sat down once more at the table by the window, and began to interlard the manuscript with such allusions to Italy and the Italians as could suggest themselves on the spur of the moment to his anxious imagination. At the end of half an hour—about the time

a practised hand would have occupied in writing the whole article—he counted words once more, and found there were still two hundred wanting. Two hundred more words to say about Italian organ-boys! Alas for the untrained human fancy! A master leader writer at the office of the ‘Morning Intelligence’ could have run on for ever on so fertile and suggestive a theme—a theme pregnant with unlimited openings for all the cheap commonplaces of abstract journalistic philanthropy; but poor Ernest, a ‘prentice hand at the trade, had yet to learn the fluent trick of the accomplished news purveyor; he absolutely could not write without thinking about it. A third time he was obliged to recommit his manuscript, and a third time to count the words over. This time, oh joy, the reckoning came out as close as possible to the even fifteen hundred. Ernest gave a sigh of relief, and turned ; read it all over again, as finally

enlarged and amended, to the critical ears of admiring Edie.

There was anecdote enough now, in all conscience, in the article; and allusions enough to stock a whole week's numbers of the 'Morning Intelligence.' Edie listened to the whole tirade with an air of the most severe and impartial criticism. When Ernest had finished, she rose up and kissed him. 'I'm sure it'll do, Ernest,' she said confidently. 'It's exactly like a real leader. It's quite beautiful—a great deal more beautiful, in fact, than anything else I ever read in a newspaper: it's good enough to print in a volume.'

'I hope the editor'll think so,' Ernest answered, dubiously. 'If not, what a lot of valuable tenpenny foolscap wasted all for nothing! Now I must write it all out again clean, Edie, on fresh pieces.'

Newspaper men, it must be candidly admitted, do not usually write their articles

twice over; indeed, to judge by the result, it may be charitably believed that they do not even, as a rule, read them through when written, to correct their frequent accidental slips of logic or English; but Ernest wrote out his organ-boy leader in his most legible and roundest hand, copper-plate fashion, with as much care and precision as if it were his first copy for presentation to the stern writing-master of a Draconian board school. 'Editors are more likely to read your manuscript if it's legible, I should think, Edie,' he said, looking up at her with more of hope in his face than had often been seen in it of late. 'I wonder, now, whether they prefer it sent in a long envelope, folded in three; or in a square envelope, folded twice over; or in a paper cover, open like a pamphlet. There must be some recognised professional way of doing it, and I should think one's more likely to get it taken if one sends it in the regular pro-



fessional fashion, than if one makes it look too amateurish. I shall go in for the long envelope; at any rate, if not journalistic, it's at least official.'

The editor of the "Morning Intelligence" is an important personage in contemporary politics, and a man of more real weight in the world than half-a-dozen Members of Parliament for obscure country boroughs; but even that mighty man himself would probably have been a little surprised as well as amused (if he could have seen it) at the way in which Ernest and Edie Le Breton anxiously endeavoured to conciliate beforehand his merest possible personal fads and fancies. As a matter of fact, the question of the particular paper on which the article was written mattered to him absolutely less than nothing, inasmuch as he never looked at anything whatsoever until it had been set up in type for him to pass off-hand judgment upon its faults or its merits. His

time was far too valuable to be lightly wasted on the task of deciphering crabbed manuscript.

In the afternoon, Berkeley called to see whether Ernest had followed his suggestion, and was agreeably surprised to find a whole article already finished. He glanced through the neatly written pages, and was still more pleased to discover that Ernest, with an unsuspected outburst of practicality and practicability, had really hit upon a possible subject. 'This may do, Ernest,' he said with a sigh of relief. 'I dare say it will. I know Lancaster wants leader writers, and I think this is quite good enough to serve his turn. I've spoken to him about you: come round with me now—he'll be at the office by four o'clock—and we'll see what we can do for you. It's absolutely useless sending anything to the editor of a daily paper without an introduction. You might write with the pen of the angel Gabriel, or turn out leaders which were a judicious

mean between Gladstone, Burke, and Herbert Spencer, and it would profit you nothing, for the simple reason that he hasn't got the time to read them. He would toss Junius and Montesquieu into the waste paper basket, and accept copy on the shocking murder in the Borough Road from one of his regular contributors instead. He can't help himself: and what you must do, Ernest, is to become one of the regular ring, and combine to keep Junius and Montesquieu permanently outside.'

'The struggle for existence gives no quarter,' Ernest said sadly with half a sigh.

'And takes none,' Berkeley answered quickly. 'So for your wife's sake you must try your best to fight your way through it on your own account, for yourself and your family.'

The editor of the "Morning Intelligence," Mr. Hugh Lancaster, was a short, thick-set, hard-headed sort of man, with a kindly twinkle in his keen grey eyes, and a harassed smile

playing continually around the corners of his firm and close mouth. He looked as though he was naturally a good-humoured benevolent person, overdriven at the journalistic mill till half the life was worn out of him, leaving the benevolence as a wearied remnant, without energy enough to express itself in any other fashion than by the perpetual harassed smile. He saw Arthur Berkeley and Ernest Le Breton at once in his own sanctum, and took the manuscript from their hands with a languid air of perfect resignation. 'This is the friend you spoke of, is it, Berkeley?' he said in a wearied way. 'Well, well, we'll see what we can do for him.' At the same time he rang a tiny hand-bell. A boy, rather the worse for printer's ink, appeared at the summons. Mr. Lancaster handed him Ernest's careful manuscript unopened, with the laconic order, 'Press. Proof immediately.' The boy took it without a word. 'I'm very busy now,' Mr. Lancaster

went on in the same wearied dispirited manner :  
' come again in thirty-five minutes. Jones, show these gentlemen into a room somewhere.' And the editor fell back forthwith into his easy-chair and his original attitude of listless indifference. Berkeley and Ernest followed the boy into a bare back room, furnished only with a deal table and two chairs, and there anxiously awaited the result of the editor's critical examination.

' Don't be afraid of Lancaster, Ernest,' Arthur said kindly. ' His manner's awfully cold, I know, but he means well, and I really believe he'd go out of his way, rather than not, to do a kindness for anybody he thought actually in want of occupation. With most men, that's an excellent reason for not employing you : with Lancaster I do truly think it's a genuine recommendation.'

At the end of thirty-five minutes the grimy-faced office-boy returned with a friendly nod.

‘Editor’ll see you,’ he said, with the Spartan brevity of the journalistic world—nobody connected with newspapers ever writes or speaks a single word unnecessarily, if he isn’t going to be paid for it at so much per thousand—and Ernest followed him, trembling from head to foot, into Mr. Lancaster’s private study.

The great editor took up the steaming hot proof that had just been brought him, and glanced down it carelessly with a rapid scrutiny. Then he turned to Ernest, and said in a dreamy fashion, ‘This will do. We’ll print this tomorrow. You may send us a middle very occasionally. Come here at four o’clock, when a subject suggests itself to you, and speak to me about it. My time’s very fully occupied. Good morning, Mr. Le Breton. Berkeley, stop a minute, I want to talk with you.’

It was all done in a moment, and almost before Ernest knew what had happened he

was out in the street again, with tears filling his eyes, and joy his heart, for here at last was bread, bread, bread, for Edie and the baby! He ran without stopping all the way back to Holloway, rushed headlong into the house and fell into Edie's arms, calling out wildly, 'He's taken it! He's taken it!' Edie kissed him half-a-dozen times over, and answered bravely, 'I knew he would, Ernest. It was such a splendid article.' And yet thousands of readers of the 'Morning Intelligence' next day skimmed lightly over the leader on organ-boys in their ordinary casual fashion, without even thinking what hopes and fears and doubts and terrors had gone to the making of that very commonplace bit of newspaper rhetoric. For if the truth must be told, Edie's first admiring criticism was perfectly correct, and Ernest Le Breton's leader was just for all the world exactly the same as anybody else's.

Meanwhile, Arthur Berkeley had stayed

behind as requested in Mr. Lancaster's study, and waited to hear what Mr. Lancaster had to say to him. The editor looked up at him wearily from his chair, passed his broad hand slowly across his bewildered forehead, and then said the one word, 'Poor?'

'Nothing on earth to do,' Berkeley answered.

'He might make a journalist, perhaps,' the editor said, sleepily. 'This social's up to the average. At any rate, I'll do my very best for him. But he can't live upon socials. We have too many social men already. What can he do? That's the question. It won't do to say he can write pretty nearly as well about anything that turns up as any other man in England can do. I can get a hundred young fellows in the Temple to do that, any day. The real question's this: is there anything he can write about a great deal better than all the other men in all England put together?'



‘Yes, there is,’ Berkeley answered with commendable promptitude, undismayed by Mr. Lancaster’s excessive requirements. ‘He knows more about communists, socialists, and political exiles generally, than anybody else in the whole of London.’

‘Good,’ the editor answered, brightening up, and speaking for a moment a little less languidly. ‘That’s good. There’s this man Schurz, now, the German agitator. He’s going to be tried soon for a seditious libel it seems, and he’ll be sent to prison, naturally. Now, does your friend know anything at all of this fellow?’

‘He knows him personally and intimately,’ Berkeley replied, delighted to find that the card which had proved so bad a one at Pilbury Regis was turning up trumps in the more Bohemian neighbourhood of the Temple and Fleet Street. ‘He can give you any information you want about Schurz or any of the rest

of those people He has associated with them all familiarly for the last six or seven years.'

'Then he takes an interest in politics,' said Mr. Lancaster, almost waking up now. 'That's good again. It's so very difficult to find young men nowadays, able to write, who take a genuine interest in politics. They all go off after literature and science and æsthetics, and other dry uninteresting subjects. Now, what does your average intelligent daily paper reader care, I should like to know, about literature and science and æsthetics and so forth? Well, he'll do, I've very little doubt: at any rate, I'll give him a trial. Perhaps he might be able to undertake this Great Widgerly disenfranchising case. Stop! he's poor, isn't he? I daresay he'd just as soon not wait for his money for this social. In the ordinary course, he wouldn't get paid till the end of the quarter; but I'll give you a cheque to take back to him now; perhaps he wants

it. Poor fellow, poor fellow! he really looks very delicate. Depend upon it, Berkeley, I'll do anything on earth for him, if only he'll write tolerably.'

'You're awfully good,' Arthur said, taking the proffered cheque gratefully. 'I'm sure the money will be of great use to him: and it's very kind indeed of you to have thought of it.'

'Not at all, not at all,' the editor answered, collapsing dreamily. 'Good morning, good morning.'

At Mrs. Halliss's lodgings in Holloway, Edie was just saying to Ernest over their simple tea, 'I wonder what they'll give you for it, Ernest.' And Ernest had just answered, big with hope, 'Well, I should think it would be quite ten shillings, but I shouldn't be surprised, Edie, if it was as much as a pound;' when the door opened, and in walked Arthur Berkeley, with a cheque in his hand, which he

laid by Edie's teacup. Edie took it up and gave a little cry of delight and astonishment. Ernest caught it from her hand in his eagerness, and gazed upon it with dazed and swimming vision. Did he read the words aright, and could it be really, 'Pay E. Le Breton, Esq., or order, three guineas'? Three guineas! Three guineas! Three real actual positive gold and silver guineas! It was almost too much for either of them to believe, and all for a single morning's light labour! What a perfect Eldorado of wealth and happiness seemed now to be opening out unexpectedly before them!

So much Arthur Berkeley, his own eyes glistening too with a sympathetic moisture, saw and heard before he went away in a happier mood and left them to their own domestic congratulations. But he did not see or know the reaction that came in the dead of night, after all that day's unwonted excitement, to

poor, sickening, weary, over-burdened Ernest. Even Edie never knew it all, for Ernest was careful to hide it as much as possible from her knowledge. But he knew himself, though he would not even light the candle to see it, that he had got those three glorious guineas—the guineas they had so delighted in—with something more than a morning's labour. He had had to pay for them, not figuratively but literally, with some of his very life-blood.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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