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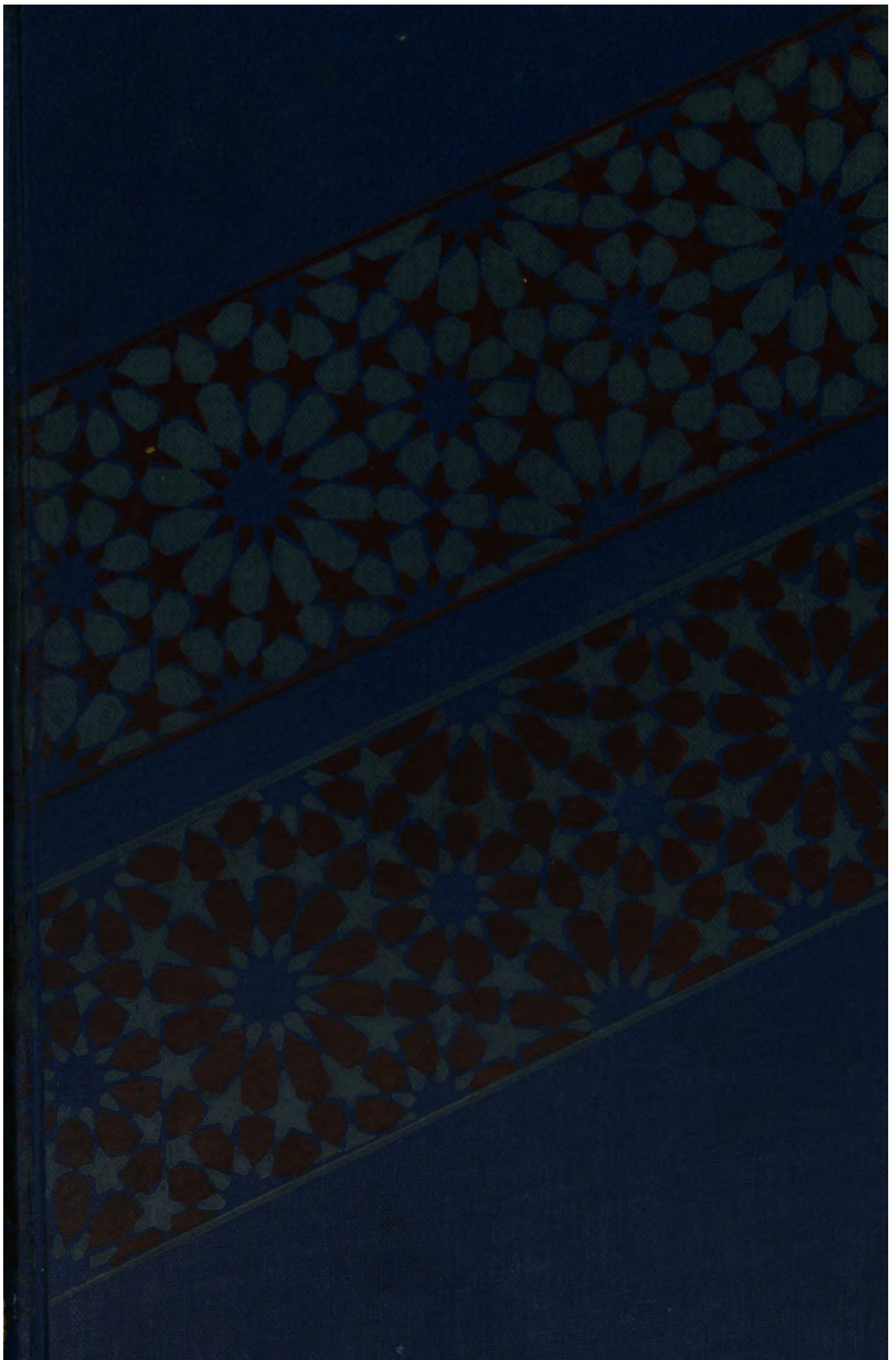
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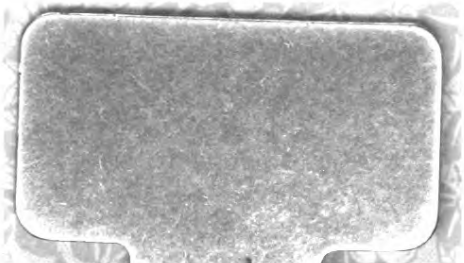
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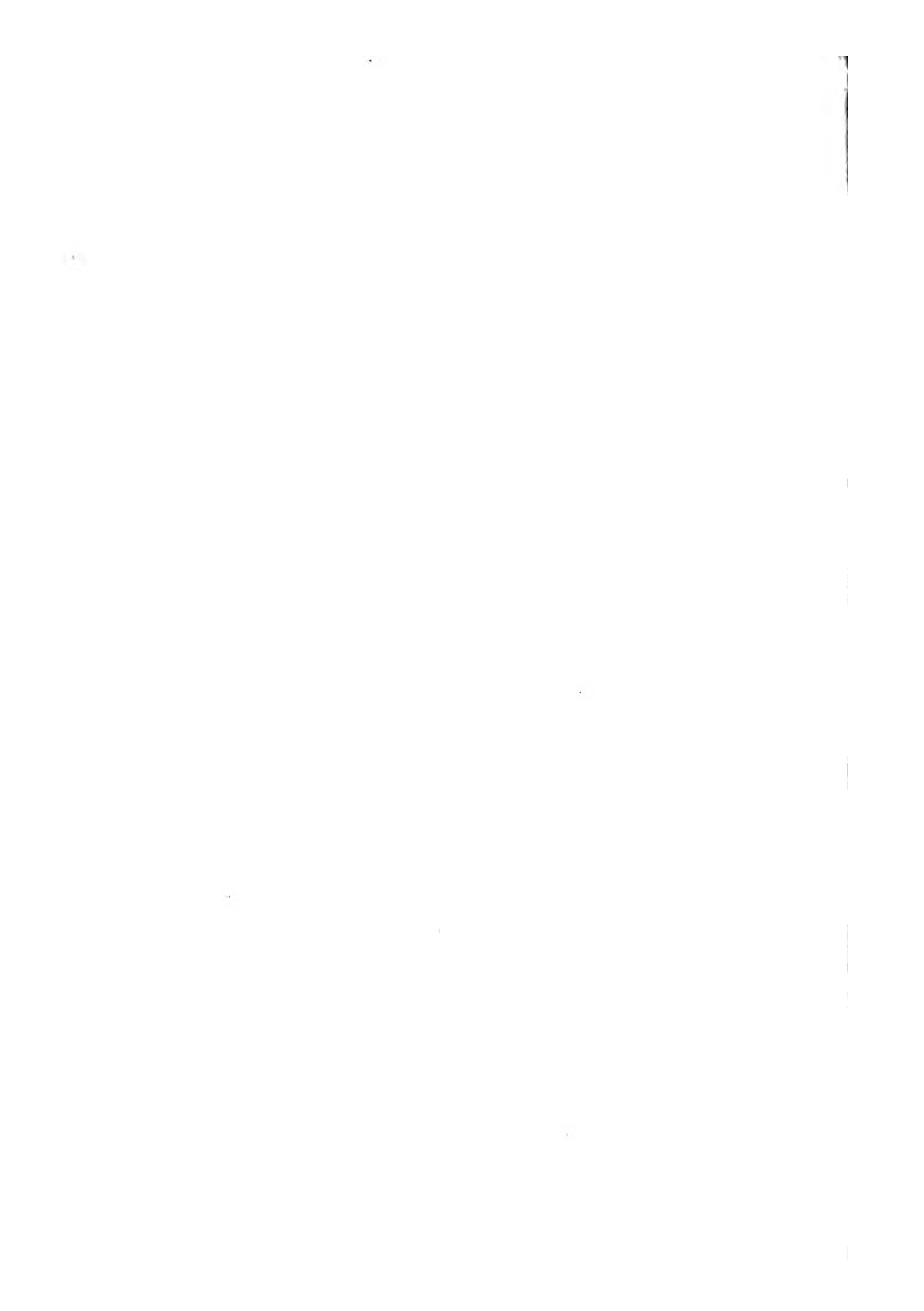


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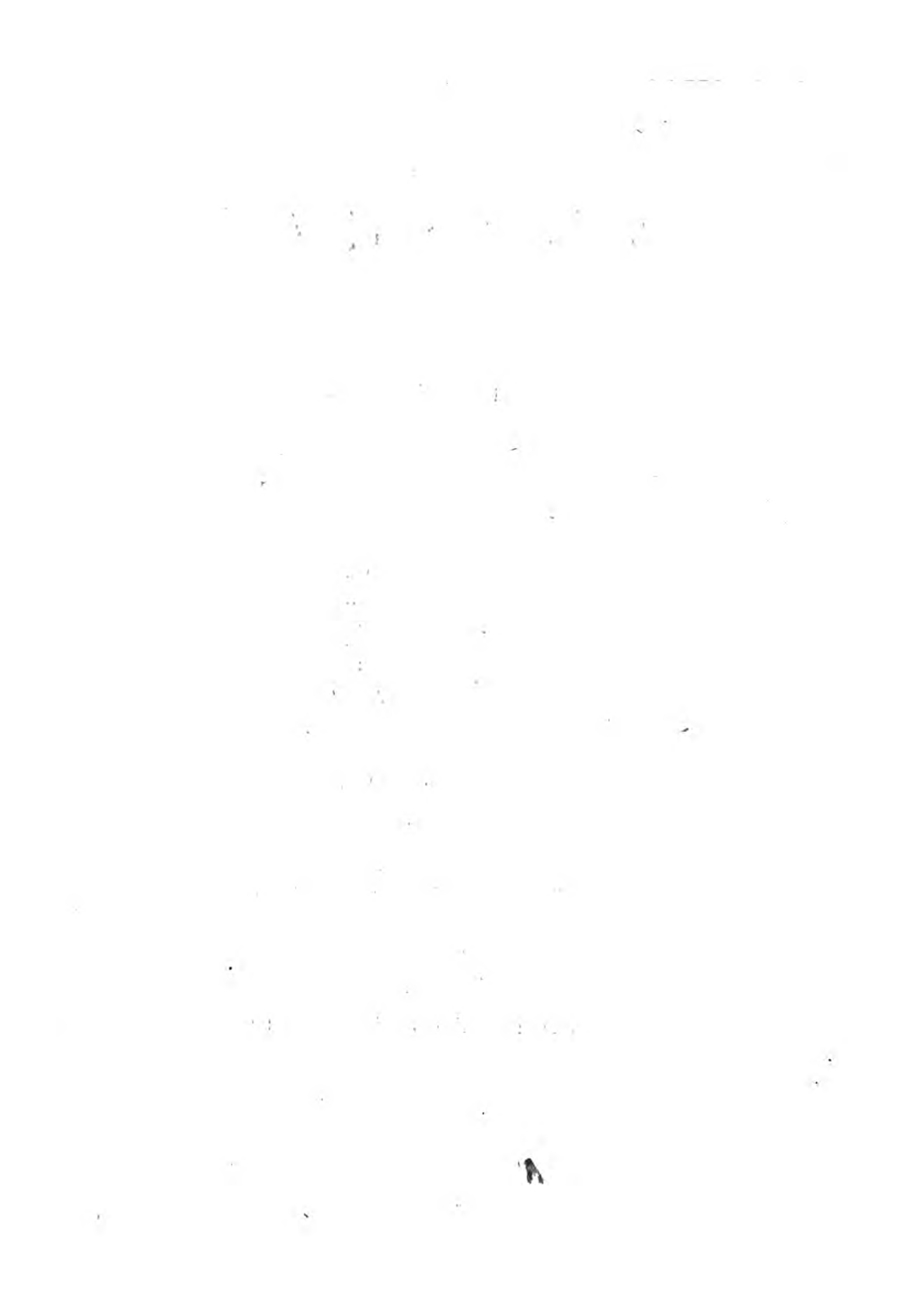
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B A B Y L O N

BY

GRANT ALLEN

(CECIL POWER)

AUTHOR OF 'PHILISTIA' 'STRANGE STORIES' ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY P. MACNAB

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THE FIRST VOLUME.

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B A B Y L O N

CHAPTER I.

RURAL AMERICA.

‘WHAR’S Hiram, Het?’ Deacon Zephaniah Winthrop asked of his wife, tartly. ‘Pears to me that boy’s allus off somewhar, whenever he’s wanted to do anything. Can’t git along without him, any way, when we’ve got to weed the spring peppermint. Whar’s he off, I say, Mehitabel?’

Mrs. Winthrop drew herself together from the peas she was languidly shelling, and answered in the dry withered tone of a middle-aged northern New Yorker, ‘Wal, I

s'pose, Zeph, he's gone down to the blackberry lot, most likely.'

'Blackberry lot,' Mr. Winthrop replied with a fine air of irony. 'Blackberry lot, indeed. What does he want blackberryin', I should like to know? I'll blackberry him, I kin tell you, whenever I ketch him. Jest you go an' holler for him, Het, an' ef he don't come ruther sooner 'n lightnin', he'll ketch it, an' no mistake, sure as preachin'. I've got an orful itchin', Mis' Winthrop, to give that thar boy a durned good cow-hidin' this very minnit.'

Mrs. Winthrop rose from the basket of peas and proceeded across the front yard with as much alacrity as she could summon up, to call for Hiram. She was a tall, weazened, sallow woman, prematurely aged, with a pair of high cheekbones, and a hard, hungry-looking, unlovable mouth; but she was averse to the extreme and unnecessary measure of cow-

hiding her firstborn. 'Hiram,' she called out, in her loudest and shrillest voice: 'Hiram! Drat the boy, whar is he? Hiram! Hi-ram!'

It was a dreary and a monotonous outlook altogether, that view from the gate of Zephaniah Winthrop's freehold farm in Geauga County. The homestead itself, an unpainted frame house, consisted of planed planks set carelessly one above the other on upright beams, stood in a weedy yard, surrounded by a raw-looking paling, and unbeautified by a single tree, creeper, shrub, bush, or scented flower. A square house, planted naked in the exact centre of a square yard, desolate and lonely, as though such an idea as that of beauty had never entered into the human heart. In front the long straight township road ran indefinitely as far as the eye could reach in either direction, beginning at the horizon on the north, and ending at the horizon on the south, but leading nowhere in particular, that

anyone ever heard of, meanwhile, unless it were to Muddy Creek Dépôt (pronounced *deepo*) on the Rome, Watertown, and Ogdensburg Railroad. At considerable intervals along its course, a new but congenitally shabby gate opened here and there into another bare square yard, and gave access to another bare square frame house of unpainted pine planks. In the blanks between these oases of unvarnished ugliness the road, instead of being bordered by green trees and smiling hedgerows, pursued its gaunt way, unrejoicing, between open fields or long and hideous snake fences. If you have ever seen a snake fence, you know what that means; if you haven't seen one, sit down in your own easy chair gratefully and comfortably, and thank an indulgent heaven with all your heart for your happy ignorance.

Beyond and behind the snake fences lay fields of wheat and meadows and pasture

land; not, as in England, green and lush with grass or clover, but all alike bare, brown, weedy, and illimitable. There were no trees to be seen anywhere (though there were plenty of stumps), for this was 'a very fully settled section,' as Mr. Winthrop used to murmur to himself complacently: 'the country thar real beautiful: you might look about you, some parts, for a mile or two right away together and never see a single tree a-standin' anywhar.' Indeed, it was difficult to imagine where on earth a boy could manage to hide himself in all that long, level, leafless district. But Mrs. Winthrop knew better: she knew Hiram was loafing away somewhere down in the blackberry lot beside the river.

'Lot' is a cheap and nasty equivalent in the great American language for field, meadow, croft, copse, paddock, and all the other beautiful and expressive old-world names which denote in the tongue of the old country

our own time-honoured English inclosures. And the blackberry lot, at the bottom of the farm, was the one joy and delight of young Hiram Winthrop's boyish existence. Though you could hardly guess it, as seen from the farm, there was a river running in the hollow down yonder—Muddy Creek, in fact, which gave its own euphonious name to the naked little Dépôt; not here muddy, indeed, as in its lower reaches, but clear and limpid from the virgin springs of the Gilboa hillsides. Beside the creek, there stretched a waste lot, too rough and stony to be worth the curse of cultivation; and on that lot the blackberry bushes grew in wild profusion, and the morning-glories opened their great pink bells blushing to the early sun, and the bobolinks chattered in the garish noontide, and the grey squirrels hid by day among the stunted trees, and the chipmunks showed their painted sides for a moment as they darted swiftly in

and out from hole to hole amid the tangled brushwood. What a charmed spot it seemed to the boy's mind, that one solitary patch of undesecrated nature, in the midst of so many blackened stumps, and so much first-rate fall wheat, and such endless, hopeless, dreary hillocks of straight rowed, dry leaved, tillering Indian corn!

‘Hiram! Hiram! Hi-ram!’ cried Mrs. Winthrop, growing every moment shriller and shriller.

Hiram heard, and leaped from the brink at once, though a kingfisher was at that very moment eyeing him with head on one side from the half-concealing foliage of the basswood tree opposite. ‘Yes, marm,’ he answered submissively, showing himself as fast as he was able in the pasture above the blackberry lot. ‘Wal! What is it?’

‘Hiram,’ his mother said, as soon as he was within convenient speaking distance,

‘you come right along in here, sonny. Where was you, say? Here’s father swearin’ he’ll thrash you for goin’ loafin’. He wants you jest to come in at once and help weed the peppermint. I guess you’ve bin down in the blackberry lot, fishin’, or suthin’.’

‘I ain’t bin fishin’,’ Hiram answered, with a certain dogged, placid resignation. ‘I’ve bin lookin’ around, and that’s so, mother. On’y lookin’ around at the chipmunks an’ bobolinks, ’cause I was dreadful tired.’

‘Tired of what?’ asked his mother, not uncompassionately.

‘Planin’,’ Hiram answered, with a nod. ‘Planks. Father give me forty planks to plane, an’ I’ve done ’em.’

‘Wal, mind he don’t thrash you, Hiram,’ the sallow-faced woman said, warningly, with as much tenderness in her voice as lay within the compass of her nature. ‘He’s orful mad

with you now, 'cause you didn't answer immejately when he hollered.'

'Then why don't he holler loud enough?' asked Hiram, in an injured tone—he was an ill-clad boy of about twelve—'I can't never hear him down lot yonder.'

'What's that you got in your pocket, sir?' Mr. Winthrop puts in, coming up unexpectedly to the pair on the long, straight, blinking high-road. 'What's that, naow, eh, sonny?'

Hiram pulls the evidence of guilt slowly out of his rough tunic. 'Injuns,' he answers, shortly, in the true western laconic fashion.

Mr. Winthrop examines the object carelessly. It is a bit of blackish stone, rudely chipped into shape, and ground at one end to an artificial edge with some nicety of execution.

'Injuns!' he echoes contemptuously, dashing it on the path: 'Injuns! Oh yes, this is

Injuns! An' what's Injuns? Heathens, outlandish heathens; and a drunken, p'isonous crowd at that, too. The noble red man is a fraud; Injuns must go. It allus licks my poor finite understandin' altogether why the Lord should ever have run this great continent so long with nothin' better 'n Injuns. It's one o' them mysteries o' Providence that 'taint given us poor wums to comprehend daown here, nowadays. Wal, they're all cleared out of this section naow, anyway, and why a lad that's brought up a Chrischun and Hopkinsite should want to go grubbin' up their knives and things in this cent'ry is a caution to me, that's what it is, a reg'lar caution.'

'This ain't a knife,' Hiram answered, still doggedly. 'This is a tommyhawk. Injun knives ain't made like this 'ere. I've had knives, and they're quite a different kinder pattern.'

Mr. Winthrop shook his head solemnly.

'Seems to me,' he said with a loud snort, 'taint right of any believin' boy goin' lookin' up these heathenish things, mother. He's allus bringin' 'em home—arrowheads, he calls 'em, and tommyhawks, and Lord knows what rubbish—when he ought to be weedin' in the peppermint lot, an' earnin' his livin'. Why wasn't you here, eh, sonny? Why wasn't you? Why wasn't you? Why wasn't you?'

As Mr. Winthrop accompanied each of these questions by a cuff, crescendo, on either ear alternately, it is not probable that he himself intended Hiram to reply to them with any particular definiteness. But Hiram, drawing his sleeve across his eyes, and wiping away the tears hastily, proceeded to answer with due deliberation: 'Cause I was tired planin' planks. So I went down to the blackberry lot, to rest a bit. But you won't let a feller rest. You want him to be workin' like a nigger all day. 'Taint reasonable.'

‘Mother,’ Mr. Winthrop said again, more solemnly than before, ‘it’s my opinion that the old Adam is on-common powerful in this here lad, on-common powerful! Ef he had lived in Bible times, I should hev been afeard of a visible judgment on his head, like the babes that mocked at Elijah. (Or was it Elisha?’ asked Mr. Winthrop to himself, dubitatively. ‘I don’t ’zackly recollect the pertickler prophet.) The eye that mocketh at its father, you know, sonny; it’s a dangerous thing, I kin tell you, to mock at your father. Go an’ weed that thar peppermint, sir; go an’ weed that thar peppermint.’ And as he spoke the deacon gave Hiram a parting dig in the side with the handle of the Dutch hoe he was lightly carrying.

Hiram dodged the hoe quickly, and set off at a run to the peppermint lot. When he got there he waited a moment, and then felt in his pocket cautiously for some other unseen

object. Oh joy, it wasn't broken! He took it out and looked at it tenderly. It was a bobolink's egg. He held it up to the light, and saw the sunshine gleaming through it. 'Aint it cunning?' he said to himself, with a little hug and chuckle of triumph. 'Ain't it a cunning little egg, either? I thought he'd most broke it, I did, but he hadn't, seems. It's the first I ever found, that sort. Oh my, ain't it cunning?' And he put the egg back lovingly in his pocket, with great cautiousness.

For a while the boy went on pulling up the weeds that grew between the wide rows of peppermint, and then at last he came to a big milk-weed in full flower. The flowers were very pretty, and so curious, too. He looked at them and admired them. But he must pull it up: no room in the field for milk-weed (it isn't a marketable crop, alas!), so he caught the pretty thing in his hands, and uprooted it without a murmur. Thus he went on, row

after row, in the hot July sun, till nearly half the peppermint was well weeded.

Then he sat down to rest a little on the pile of boulders in the far corner. There was no tree to sit under, and no shade ; but the boy could at least sit in the eye of the sun on the pile of ice-worn boulders. As he sat, he saw a wonderful and beautiful sight. In the sky above, a great bald-headed eagle came wheeling slowly toward the corner of the fall wheat lot. From the opposite quarter of the sky his partner circled on buoyant wings to meet him ; and with wide curves to right and left, crossing and recrossing each other at the central point like well-bred setters, those two magnificent birds swiftly beat the sunlit fields for miles around them. At last, one of the pair detected game ; for an instant he checked his flight, to steady his swoop, and then, with wings half-folded, and a rushing noise through the air, he fell plump on the ground at a vague spot in

the midst of the meadow. One moment more, and he rose again, with a quivering rabbit suspended from his yellow claws. Presently he made towards the corn lot. It was fenced round, like all the others, with a snake fence, and, to Hiram's intense joy, the eagle finally settled, just opposite him, on one of the two upright rails that stand as a crook or stake for the top rail, called the rider. Its big white head shone in the sunlight, its throat rang out a sharp, short bark, and it craned its neck this way and that, looking defiantly across the field to Hiram.

'I reckon,' the boy said to himself quietly, 'I could draw that thar eagle.'

He put his hand into his trousers pocket, and pulled out from it a well-worn stump of blacklead pencil. Then from another pocket he took a small blank book, an old account book, in fact, with one side of the pages all unwritten, though the other was closely

covered with rows of figures. It was a very precious possession to Hiram Winthrop, that dog-eared little volume, for it was nearly filled with his own tentative pencil sketches of beast and birds, and all the other beautiful things that lived together in the blackberry bottom. He had never seen anything beautiful anywhere else, and that one spot and that one book were all the world to him that he loved or cared for.

He laid the book upon his knee, and proceeded carefully to sketch the grand white-headed eagle in his boyish fashion. 'He's the American eagle, I guess,' the lad said to himself, as he looked from bird to paper with rapid glances; 'on'y he ain't so stiff-built as the one upon the dollars, neither. His head goes so. Aint it elegant? Oh my, not a bit, ruther. And his tail! That's how. The feathers runs the same as if it was shingles on the roof of a residence. I've got his tail just

as true as Genesis, you bet. I can go the head and the tail, straight an' square, but what licks me is the wings. Seems as if you couldn't get his wing to show right, nohow, agin the body. Think it must be that way, pretty near; but I don't know. I wish thar was some feller here in Geauga could show me how the folks that draw the illustrations in the books ud draw that thar wing. It goes one too high for me, altogether.'

Even as Hiram thought that last thought he was dimly aware in a moment of an ominous shadow supervening behind him, and of a heavy hand lifted angrily to cuff him about the head for his pesky idleness. He knew it was his father, and with rapid instinct he managed to avoid the unseen blow. But, alas, alas, as he did so, he dropped the precious account book from his lap, and let it fall upon the heap of boulders. Deacon Winthrop took the mysterious volume up, and peered at

it long and cautiously. ‘Wal,’ he said slowly, turning over the pages one by one, as if they were clear evidence of original sin unregenerated—‘wal, this do beat all, really. I’ve allus wondered what on airth you could be up to, sonny, when you was sent to weed, and didn’t get a furrer or two done, mornings, while I was hoein’ a dozen rows of corn or tomaters. Wal, this do beat all. Makin’ figgers of chipmunks, and woodchucks, and musk-rats, and—my goodness, ef that thar aint a rattlesnake! Hiram Winthrop, it’s my opinion that you was born to reprobation—that’s jest about the size of it!’

If this opinion had not been vigorously backed by a box on the ears and a violent shaking, it isn’t likely that Hiram in his own mind would have felt deeply concerned at it. Reprobation is such a very long way off (especially when you’re twelve years old), whereas a box on the ears is usually experi-

enced in the present tense with remarkable rapidity. But Hiram was so well used to cuffing (for the deacon was a God-fearing man, who held it prime part of his parental duty to correct his child with due severity) that he didn't cry much or make a fuss about it. To say the truth, too, he was watching so eagerly to see what his father would do with the beloved sketch-book that he had no time to indulge in unnecessary sentiment. For if only that sketch-book were taken from him—that poor, soiled, second-hand, half-covered sketch-book—Hiram felt in his dim inarticulate fashion that he would have solved the pessimistic problem forthwith in the negative, and that life for him would no longer be worth living.

The deacon turned the leaves over slowly for some minutes more, with many angry ejaculations, and then deliberately took them between his finger and thumb, and tore the

book in two across the middle. Next, he doubled the pages over again, and tore them a second time across, and so on until the whole lot was reduced to a mass of little fluttering crumpled fragments. These he tossed contemptuously among the boulders, and with a parting cuff to Hiram proceeded on his way, to ruminate over the singular mystery of reprobation, even in the children of regenerate parents. 'You jest mind you go in right thar an' weed the rest of that peppermint, sonny,' he said as he strode away. 'An' be pretty quick about it, too, or else you'll be more scar't when you come home to-night than ever you was scar't in all your life afore, you take my word for it.'

As soon as the deacon was gone, poor Hiram sat down again on the heap of boulders and cried as though his little heart would fairly break. In spite of his father's vigorous admonition, he *couldn't* turn to at once and

weed the peppermint. 'Taint the lickin' I mind,' he said to himself ruefully, as he gathered up the scattered fragments in his hand, 'tain't the lickin', it's the picturs. Them thar picturs was pretty near the on'y thing I liked best of anything livin'. Wal, it wouldn't hev mattered much ef he'd on'y tore up the ones I'd drawed : but when he tore up all my paper, so as I can't draw any more, that does make a feller feel reel bad. I never was so mad with him in my life afore. I reckon fathers is the onaccountablest and most mirac'lous creeturs in all creation. He might hev tore the picturs ef he liked, but what for did he want to go tearin' up all my paper?'

As he sat there on the boulders, still, with that gross injustice rankling impotently in his boyish soul, he felt another shadow approaching once more, and looked up expecting to see his father returning. But it wasn't the gaunt long shadow of the deacon that came

across the pile: it was a plump, round, thickset English shadow, and it was closely followed by the body of its owner, his father's hired help, late come from Dorsetshire. Sam Churchill leant down in his bluff, kindly way, when he saw the little chap crying, and asked him quickly if he was ill.

‘Sick?’ Hiram answered, through his sobs, unconsciously translating the word into his own dialect. ‘Sick? No, I aint sick, Mr. Sam; but I’m orful mad with father. He kem right here just now and tore up my drawin’ book—an’ that drawin’ book was most everything to me, it was—and he’s tore it up, a ravin’ an’ tearin’ like all possest, this very minnit.’

Sam looked at the fragments sympathetically. ‘I tell’ee, Hiram,’ he said gently, ‘I’ve got a brother o’ my own awver yonder in Darsetshire—about your age, too—as is turble vond of drawin’. I was turble vond of it

myself when I was a little chap at 'Ootton. Thik ther eagle is drawed first-rate, 'e be, an' so's the squir'l. I've drawed squir'ls myself, many's the time, in the copse at 'Ootton, I mind : an' I've gone mitching, too, in summer, birds'-nestin' and that, all over the vields for miles around us. Your faather's a main good man, Hiram ; 'e's a religious man, an' a 'onest man, and I do love to 'ear 'un argify most turble vine about religion, an' 'ell, an' reprobation, an' 'Enery Clay, and such like : but 'e's a 'ard man, ther's no denyin' of it. 'E's took 'is religion 'ot an' 'ot, 'e 'as ; an' I do think 'e do use 'ee bad sometimes, vor a little chap, an' no mistake. Now, don't 'ee go an' cry no longer, ther's a good little vulla ; don't 'ee cry, Hiram, vor I never could abare to zee a little chap or a woman a-cryin'. Zee 'ere, Hiram,' and the big hand dived deep into the recesses of a pair of very muddy corduroy trousers, 'ere's a sixpence for 'ee—what do 'ee call it awver

'ere, ten cents, bain't it? 'Ere, take it, take it young un; don't 'ee be aveard. Now, what'll 'ee buy wi' it, eh? Lollipops, most like, I sim.'

'Lollipops!' the boy answered quickly, taking the dime with a grateful gesture. 'No, Mr. Sam, not them: nor toffy, nor peanuts neither. I shall go right away to Wes' Johnson's store, next time father's in the city, an' buy a new book, so as I can make a crowd more drawin's. That's what I like better 'n anything. It's jest splendid.'

Sam looked at the little Yankee boy again with a certain faint moisture in his eyes; but he didn't reflect to himself that human nature is much the same all the world over, in Dorsetshire or in Geauga County. In fact, it would never have occurred to Sam's simple heart to doubt the truth of that fairly obvious principle. He only put his hand on Hiram's ragged head, and said softly: 'Well, Hiram,

turn to now, an' I'll help 'ee weed the peppermint.'

They weeded a row or two in silence, and then Sam asked suddenly: 'What vor do un grow thik peppermint, Hiram?'

'To make candy, Mr. Sam,' Hiram answered.

'Good job too,' Sam went on musingly. 'Seems to me they do want it turble bad in these 'ere parts. Sight too much corn, an' not near enough candy down to 'Murrica; why can't deacon let the little vulla draw a squir'l if 'e's got a mind to? That's what I wants to know. What do those varmers all around 'ere do? (Varmers they do call 'em; no better nor labourers, I take it.) Why, they buy a bit 'o land, an' work, an' slave thesselves an' their missuses, all their lives long, what vor? To raise pork and corn on. What vor, again? To buy more land; to raise more corn an' bacon; to buy more land again; to

raise more corn an' bacon ; and so on, world without end, amen, for ever an' ever. An' in the tottal, what do ur all come to? Pork and flour, for ever an' ever. Why, even awver yonder in old England, we'd got something better nor that, and better worth livin' vor.' And Sam's mind wandered back gently to Wootton Mandeville, and the old tower which he didn't know to be of Norman architecture, but which he loved just as well as if he did for all that : and then he borrowed Hiram's pencil, and pulled a piece of folded paper from his pocket (it had inclosed an ounce of best Virginia), and drew upon it for Hiram's wondering eyes a rough sketch of an English village church, with big round arches and dog-tooth ornament, embowered in shady elm-trees, and backed up by a rolling chalk down in the further distance. Hiram looked at the sketch admiringly and eagerly.

‘I wish I could draw such a thing as that,

he said with delight. 'But I can't, Mr. Sam; I can only draw birds and musk-rats and things—not churches. That's a reel pretty church, too: reckon I never see such a one as that thar anywhere. Might that be whar you was raised, now?'

Sam nodded assent.

'Wal, that does beat everything. I should like to go an' see something like that, sometime. Ef I git a book, will you learn me to draw a church same as you do, Mr. Sam?'

'Bless yer 'eart, yes,' Sam answered quickly, and turned with swimming eyes to weed the rest of the peppermint. From that day forth, Sam Churchill and Hiram Winthrop were sworn friends through all their troubles.

CHAPTER II.

RURAL ENGLAND.

It was a beautiful July morning, and Colin Churchill and Minna Wroe were playing together in the fritillary fields at Wootton Mandeville. At twelve years old, the intercourse of lad and maiden is still ingenuous; and Colin was just twelve, though little Minna might still have been some two years his junior. A tall, slim, fair-haired boy was Colin Churchill, with deep-blue eyes more poetical in their depth and intensity than one might have expected from a little Dorsetshire peasant child. Minna, on the other hand, was shorter and darker; a

gipsy-looking girl, black-haired and tawny-skinned; and with two little beady-black eyes that glistened and ran over every moment with contagious merriment. Two prettier children you wouldn't have found anywhere that day in the whole county of Dorset than Minna Wroe and Colin Churchill.

They had gathered flowers till they were tired of them in the broad spongy meadow; they had played hide-and-seek among the eighteenth-century tombstones in the big old churchyard; they had quarrelled and made it up again half a dozen times over in pure pettishness: and now, by way of a distraction, Minna said at last coaxingly: 'Do 'ee, Colin, do 'ee come down to the lake yonder and make I a bit of a vigger-'ead.'

'Don't 'ee worrit me, Minna,' Colin answered, like a young lady who refuses to sing, half-heartedly (meaning all the time that one should ask her again): 'Don't

'ee see I be tired? I don't want vor to go makin' no vigger-'eads vor 'ee, I tell 'ee.'

But Minna would have one: on that she insisted: 'What a vinnid lad 'ee be,' she cried petulantly, 'not to want to make I a vigger-'ead. Now do'ee, Colin, ther's a a good boy; do'ee, an' I'll gee 'ee 'arf my peppermint cushions, come Saturday.'

'I don't want none o' your cushions, Minna,' Colin answered, with a boy's gallantry; 'but come along down to the lake if 'ee will: I'll make 'ee dree or vower vigger-'eads, never vear, an' them vine uns too, if so be as you want 'em.'

They went together down to the brook at the corner of the meadow (called a lake in the Dorsetshire dialect); and there, at a spot where the plastic clay came to the surface in a little cliff at a bend of the stream, Colin carved out a fine large lump of shapeless raw material from the bank, which

he forthwith proceeded to knead up with his hands and a sprinkling of water from the rill into a beautiful sticky consistency. Minna watched the familiar operation with deepest interest, and added from time to time a word or two of connoisseur criticism: 'Now thee'st got it too wet, Colin;' or, 'Take care thee don't putt in too much of thik there blue earth yonder;' or, 'That's about right vor the vigger-'ead now, I'm thinkin'; thee'd better begin makin' it now avore the clay gets too dried up.'

As soon as Colin had worked the clay up to what he regarded as the proper requirements of his art, he began modelling it dexterously with his fingers into the outer form and fashion of a ship's figure-head: 'What'll 'ee 'ave virst, Minna?' he asked as he roughly moulded the mass into a bold outward curve, that would have answered

equally well for any figure-head in the whole British merchant navy.

‘I’ll ’ave the Mariar-Ann,’ Minna answered with a nod of her small black head in the direction of the mouth in the valley, where the six petty fishing vessels of Wootton Mandeville stood drawn up together in a long straight row on the ridge of shingle. The Mariar-Ann was the collier that came monthly from Cardiff, and its figure-head represented a gilded lady, gazing over the waves with a vacant smile, and draped in a flowing crimson costume of no very particular historical period.

Colin worked away at the clay vigorously for a few minutes with fingers and knife by turns, and at the end of that time he had produced a very creditable figure-head indeed, accurately representing in its main features the gilded lady of the Mariar-Ann.

‘Oh, how lovely!’ Minna cried, de-

lighted. 'Thik's the best thee'st made, Colin. Let's bake un and keep un always.'

'Take un 'ome an' bake un yourself, Minna,' the boy answered. 'We ain't got no vire 'ere. What 'll I make 'ee now? 'Nother vigger-'ead?'

'No!' Minna cried, with a happy inspiration. 'Make myself, Colin.'

The boy eyed her carefully from head to foot. 'I don't s'pose I can do 'ee, Minna,' he answered after a pause. 'Howsonedever, I'll try;' and he took a fresh lump of the kneaded clay, and began working it up loosely into a rough outline of the girl's figure. It was his first attempt at modelling from life, and he went at it with careful deliberation. Minna posed before him in her natural attitude, and Colin called her back every minute or two when she got impatient, and kept his little sitter steadily posed till the portrait statuette was fairly

finished. Critical justice compels the admission that Colin Churchill's first figure from life was not an entirely successful work of sculpture. Its expression was distinctly feeble; its pose was weak and uncertain; its drapery was marked by a frank disregard of folds and a bold conventionalism; and, last of all, it ended abruptly at the short dress, owing to certain mechanical difficulties in the way of supporting the heavy body on a pair of slender moist clay legs. Still, it distinctly suggested the notion of a human being; it remotely resembled a little girl; and it even faintly adumbrated, in figure at least, if not in feature, Minna Wroe herself.

But if the work of art failed a little when judged by the stern tribunal of adult criticism, it certainly more than satisfied both the young artist and the subject of his plastic skill. They gazed at the completed figure with the deepest admiration, and Minna even ventured

to express a decided opinion that anybody in the world would know it was meant for her. Which high standard of artistic portraiture has been known to satisfy much older and more exalted critics, including many ladies and gentlemen of distinction who have wasted the time of good sculptors by 'having their busts taken.'

Meanwhile, down in the village by the shore, Geargey Wroe, Minna's father, was standing by a little garden gate, where Sam Churchill the elder was carefully tending his cabbages and melons. 'Zeen our Minna, Sam!' he asked over the paling. 'Wher's 'er to, dost know? Off zumwhere with yer Colin, I'll be bound, Sammy. They're always off zumwhere together, them two is, I vancy. 'E's up to 'is drawin' or zummat down to lake there. Such a lad vor drawin' an' that I never did zee. 'Ow's bisness, Sammy?'

'Purty good, Geargey, purty good. Volks

be a-comin' in now an' takin' lodgin's, wantin' garden stuff and such like. First-rate family from London come yesterday down to Walker's. Turble rich volk I should say by the look o' un. Ordered a power o' fruit and zum vegetables. 'Ow's vishin', Geargey?'

'Bad,' Geargey answered, shaking his head ominously: 'as bad as ur could be. Town's turble empty still: nobody come 'ceptin' a lot o' good-vor-nothin' meetingers. 'Ootton ain't wot it 'ad used to be, Sammy, zince these 'ere rail-rawds. Wot we wants is the rail-rawd to come 'ere to town, so volks can get 'ere aisy, like they can to Sayton. Then we'd get zum real gintlevolk who got money in their pockets to spend, an'll spend it vree and aisy to the tradesmen, and the boatmen, and the vishermen; that's wot we wants, don't us, Sammy?'

'Us do, us do,' Sam Churchill assented, nodding.

‘Ah, I do mind the time, Sammy,’ Geargey said regretfully, wiping his eyes with the corner of his jersey, ‘w’en every wipswile I’d used to get a gintleman to go out way, who’d gi’ us share an’ share alike o’ his grub, and a drap out o’ his whisky bottle: and w’en we pulls ashore, he sez, sez’e: “I don’t want the vish, my man,” sez’e; “I only wants the sport, raly.” But nowadays, Lard bless ’ee, Sam, we gets a pack o’ meetingers down from London, and they brings along a hunk o’ bread and some fat pork, or a piece o’ blue vinny cheese, as ’ard as Portland stone. Now I can’t abare fat pork without a streak o’ lean in it, ’specially when I smells the bait; and I can’t tackle the blue vinny, ’cos I never ’as my teeth with me: thof my mate, Bill-o’-my-Soul, ’e can putt ’isself outside most things in the way o’ grub at a vurry short notice, as you do well know, Sam, and I never seed as bate made no difference to ’e nohow. But those

'ere meetings, as I was a sayin' (vor I've got avore my story, Sammy), they goes out an' haves vine sport, we'll say; and then, w'en we comes 'ome they out and lugs out dree or vower shillin's or so, vor me an' my mate, an' walks off with 'arf-a-suvren's worth o' the biggest vish, quite aisy-like, an' layves all the liddle fry an' the blin in the boat; the chattering jackanapes.'

'Ees, 'ees, lad, times is changed,' Sam murmured meditatively, half to himself; 'times is changed turble bad since old Squire's day. Wot a place 'Ootton 'ad used to be then, 'adn't ur, Geargey? Coach from Darchester an' 'bus from Tilbury station, bringin' in gurt folks from London vor the sayson every day; dinner party up to vicarage with green paysen an' peaches, an' nectarines,——' 'An' a 'ole turbat,' Geargey put in parenthetically. 'Ay, lad, an' a 'ole turbot every Saturday. Them was times, Geargey; them was times. I don't

s'pose they ther times ull never come again. Ther ain't the gentry now as ther'd used to be in old Squire's day. Pack o' trumpery London volk, with one servant, comin' down 'ere vor the sayson—short sayson—six week, or murt be seven—an' then walkin' off agin, without so much as spending ten poun' or so in the 'ole parish. I mind the times, Geargey, when volks used to say 'Ootton were the safety valve o' the Bath sayson. Soon as sayson were over up to Bath, gentlefolk and ladies a-comin' down 'ere to enj'y thesselves, an' spendin' their money vree and aisy, same as if it were water. Us don't see un comin' now, Geargey: times is changed turble: us don't see un now.'

'It's the dree terms as 'as ruined 'Ootton,' Geargey said, philosophically—the research of the cause being the true note of philosophy.

'It's they dree terms as 'as done it, vor sartin.'

'Why, 'ow's that, Gearge?'

‘Well, don’t ’ee see, Sam, it’s like o’ thik. W’en they used to ’ave ’arf-years at the schools, bless ’ee, volks with families ’ad used to bring down the children vrom school so soon as the ’arf-year were over. Then the gurt people ud take the young gentlemen out vishin’, might be in June, or July may-be, and gee a bit o’ work to honest visher-people in the off-sayson. Then in August, London people ud come an’ take lodgin’s and gee us a bit more work nice and tidy. So the sayson ’ad used to last off an’ on vrom June to October. Well, bime-by, they meddlesome school people, they goes an’ makes up these ’ere new-vangled things o’ dree terms, as they calls ’em, cuttin’ up the year unnat’ral-like into dree pieces, as ’adn’t used to be w’en we was children. Wot’s the consequence? Everybody comes a-rushin’ and a-crushin’ permixuous, in August, the ’ole boilin’ o’ ’em together, wantin’ rooms an’ boats and visher-

men, so as the parish baint up to it. Us 'as to work 'ard vor six or seven week, and not give satisfaction nayther; and then rest o' the year us 'as to git along the best us can on the shart sayson. I can't abare they new-vangled ways, upsettin' all the constitooted order of things altogither, an' settin' poor vishermen at sixes and sevens for arf their lifetime.'

'It's the march of intellect, Geargey,' Sam Churchill answered, deprecatingly (Sam understood himself to be a Liberal in politics, and used this convenient phrase as a general solvent for an immense number of social difficulties). 'It's the march of intellect, no doubt, Geargey: there's a sight o' progress about; board-schools an' sich like: an' if it cuts agin us, don't 'ee see, w'y' us 'as got to make the best of it, however.'

'It murt be, an' agin it murtn't; and agin it murt,' Geargey murmured dubiously.

‘But any way, wher’s Minna to, Sammy?— that’s wot I comed vor to ax ’ee.’

‘Down to vield by lake, yander, most like,’ Sam answered with a nod of his head in the direction indicated.

‘I’ll go an’ vetch her,’ said Geargey: ‘dinner’s most ready.’

‘An I’ll come an’ zee wot Colin’s up to,’ added Sam, laying down his hoe, and pulling together his unbuttoned waistcoat.

They walked down to the brook in the meadow, and saw the two children sitting in the corner so intent upon their artistic performances that they hardly noticed the approach of their respective fathers. Old Sam Churchill went close up and looked keenly at the clay figure of Minna that Colin was still moulding with the last finishing touches as the two elders approached them. ‘Thik ther vigger baint a bad un, Colin,’ he said, taking it carefully in his rough hand.

'Ee 'aven't done it none so ill, lad ; but it don't look so livin' like as it 'ad ought to. Wot do'ee think it is, Geargey, eh ? tell us ?'

'Why, I'm blowed if that baint our Minna,' Geargey answered, with a little gasp of open-mouthed astonishment. 'It's her vurry pictur, Colin : a blind man could see that, of course, so soon as 'e set eyes on it. 'Ow do 'ee do it, Colin, eh ? 'Ow do 'ee do it ?'

'Oh, that baint nothin',' Colin said, colouring up. 'Only a little bit o' clay, just made up vor to look like Minna.'

'Look 'ee 'ere,' Colin,' his father went on, glancing quickly from the clay to little Minna, and altering a touch or two with his big clumsy fingers, not undeftly. 'Look 'ee 'ere ; 'ee must putt the dress thik way, I should say, with a gurt dale more flusterin' about it ; it do zit too stiff and starchy, somehow, same as if it wur made o' new buckram. 'Ee must put in a fold or two, 'ere, so as to make un sit

more nat'ral. Don't 'ee see Minna's dress do double itself up, I can't rightly say 'ow, but summat o' thik there way?' And he moulded the moist clay a bit with his hands, till the folds of the drapery began to look a little more real and possible.

'I'd ought to 'ave drawed it first, I think,' Colin said, looking at the altered dress with a satisfied glance. 'Ave 'ee got such a thing as a pencil about 'ee, father?'

Old Sam took a piece of pencil from his pocket, and handed it to Colin. The boy held it tightly in his fingers, with a true artistic grasp, like one who knows how to wield it, and with a few strokes on a scrap of paper hit off little Minna far better than he had done in the plastic material. Geargey looked over his shoulder with a delighted grin on his weather-beaten features. 'I tell 'ee, Sam,' he said to the old gardener, confidentially, 'it's my belief that thik ther boy 'ull be able one o' these vine days to paint rale picturs.'

CHAPTER III.

PERNICIOUS LITERATURE.

WHEN winter came, Hiram Winthrop had less to do and more time to follow the bidding of his own fancy. True, there was cordwood to split in abundance ; and splitting cordwood is no child's play along the frozen shores of Lake Ontario. You go out among the snow in the wood-shed, and take the big ice-covered logs down from the huge pile with numbed fingers : then you lay them on a sort of double St. Andrew's cross, its two halves supported by a thwart-piece, and saw them up into fit lengths for the kitchen fireplace : and after that you split them in four with a solid-headed axe, taking care in the process not to let your

deadened hands slip, so as to cut off the ends of your own toes with an ill-directed blow glancing off the log sideways. Yes, splitting cordwood is very serious work, with the thermometer at 40° below freezing; and drawing water from the well when the rope is frozen and your skin clings to the chill iron of the thirsty bucket-handle is hardly better: yet in spite of both these small drawbacks, Hiram Winthrop found much more to enjoy in his winters than in his summers. There was no corn to hoe, no peas to pick, no weeding to do, no daily toil on farm and garden. The snow had covered all with its great white sheet; and even the neighbourhood of Muddy Creek Dépôt looked desolately beautiful in its own dreary, cold, monotonous, Siberian fashion.

The flowers and leaves were gone too, to be sure; but in the low brushwood by the blackberry bottom the hares had turned white to match the snow; and the nut-hatches were

answering one another in their varying keys; and the skunks were still busy of nights beneath the spreading walnuts; and the chickadees were tinkling overhead among the snow-laden pine-needles of the far woodland. All the summer visitors had gone south to Georgia and the gulf: but the snow-buntings were ever with Hiram in the wintry fields: and the bald-headed eagles still prowled around at times on the stray chance of catching a frozen-out racoon. Above all there was ease and leisure, respite from the deacon's rasping voice calling perpetually for Hiram here, and Hiram there, and Hiram yonder, to catch the horses, or tend the harrow, or mind the birds, or weed the tomatoes, or set shingles against the sun over the drooping transplanted cabbages. A happy time indeed for Hiram, that long, weary, white-sheeted, unbroken northern New York winter.

Sam Churchill was with the deacon still,

but had little enough to do, for there isn't much going on upon an American farm from November to April, and the deacon would gladly have got rid of his hired help in the slack time if he could have shuffled him off; but Sam had been well advised on his first hiring, and had wisely covenanted to be kept on all the year round, with board and lodging and decent wages during the winter season. And Hiram initiated Sam into the mysteries of sliding on a bent piece of wood (a home-made toboggan) down the great snowdrifts, and skating on the frozen expansion of Muddy Creek, and building round huts, Esquimaux fashion, with big square blocks of solid dry snow, and tracking the white hare over the white fields by means of the marks he left behind him, whose termination, apparently lengthening itself out miraculously before one's very eyes, marked the spot where the hare himself was hopping invisible to human

vision. In return, Sam lent him a few dearly treasured books: books that he had brought from England with him: the books that had first set the Dorsetshire peasant lad upon his scheme of going forth alone upon the wide world beyond the ocean.

Hiram was equally delighted and astonished with these wonderful charmed volumes. He had seen a few books before, but they were all of two types: Cornell's Geography, Quackenboss's Grammar, and the other school-books used at the common school; or else Barnes's Commentary, Elder Coffin's Ezekiel, the Hopkinsite Confession of Faith, and other like works of American exegetical and controversial theology. But Sam's books, oh, gracious, what a difference! There was Peter Simple, a story about a real live boy, who wa'n't good, pertickler, not to speak of, but had some real good old times on board a ship, somewhere, he did; and there was Tom Jones

(Hiram no more understood the doubtful passages in that great romance than he understood the lucubrations of Philosopher Square, but he took it in, in the lump, as very good fun for all that), Tom Jones, the story of another real live boy, with, most delightful of all, a reg'lar mean sneak of a feller, called Blifil, to act as a foil to Tom's straightforward pagan flesh-and-bloodfulness; the Buccaneers of the Caribbean Sea, a glorious work of fire and slaughter, whar some feller or other got killed right off on every page a'most, you bet; Jake the Pirate, another splendid book of the same description; and half a dozen more assorted novels, from the best to the worst, all chosen alike for their stirring incidents which went straight home to the minds of the two lads, in spite of all external differences of birth and geographical surroundings. Hiram pored over them surreptitiously, late at nights, in the room that he and Sam occupied in

common—a mere loft at the top of the house—and felt in his heart he had never in his life imagined such delightful reading could possibly have existed. And they were written by grown-up men, too! How strange to think that once upon a time, somewhere and somewhere, there were grown-up men capable of thus sympathising with, and reproducing the ideas and feelings of, the natural mind of boyhood!

One evening, very late—eleven nearly—the deacon, prowling around after a bottle or something, spied an unwonted light gleaming down from the trap-door that led up to the loft where the lads ought at that moment to have been sleeping soundly. Lights in a well-conducted farmhouse at eleven o'clock was indeed incomprehensible: what on earth, the deacon asked himself wonderingly, could them thar lads be up to at this hour? He crept up the step-ladder cautiously, so as not

to disturb them by premonitions, and opened the trap-door in sedulous silence. Sam was already fast asleep ; but there was Hiram, sot up in bed, as quiet as a 'possum, 'pearin' as if he was a-readin' something. The deacon's eyes opened with amazement ! Hiram reading ! Had his heart been touched, then, quite sudden-like ? Could he have took up the Hopkinsite Confession in secret to his upper chamber ? Was he mediatin' makin' a public profession afore the Assembly ?

The deacon glowered and marvelled. Creeping, still quite silently, up to the bed-head, he looked with an inquiring glance over poor Hiram's unsuspecting shoulder. A sea of words swam vaguely before his bewildered vision ; words, not running into long orthodox paragraphs, like the Elder's Ezekiel, but cut up, oh horror, into distinct sentences, each indicating a separate part in a conversation. The deacon couldn't clearly make it all out ;

for it was a dramatic dialogue, a form of composition which had not largely fallen in the good man's way: but he picked up enough to understand that it was a low pot-house scene, where one Falstaff was bandying improper language with a person of the name of Prince (given name, Henry)—language that made even the deacon's sallow cheek blush feebly with reflected and vicarious modesty. For a moment he endeavoured, like a Christian man, to retain his wrath; and then paternal feeling overcame him, and he caught Hiram such a oner on his ears as he flattered himself that boy wouldn't be likely to forgit in any very partickler hurry.

Hiram looked round, amazed and stunned, his ear tingling and burning, and saw the gaunt apparition of his father, standing silent and black-browed by the bare bed-head. For a moment those two glared at one another mutely and defiantly.

At last Hiram spoke: 'Wal!' he said simply.

'Wal!' the deacon answered, with smothered wrath. 'Hiram, I am angry and sin not. What do you go an' take them bad books up to read for? Who give 'em you? Whar did you get 'em? Oh, you sinful, bad boy, whar did you get 'em?' And he administered another sound cuff upon Hiram's other ear.

Hiram put his hand up to the stinging spot, and cried a minute silently: then he answered as well as he was able: 'This aint a bad book: this is called "The Complete Dram-attic Works of William Shakespeare." Sam lent it to me, an' it's Sam's book, an' ther ain't no harm in it, anyhow.'

The deacon was plainly staggered for a moment, for even he had dimly heard the name of William Shakespeare; and though he had never made any personal acquaintance

with that gentleman's works, he had always understood in a vague, indefinite fashion that this here Shakespeare was a perfectly respectable and recognised writer, whose books were read and approved of even by Hopkinsite ministers edoocated at Bethabara Seminary. So he took the volume in his hand incredulously and looked it through casually for a few minutes. He glanced at a scene or two here or there with a critical eye, and then he flung the volume from him quickly, as a man might fling and crush some loathsome reptile. By this time Sam was half-awake, and sat up in bed to inquire sleepily, what all thik ther row could be about at thik time of evenin'?' The deacon answered by going savagely to Sam's box, and taking out, one by one, for separate inspection, the volumes he found there. He held up the candle (stuck in an empty blacking-bottle) to each volume in succession, and, as soon as he had finally con-

demned them each, he flung them down in an untidy pile on the bare floor of the little bedroom. Most of them he stood stoically enough ; but the Vicar of Wakefield was at last quite too much for his stifled indignation. Sitting down blankly on the bed he fired off his volley at poor Hiram's frightened head, with terrible significance.

‘ Hiram Winthrop,’ he said solemnly, ‘ you air a son of perdition. You air more a'most 'n I kin manage with. Satan's openin' the door for you on-common wide, I kin tell you, sonny. It makes me downright scar't to see you in company along of sech books. Your mother'll be awful took back about it. I don't mind this 'ere about the Pirates of the Caribbean Sea, so much ; that's kinder hist'ry, that is, and mayn't do you much harm : but sech things as this Peter Simple, an' Wakefield, and Pickwick's Papers—why, I wonder the roof don't fall in on 'em an' crush us in

the lot altogether. I'm durned ef I could have thought you'd bin wicked enough to read 'em, sech on-principled literatoor. I sha'n't chastise you to-night, sonny; it's late, now, and we've read chapter: but to-morrer, Hiram, to-morrer, you shall pay for them thar books, take my word for it. You shall be chastened in the manner that's app'inted. Ef I was you, I should spend the rest of the evenin' in wrestlin' for forgiveness for the sin you've committed.'

And yet in the chapter the deacon had read at family worship that evening there was one little clause which said: 'Quench not the Spirit.'

Hiram slept but little that night, with the vague terror of to-morrow's whipping overshadowing him through the night watches. But he had at least one comfort: Sam Churchill had got out and gathered up his books, and locked them carefully in his box again.

‘If the boss tries to touch they books again, I tell ’ee, Hiram,’ he said bi-lingually (for absorbent America was already beginning to assimilate him), ‘’e’ll vind ’isself a-lyin’ long-ways on the vloor, afore he do know it, I promise ’ee.’ Hiram heard, and was partly comforted. At least he would still have the books to read, somehow, at some time. For in his own heart, unregenerate or otherwise, he couldn’t bring himself to believe that there could be really anything so very wicked in Henry the Fourth or Peter Simple.

CHAPTER IV.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY.

THE deacon's cowhide cut deep; but the thrashing didn't last long: and after it was all over, Hiram wandered out aimlessly by himself, down the snowclad valley of Muddy Creek, and along to the wooded wilds and cranberry marshes near the Ontario debouchure, to forget his troubles and the lasting smart of the weals in watching the beasts and birds among the frozen lowlands. He had never been so far from home before, but the weather and the ice were in his favour, enabling him to get over an amount of ground he wouldn't have tried to cover in the dry summer time. He had his skates

with him, and he skated where possible, taking them off to walk over the intervening land necks or drifted snow-sheets. The ice was glare in many places, so that one could skate on it gloriously; and before he had got half-way down to Nine-Mile Bottom he had almost forgotten all about the deacon, and the sermon, and the beating, and the threatened ten chapters of St. John (the Gospel of Love the deacon called it) to be learned by heart before next Lord's day, in expiation of the heinous crime of having read that pernicious work the 'Vicar of Wakefield.' It was the loveliest spot he had ever seen in all his poor unlovely little existence.

Close under the cranberry trees, by a big pool where the catfish would be sure to live in summer, Hiram heard men's voices, whispering low and quiet to one another. A great joy filled his soul. He could see at once by their dress and big fur caps what

they were. They were trappers! One piece of romance still survived in Geauga County, among the cranberry swamps and rush beds where the flooded creek flowed sluggishly into the bosom of Ontario; and on that one piece of romance he had luckily lighted by pure accident. Trappers! Yes, not a doubt of it! He struck out on his skates swiftly but noiselessly toward them, and joined the three men without a word as they stood taking counsel together below their breath on the ice-bound marshland.

‘Hello, sonny!’ one of the men said in a low undertone. ‘Say whar did you drop from? What air you comin’ spyin’ out a few peaceable surveyors for, eh? Tell me.’

‘I didn’t think you was surveyors,’ Hiram answered, a little disappointed. ‘I thought you was trappers.’ And at the same time he glanced suspiciously at the peculiar little gins that the surveyors held in their great gaunt-

leted hands, for all the world like Oneida traps for musk-rats.

The man noticed the glance and laughed to himself a smothered laugh—the laugh of a person accustomed always to keep very quiet. ‘The young un has spotted us, an’ no mistake, boys,’ he said, laughing, to the others. ‘He’s a bit too ’cute to be took in with the surveyor gammon. What do you call this ’ere, sonny?’

‘I calc’late that’s somewhar near a mink trap,’ Hiram answered, breathless with delight.

‘Wal, it *is* a mink trap,’ the trapper said slowly, looking deep into the boy’s truthful eyes. ‘Now, who sent you down here to track us out and peach upon us; eh, Bob?’

‘Nobody sent me,’ Hiram replied, with his blue eyes looking deep back into the trapper’s keen restless grey pair. ‘I kem out all o’ my own accord, ’cos father gave me a

lickin' this mornin', an' I've kem out jest to get away for a bit alone somewhar.'

'Who's your father?' asked the man still suspiciously.

'Deacon Winthrop, down to Muddy Creek Deepo.'

'Deacon Winthrop! Oh, I know him, ruther. A tall, skinny, dried-up kind of fellow, ain't he, who looks as if most of his milk was turned sour, an' the Hopkinsite Confession was a settin' orful heavy on his digestion?'

Hiram nodded several times successively, in acknowledgment of the general accuracy of this brief description. 'That's him, you bet,' he answered with unfilial promptitude. 'I guess you've seed him somewhar, for that's him as like as a portrait. Look here, say, I'll draw him for you.' And the boy, taking his pencil from his pocket, drew as quickly as he was able on a scrap of birch-bark a humorous

caricature of his respected parent, as he appeared in the very act of offering an unctuous exhortation to the Hopkinsite assembly at Muddy Creek meeting-house. It was very wrong and wicked, of course—a clear breach of the Fifth Commandment—but the deacon hadn't done much on his own account to merit honour or love at the hands of Hiram Winthrop.

The man took the rough sketch and laughed at it inwardly, with a suppressed chuckle. There was no denying, he saw, that it was the perfect moral of that thar freezed-up old customer down to the Deepo. He handed it with a smile to his two companions. They both recognised the likeness and the little additions which gave it point, and one of them, a Canadian as Hiram conjectured (for he spoke with a dreadful English accent—so stuck-up), said in the same soft undertone: 'Do you know where any mink live anywhere hereabouts?'

‘A little higher up stream,’ Hiram answered, overjoyed, ‘I know every spot whar ther’s any mink stirrin’ for five miles round, anyhow.’

The Canadian turned to the others.

‘Boys,’ he said, ‘you can trust the youngster. He won’t peach on us. He’s game, you may be sure. Now, youngster, we’re trappers, as you guessed correctly. But you see, farmers don’t love trappers, because they go trespassing, and over-running the fields: and so we don’t want you to say a word about us to this father of yours. Do you understand?’

Hiram nodded.

‘You promise not to tell him or anybody?’

‘Yes, I promise.’

‘Well, then, if you like, you can come with us. We’re going to set our traps now. You don’t seem a bad sort of little chap,

and you can see the fun out if you've a mind to.'

Hiram's heart bounded with excitement. What a magnificent prospect! He promised to show the trappers every spot he knew about the place where any fur-bearing animal, from ermine to musk-rat, was likely to be found. In ten minutes, all four were started off upon their skates once more, striking up the river in the direction of the deacon's, and setting traps by Hiram's advice as they went along, at every likely run or corner.

'You drew that picture real well,' the Canadian said, as they skated side by side: 'I could see it was the old man at a glance.'

Hiram's face shone with pleasure at this sincere compliment to his artistic merit. 'I could hev done it a long sight better,' he said simply, 'ef my hands hadn't been numbed a bit with the cold, so's I could hardly hold the pencil.'

It was a grand day, that day with the trappers—the gipsies of half-settled America; the grandest day Hiram had ever spent in his whole lifetime. How many musk-rats' burrows he pointed out to his new acquaintance along the bank of the creek; how many spots where the mink, that strange water-haunting weasel, lurks unseen among the frozen sedges! Here and there, too, he showed them the points where he had noticed the faint track of the ermine on the lightly fallen snow, and where they might place their traps across the path worn by the 'coons on their way to and from the Indian corn patch. It was cruel work, to be sure, setting those murderous snapping iron jaws, and perhaps if Hiram had thought more about the beasts themselves (whom after all he loved in his heart) he wouldn't have been so ready to aid their natural enemies in thus catching and exterminating

them: but what boy is free from the aboriginal love of hunting something? Certainly not Hiram Winthrop, at least, to whom this one glimpse of a delightful wandering life among the woods and marshes—a life that wasn't all made up of bare fields and fall wheat and snake fences and cross-ploughing—seemed like a stray snatch of that impossible paradise he had read about in 'Peter Simple' and the 'Buccaneers of the Caribbean Sea.'

'Say, Bob,' the Canadian muttered to him as they were half-way through their work (in Northern New York every boy unknown is *ex officio* addressed as Bob), 'we shall be back in these diggings in the spring again, looking after the summer furs, you see. Now, don't you go and tell any other trappers about these places we've set, because trappers gener'ly (present company always excepted) is a pretty dishonest lot,

and they'll poach on other trappers' grounds and even steal their furs and traps as soon as look at 'em. You stand by us and we'll stand by you, and take care you don't suffer by it.'

'When'll you come?' Hiram asked in the thrilling delight of anticipation.

'When the first spring days are on,' the Canadian answered. 'I'll tell you the best sign: it's no use going by days o' the month — we don't remember 'em mostly; —but it'll be about the time when the skunk cabbage begins to flower.'

Hiram made a note of the date mentally, and treasured it up in safety on the lasting tablets of his memory.

At about one o'clock the trappers sat down upon the frozen bank and ate their dinner. It would have been cold work to men less actively engaged; but skating and trapping warms your blood well. 'Got any

grub?' one of the men asked Hiram, still softly. Your trapper seems almost to have lost the power of speaking above a whisper, and he moves stealthily as if he thought a spectral farmer was always dogging his steps close behind him.

'No, I ain't,' Hiram answered.

'Then, thunder, pitch into the basket,' his new friend said encouragingly.

Hiram obeyed, and made an excellent lunch off cold hare and lake ship-biscuit.

'Are you through?' the men asked at last.

'Yes,' Hiram replied.

'Then come along and see the fun out.'

They skated on, still upward, in the general direction of the blackberry bottom. When they got there, Hiram, now quite at home, pointed out even more accurately than ever the exact homes of each individual mink and ermine. So the men worked away

eagerly at their task till the evening began to come over. Then Hiram, all aglow with excitement and wholly oblivious of all earthly considerations, became suddenly aware of a gaunt figure moving about among the dusky brushwood and making in the direction of his friends the trappers. 'Hello,' he cried to his new acquaintances in a frightened tone, 'you'd best cut it. Thar's the deacon.'

The Canadian laughed a short little laugh, 'All right, Bob,' he said coolly; 'we ain't afraid of him. If he touches you to hurt you, I surmise he'll find himself measuring his own height horizontally rather quicker than he expected.'

The deacon overheard the alarming prediction, and, being a wise man in his generation, prudently abstained from making any hostile demonstration to Hiram in the presence of his self-constituted protectors. 'Good evenin', gents all,' he said, advancing blandly. 'I'd lost my son, d'ye see, an' I'd kem out right

here to look after him. Hiram, you come along home, sonny ; your mother's most out of her mind about you, I kin tell you.'

'Good evening, Colonel,' the Canadian answered in a determined fashion. 'We're sorry business has compelled us to trespass on your property ; but the fur trade, Colonel, the fur trade is a pretty exacting profession. The Lord Chief Justice of England insists upon his ermine, you see, Colonel, and the demand compels the supply. We're all instruments, sir, instruments merely. Your boy's a pretty smart lad, and if he concentrates his mind upon the subject, I surmise that he'll grow up to be a pretty accomplished trapper.' (The deacon's disgust spoke out volubly at this suggestion even upon his lantern-jawed impassive countenance.) 'Well, sir, he's been very useful to us, and we particularly request that you won't lick him for it. We don't wish him to be hurt. We're law-abiding citizens, Colonel, but

we won't let that boy be hurt. You understand, sir—pre-cisely so. Bob, we'll clear them traps on Saturday morning. You come then and report proceedings.'

'All right,' Hiram answered defiantly; 'I'll be along.'

'Good evenin', Colonel,' the three men said.

'Good evenin', gents all,' the deacon answered, boiling over with wrath, but smothering his rage till they were well off the premises.

Hiram turned and walked home in perfect silence by the side of his father. They had got inside the house before the deacon ventured to utter a single word. Then he closed the door firmly, cuffed Hiram half a dozen times over about the head, and cried angrily, 'I was afeard, sonny, you'd got drowned in the creek, reely: I was afeard you was cut off in your sin this time; I was afeard of a judgment, I was: for I've reproved you often, sonny:

you can't blame it agin me that I hain't re-proved you often : and he that bein' often re-proved hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed.'

'Wal,' Hiram cried through his tears (he *was* a stubborn un, some), 'it's you that hardens it, ain't it? What do you go allus hittin' it for?'

'Tain't that neck, you scoffin' sinner,' the deacon answered savagely, dealing him another cuff or two about the head. 'Tain't that neck, you know as well as I do : it's the sperritooal neck the prophet is alloodin' to. But you shall have some cow-hide, again, Hiram ; don't you be afeard about it : you shan't go to reprobation unhindered ef I kin help it. The rod an' reproof give wisdom : but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Mis' Winthrop, I'm afeard this son o' yours 'ull bring you to shame yet, marm, with his sinful onregenerate practices. What's he bin doin'?

Now, you jest guess : why, bringin' a whole crowd of disreputable trappers a-settin' mink-traps an' ermine-springes on his own father's blackberry lot. He ain't satisfied with the improvin' company he kin get to home, he ain't, but he must go consortin' and associatin' with a lot of no-account, skulkin', profane trappers—a mean crowd, a mob, a set of low fellers I wouldn't hold no intercourse with, anyhow. Hiram Winthrop, it's my belief you hev got no sense of the dignity of your persition.'

'I beg pardon, Colonel,' the Canadian interposed, lifting the latch of the front door lightly (it opened into the living room), 'but I wish gently to protest against them opprobrious epithets being out of thoughtlessness applied to the exacting profession of the fur trade. The fur trade, sir, is a most noble profession. The honourable Hudson Bay Company, for whose deepo at Kingston I trade,

is a recognised public body, holding a charter from Queen Victoria, and reckoning among its officials several prominent gentlemen of the strictest probity. I should be sorry, Colonel, and my mates 'ud be sorry, to cause any unpleasantness as a sequel to this little excursion: but we can't stand by and hear them opprobrious epithets applied to the noble profession of the fur trade, or to ourselves as its representatives in Geauga County. I'll trouble you, Colonel, to withdraw them words, right away, with a candid apology, and to give us your word of honour that you ain't going to thrash this little chap for the exertions he has made to-day on behalf of the noble profession which me and my mates has the pleasure and honour of representing. Otherwise, I don't hesitate to say, Colonel, I surmise there'll be a little unpleasantness somewhere between us.'

CHAPTER V.

EMANCIPATION.

‘CHURCHILL,’ said the vicar, pulling up his cob opposite the gate of the little market garden, ‘I want to speak to you a minute about that boy of yours. He’s twelve years old and more, I should say, by the look of him, and he’s hanging about the village all his time, doing nothing. Do you want a place to put him to? What are you going to do with him?’

‘Wull, passon,’ Sam Churchill answered, touching his hat in a semi-deferential manner (as a liberal politician, Sam was constitutionally agin the passon), ‘Us *did* think o’ zendin’ un to school a bit longer, and tryin’ vor to prentice un to zum trade zumwhere:

but if a good place at sarvice was goin' a beggin', wy, me an' 'is mother wouldn't stand in the way of 'is takin' it, sartinly, nowadays.'

'Don't send the boy to school any more, Churchill,' the vicar said decisively. 'This education business is being overdone. You allowed your other boy—Sam I think you called him—to read a pack of nonsensical books about going to sea and so forth, and what's the result? He's gone off to America and left you alone, just as he was beginning to be fitted for a useful assistant. Depend upon it, Churchill, over-education's a great error.'

'That's just what my missus do zay, zur,' Sam chimed in respectfully. 'If us 'adn't let Sam read them Cap'n Marryat books, 'ur do zay, 'e 'ouldn't never 'ave gone off a-zeekin' 'is fortune awver yander to 'Murrica. Howsomdever, what place 'ave 'ee got in yer eye vor our Colin, passon?'

‘Let him come to the vicarage,’ the parson said, ‘and I’ll train him to be my own servant. Then he can get to be a gentleman’s valet, and take a good place by-and-by in London. The boy’s got good manners and good appearance, and would make a capital servant in time, I don’t doubt it.’

‘Wull, I’ll talk it awver wi’ the missus,’ old Sam replied dubiously.

When Colin was asked whether he would like to go to the vicarage or not, he answered, with the true west-country insouciance, that he didn’t much care where he went, so long as the place was good and the work was aisy : and so, before the week was out, he had been duly installed as the vicar’s buttons and body-servant, and initiated into the work of brushing clothes, opening doors, announcing visitors, and all the other mysteries of his joint appointment.

The vicar of Wootton was a very great

person indeed. He was second cousin to the Earl of Beaminster, the greatest landowner in that part of Dorset; and he never for a moment forgot that he was a Howard-Russell, the inheritor of two of the noblest names in England, and of nothing else on earth except a remarkably narrow and retreating forehead. The vicar was not clever; to that he had no pretensions: but he was a high-minded, honourable, well-meaning English gentleman and clergyman of the old school; not much interested in their new-fangled questions of High Church, and Low Church, and Broad Church, and all the rest of it, yet doing his parochial duty as he conceived of it in a certain honest, straightforward, perfunctory, official fashion. 'In my young days, my dear,' he used to say to his nieces (for he was a bachelor), 'we didn't have all these high churches, and low churches, and medium-sized churches, that people have nowadays.'

We had only one church, the Church of England. That's the only church that I for my part can ever consent to live and die in.'

In the vicar's opinion, a clergyman was an officer charged with the maintenance of spiritual decorum in the recognised and organised system of this realm of England. His chief duty was to dispense a decorous hospitality to his friends and equals, to display a decorous pattern of refined life to his various inferiors, to inculcate a decorous morality on all his parishioners, and to take part in a decorous religious service (with the assistance of his curates) twice every Sunday. The march of events had latterly compelled him to add morning prayer on Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent to this simple list of functions; but further than that the vicar resolutely refused to go. When anyone talked to him about matins and evensong, or discussed the Athanasian Creed, or even

spoke of the doings of Convocation, the vicar sniffed a little with his aristocratic nose, and remarked stiffly that people didn't go in for those things in his young days, thank goodness. So far as his opinion went, he hated innovations; the creeds were very good creeds indeed, and people had got along very well with them, and without matins or convocations, ever since he could remember.

Still, the vicar was a man of taste. A cousin of Lord Beaminster's and a vicar of Wootton Mandeville ought, he felt, in virtue of his position, to be a man of taste. Not an admirer of new fads and fancies in art: oh, no, no; by no means: not a partisan of realism, or idealism, or romanticism, or classicism, or impressionism, or any other of their fashionable *isms*; certainly not: but in a grand, old-fashioned, unemotional, dignified sort of way, a man of taste. The vicar had two Romneys hanging in his dining-room;

graceful ancestresses with large straw-hats and exquisitely highborn eighteenth-century Howard faces (the Russell connection hadn't then got into the family); and he had good engravings from originals in the Vatican and the Pitti Palace well displayed in his drawing-room: and he had even a single small Thorwaldsen, a Thetis rising from the sea, which fronted him as he sat in the oak-wainscoted study, and inspired his literary efforts while engaged on the composition of his three annual new sermons. It was impossible to enter the vicarage, indeed, without feeling at once the exact artistic position of its excellent occupant. He was decorously æsthetic, just as he was decorously religious and decorously obedient to the usages of society. The Reverend Philip Howard-Russell, in fact, hated enthusiasm in every form. He hated earnest dissent most of all, of course; it was an irregular, indecorous, unauthorised way of

trying to get to heaven on one's own account, without the aid of the duly constituted ecclesiastical order: but he hated all nonsense about art almost equally. He believed firmly in Raffael and Michael Angelo, as he believed in church and state: he thought Correggio and Guido almost equally fine; but he had a low opinion of the early Italian masters, and would have looked askance at Botticelli or Fra Angelico, wherever he found them, even in a ducal mansion. He didn't live (as good fortune would have it) to see the extremely ill-balanced proceedings of Mr. Burne Jones and his school: indeed the vicar could never have consented to prolong his life into such an epoch of 'movements' and 'earnestness' as our own: but he distinctly recollected, with a thrill of horror, that when he was a tutor at Christ Church there were two or three young men who got up something they called a Preraphaelite Brotherhood, which

ultimately came to no good. 'One of them, by name Millais,' he used to say, 'got rid of all that nonsense at last, and has become a really very promising young painter: but as to the others, that fellow Hunt, and a half-Italian man they call Rossetti—well, you know the things they paint are really and truly quite too ridiculous.'

On the whole, Colin Churchill liked his place at the vicarage fairly well. To be sure, passon was exacting sometimes; he had a will of his own, the Reverend Philip, and knew what was becoming from the lower classes towards their natural superiors—but, for all that, Colin liked it. The work wasn't very hard; there was plenty of time to get out into the fields still and play with Minna at odd minutes; the vicarage was pretty and prettily furnished; and above all, it was full of works of art such as Colin had never before even imagined. He didn't know why, of

course, but the Romneys and the Thorwaldsen in particular took his fancy immensely from the very first moment he saw them. The Thetis was his special adoration: its curves and lines never ceased to delight and surprise him. An instinctive germ of art which was born in all the Churchill family was beginning to quicken into full life in little Colin. Though the boy knew it not, nor suspected it himself, he was in fact an artistic genius. All the family shared his gifts more or less: but in Colin those gifts were either greater by original endowment, or were more highly developed by the accidents of place and time—who shall say which? Perhaps Sam, put where Colin was, might have become a great sculptor: perhaps Colin, put where Sam was, might have become a respectable American citizen. And perhaps not. These are mysteries which no man yet can solve, least of all the present biographer.

The vicar had a large collection of prints in his study ; and when visitors came who were also men of taste with no nonsense about them, it was his custom to show them his collection on a little frame made for the purpose. On such occasions, Colin had to perform the duty of placing the prints one after another upon the frame : and while the vicar and his guests looked at them critically, the boy, too, would gaze from behind them, and listen open-mouthed to their appreciative comments. There was one picture in particular that Colin especially admired — a mezzotint from a fresco of the Four Seasons, by a nameless Renaissance artist, in an out-of-the-way church at Bologna. Perhaps it was the classical bas-relief air of the picture that struck the boy's fancy so much ; for the native bent of Colin Churchill's genius was always rather sculpturesque than pictorial : but at any rate he loved that picture dearly, and

more than once the vicar noticed that when they came to it, his little page lingered behind abstractedly, and didn't go on to the next in order as soon as he was told to.

'Churchill,' the vicar once said to him sharply on such an occasion, 'why don't you mind when you're spoken to? I said "Next!" Didn't you hear me?'

'I beg your pardon, zur—sir, I mean,' Colin answered, relapsing for the moment into his original barbarism: 'I heer'd you, but—but I was a-lookin' at it and forgot, sir.'

The vicar gazed at the boy for a moment in mute astonishment. 'Looking at it!' he murmured at last, half to himself, with a curious curl about the corner of his mouth; 'goodness gracious, what are we coming to next, I wonder! He was looking at my mezzotints! Extraordinary. Young Churchill looking at my mezzotints!—The next, you see, Colonel, is a very rare print by Cornelius

Bloemart after Mieris. Exquisitely delicate engraving, as you observe; very remarkable purity and softness. A capital conjunction in fact: no burin but Bloemart's could render so finely the delicate finish of Frans Mieris. The original is almost worthy of Gerard Douw; you've seen it, I dare say, at Leyden. Next, boy: next.—Looking at it! Well, I declare! He says he was looking at it! That man Churchill always *was* an ill-mannered, independent, upstanding sort of fellow, and after all what can you expect from his children?

In spite of occasional little episodes like this, however, Colin and the parson got on fairly well together in the long-run. The parson's first task had been, of course, to take care that that boy's language should be reduced to something like the queen's English: and to that effect, Capel, the butler (better known in Wootton as the Dook, on account

of his distinguished and haughtily aristocratic manners) had been instructed to point out to Colin the difference in pronunciation between the letters hess and zud, the grammatical niceties of this, these, those, they and them, and the formalities necessary to be used by men of low estate in humbly addressing their duly constituted pastors and masters. Colin, being naturally a quick boy, had soon picked up as much of all this as the Dook was able to teach him; and if there was still a considerable laxity in the matter of aspiration, and a certain irregularity in the matter of moods and tenses, that was really more the fault of the teacher than of the pupil. The Dook had been to London and even to Rome, and had picked up the elegant language of the best footmen in west-end society. Colin learnt just what the Dook taught him; he had left behind the crude West-Saxon of the court of King Alfred, on which he had been nurtured

as his mother-tongue, and had almost progressed to the comparatively cultivated and cosmopolitan dialect of an ordinary modern English man-servant.

At first, little Minna was in no small degree contemptuous of Colin's 'vine new-vangled talkin'.' "Don't you," indeed,' she cried one day in her supremely sarcastic little manner, when Colin had ventured to use that piece of superfine English in her very ears, instead of his native West-Saxon 'don't 'ee;' 'vine things we're comin' to nowadays, Colin, wen the likes o' thee goes sayin' "don't you." I s'pose 'ee want to grow up an' be like the Dook, some o' these vine days. Want to be a butler, an' 'old theeself so stiff, and talk that vine that plain volk can't 'ardly tell what thee's talkin' about. Gurt stoopid, I do call 'ee.' But Colin, in spite of ridicule, continued on his own way, and Minna, who had her pride and her little day-dreams on her own

account, too, at last began to think that perhaps after all Colin might be in the right of it.

So, being a west-country girl with a mind of her own (like most of them), Minna set to work on her part also to correct and get rid of her pretty, melting native dialect. She went to school at the British National School (the vicar had carefully warded off that last disgrace of the age, the blatant board school, from his own village); and even as Colin set himself to attain the lofty standard of excellence afforded him by the Dook, so did Minna do her best to follow minutely the voice and accent of the head pupil-teacher, who had actually been for three terms at the Normal College in London. There she had picked up a very noble vulgar London twang, learnt to pronounce 'no' as 'na-o,' and acquired the habit of invariably slurring over or dropping all her short unaccented syllables.

In all these splendid characteristics of the English language as currently spoken in the great metropolis, Minna endeavoured to the best of her ability to follow her leader ; and at the end of a year she had so far succeeded that Colin himself complimented her on the immense advance she had lately made in her new linguistic studies.

Colin's greatest delight, however, was still to go down in the afternoon, when the vicar was out, to the brook in the meadow, and there mix up as of yore a good big batch of plastic clay with which to model what he used to call his little images. The Dook complained greatly of the clay, 'a nasty dirty mess, indeed, to go an' acshally bring into any gentleman's house, let alone the vicar's, and him no more nor a page neither!' but Colin managed generally to appease his anger, and to gain a grudging consent at last for the clay to be imported into the house under the

most stringent sumptuary conditions. The vicar must never see it coming or going; he mustn't be allowed to know that the Dook permitted such goings-on in the house where he was major-domo. On that point Mr. Capel was severity itself. So when the images were fairly finished, Colin used to take them out surreptitiously at night, and then hand them over to Minna Wroe, who had quite a little museum of the young sculptor's earliest efforts in her own bedroom. She had alike the Thetis after Thorwaldsen (a heathenish, scarce half-clad huzzy, who shocked poor Mrs. Churchill's sense of propriety immensely, until she was solemnly assured that the original stood in the vicar's study), and the Infant Samuel after the plaster cast on the cottage mantelpiece; as well as the bust of Miss Eva, the vicar's favourite niece, studied from life as Colin stood behind her chair at night, or handed her the potatoes at dinner. If Miss

Eva hadn't been eighteen, and such a *very* grand young lady, little Minna might almost have been jealous of her. But as it was—why, Colin was only the page boy, and so really, after all, what did it matter?

For three years Colin continued at the vicarage, till he was full fifteen, and then an incident occurred which gave the first final direction to his artistic impulses.

One afternoon he had been down to the brook, talking as usual with his old playmate Minna (even fifteen and thirteen are not yet very dangerous ages), when he happened, in climbing up that well-known clay cliff, to miss his foothold on the sticky slippery surface, and fell suddenly into the bed of the stream below. His head was sadly cut by the flints at the bottom, and two neighbours picked him out and carried him between them up to the vicarage. There he was promptly laid upon his own bed, while Capel sent off hurriedly

for the Wootton doctor to staunch the flow of blood from the ugly cut.

When the vicar heard of the accident from the Dook, he was sitting in the drawing-room listening to Miss Eva playing a then fashionable gavotte by a then fashionable composer. 'Is he badly hurt, Capel?' the vicar asked, with decorous show of interest.

'Pretty bad, sir,' the Dook answered in his official manner. 'I should judge, sir, by the look of it, that the boy had cut a artery, sir, or summat of that sort; leastways, the wovnd is bleeding most uncommon profusely.'

'I'll come and see him,' the vicar said, with the air of a man who decorously makes a sacrifice to Christian principles. 'You may tell the poor lad, Capel, that I'll come and see him presently.'

'And I will too,' Eva put in quickly.

'Eva, my dear!' her uncle observed with chilling dignity. 'You had better not. The

sight would be a most unpleasant one for you. Indeed, for all of us. Capel, you may tell Churchill that I am coming to see him. Eva, I'm afraid I interrupted you: go on, my dear.'

Eva played out the gavotte to the end a little impatiently, and then the vicar rose after a minute or two of decent delay (one mustn't seem in too great a hurry to sympathise with the accidents which may befall one's poorer neighbours), and walked in his stately leisurely fashion towards the servants' quarters. 'Which is Churchill's room, Capel?' he asked as he went along. 'Ah, yes, this one, to be sure. Poor lad, I hope he's better now.'

But as soon as the vicar stood within the room, which he had never entered before since Colin had used it, he had hardly any eyes for the boy or the surgeon, and could scarcely even ask the few questions which decorum demanded as to his state and probable recovery.

For the walls of Colin Churchill's bedroom were certainly of a sort gravely to surprise and disquiet the unsuspecting vicar. All round the room, a number of large sheets of paper hung, on which were painted in bright water-colours cartoon-like copies of the engravings which formed the chief decoration of the vicar's drawing-room.

‘Who did these?’ he asked sternly.

‘Me, sir,’ the boy answered, trembling, from the bed.

The Reverend Philip Howard-Russell started visibly. He displayed astonishment even before his own servants. In truth, he was too good a judge of art not to see at a glance that the pictures were well drawn, and that the colouring, which was necessarily original, had been harmonised with native taste. All this was disquieting enough; but more disquieting than all was another work of art which hung right on the top of Colin's

bed-head. It was a composition in clay of the Four Seasons, reproduced in bas-relief from the mezzotint in the vicar's portfolio, over which he now at once remembered Colin had so often and so constantly lingered.

Though he ought to have been looking at the boy, the vicar's eyes were fixed steadily during almost all the interview on this singular bas-relief. If the water-colours had merit, the vicar, as a man of taste, could not conceal from himself the patent fact that the bas-relief showed positive signs of real genius. It was really most untoward, most disconcerting! A lad of that position in life to go and model a composition in relief from an engraving on the flat, and to do it well, too! The vicar had certainly never heard of anything like it!

He said a few words of decorously conventional encouragement to Colin, told the surgeon he was delighted to hear the wound was not a serious one, and then beckoned the

Dook quietly out of the room as he himself took his departure.

‘Capel,’ he said, in a low voice on the landing, ‘what on earth is the meaning of that—ur—that panel at Churchill’s bedside?’

‘Well, sir, the boy likes to make a mess with mud and water, you see,’ the butler answered submissively, ‘and I didn’t like to prevent him, because he’s a well-conducted lad in gen’ral, sir, and he seems to have took a awful fancy to this sort of imaging. I hope there ain’t no harm done, sir. I never allows him to make a mess with it.’

‘Not at all, not at all, Capel,’ the vicar continued, frowning slightly. ‘No harm in the world in his amusing himself so, of course; still’—and this the vicar added to himself as though it were a peculiarly aggravating piece of criminality—‘there’s no denying he has reproduced that mezzotint in really quite a masterly manner.’

The vicar went back to the drawing-room with a distressed and puzzled look upon his clean-shaven clear-cut countenance. 'Is he badly hurt, uncle?' asked Eva. 'No, my dear,' the vicar replied, testily; 'nothing to speak of; but I'm afraid he has made himself a very singular and excellent bas-relief.'

'A what?' cried Eva, imagining to herself that she had overlooked the meaning of some abstruse medical term which sounded strangely artistic to her unaccustomed ears.

'A bas-relief,' the vicar repeated, in a disgusted tone. 'Yes, my dear, I'm not surprised you should be astonished at it, but I said a bas-relief. He has reproduced my Bologna Four Seasons in clay, and what's worse, Eva, he has really done it extremely well too, confound him.'

It was only on very rare occasions that the vicar allowed himself the use of such doubtful expressions, and even then he

employed them in his born capacity as a Howard-Russell rather than in his acquired one as a clergyman of the Church of England.

‘Eva, my dear,’ he said again after a long pause, ‘the boy’s head is bandaged now, and after all there’s really nothing in any way in his condition to shock you. It might be as well, perhaps, if you were to go to see him, and ask Mr. Walkem whether the cook ought to make him anything in the way of jelly or beef-tea or any stuff of that sort, you know. These little attentions to one’s dependents in illness are only Christian, only Christian. And, do you know, Eva, you might at the same time just glance at the panel by the bed-head, and tell me by-and-by what you think of it. I’ve great confidence in your judgment, my dear, and after all it mayn’t perhaps be really quite so good as I’m at first sight inclined to believe it.’

When niece and uncle met again at dinner, Eva unhesitatingly proclaimed her opinion that the bas-relief was very clever (a feminine expression for every degree of artistic or intellectual merit, not readily apprehended by the ridiculous hair-splitting male intelligence). The vicar moved uneasily in his chair. This was most disconcerting. What on earth was he to do with the boy? As a man of taste, he felt that he mustn't keep a possible future Canova blacking boots in his back kitchen; as a Christian minister, he felt that he must do the best he could to advance the position of all his parishioners; yet finally, as a loyal member of this commonwealth, he felt that he ought not to countenance people of that position in life in having tastes and occupations above their natural station. Old Churchill's son, too! Could anything be more annoying? 'What on earth ought we to do with him, Eva?' he asked doubtfully.

‘Send him to London to some good artist, and see what he can make of him,’ Eva replied with astonishing promptitude. (It’s really wonderful how young people of the present day will undertake to solve the most difficult practical problems off-hand, as if there were absolutely nothing in them.)

The vicar glanced towards the Dook uneasily. ‘It’s a very extraordinary thing,’ he said, ‘for a lad of his class to go and dream of going and doing. I may be old-fashioned, Eva, my dear, but I don’t quite like it. I won’t deny that I don’t quite like it.’

‘Haven’t I read somewhere,’ Eva went on innocently, ‘that Giotto or somebody was a peasant boy who fed sheep, and that some one or other, Cimabue, I think (only I don’t know how to pronounce his name properly), saw some drawings he’d made with a bit of charcoal on some rock, and took him for his pupil, and made him into, oh, such a great painter?’

I know it was such a delightfully romantic story, wherever I read it.'

The vicar coughed drily. 'That was in the thirteenth century, my dear,' he said, in his coldest and most repressive tone. 'The thirteenth century was a very long time ago, Eva. Society hadn't organised itself then, as it has done in our own day. Besides, the story has been critically doubted. Ci-ma-bu-e,' and the vicar dwelt carefully on each syllable of the name with a little distinct intonation which mutely corrected Eva's faulty Italian without too obtrusively exciting the butler's attention, 'had probably very little to do with discovering Giot-to.—Capel, this is not the green seal claret. Go and decant some green seal at once, will you.—My dear, this is a discussion which had better not be carried on before the servants.'

In three days more the Dook was regaling the gossips of the White Lion with the whole

story how the vicar, with his usual artistic sensibility, had discovered merit in that lad of Churchill's, and had found out as the thing the lad had made out of mud were really what they call a bas-relief, 'which I've seen 'em, of course,' said the Dook, loftily, 'in lots of palaces in Italy, carv'd by Jotter, and Bonnomey, and Jamberty, and all them old swells; but I never took much notice of this one o' young Churchill's, naterally, till the vicar came in; and then, as soon as ever he clapped eyes on it, he says at once to me, "Capel," says he, "that's a bas-relief." And then, I remembered as I'd seen just the same sort of things, as I was sayin', over in Italy, by the cart-load; but, Lord, who'd have ever thought old Sam Churchill's son could ever ha' done one! And now the vicar's asted Sam to let him get the boy apprenticed to a wood-carver: and Sam's give his consent; and next week the boy's going off to Exeter, and going

to make his fortune as sure as there's apples in Herefordshire.'

The idea of the wood-carver may be considered as a sort of compromise on the vicar's part between his two duties, as a munificent discoverer of rising talent, and a judicious represser of the too-aspiring lower orders. A wood-carver's work is in a certain sense artistic, and yet it isn't anything more, as a rule, than a decent handicraft. The vicar rather prided himself upon this clever sop to both his consciences: he chuckled inwardly over the impartial manner in which he had managed to combine the recognition of plastic merit with the equal recognition of profound social disabilities. Eva, to be sure, had stood out stoutly against the wood-carving, and had pleaded hard for a sculptor in London: but the vicar disarmed her objections somewhat by alleging the admirable precedent of Grinling Gibbons. 'Gibbons, you know, my dear, rose

to the very first rank as a sculptor from his trade as a wood-carver. Pity to upset the boy's mind by putting him at once to a regular artist. If there's really anything in him, he'll rise at last; if not, it would only do him harm to encourage him in absurd expectations.' Oh, wise inverted Gamaliels! you too in your decorous way, with your topsyturvy opportunism, cannot wholly escape the charge of quenching the spirit.

CHAPTER VI.

ENTER A NEW ENGLANDER.

HIRAM WINTHROP'S emancipation had come a little earlier, and it had come after this fashion.

It was early spring along the lake shore, and Hiram had wandered out, alone as usual, into the dense marshy scrub that fringed the Creek, near the spot where it broadens and deepens into a long blue bay of still half-frozen and spell-bound Ontario. The skunk-cabbage was coming into flower! It was early spring, and the boy's heart was glad within him, as though the deacon, and the cord-wood, and the coming drudgery of hoeing and weeding had never existed. Perhaps,

now, he should see the trappers again. He wandered on among the unbroken woods, just greening with the wan fresh buds, and watched the whole world bursting into life again after its long wintry interlude; as none have ever seen it waken save those who know the great icy lake country of North America. The signs of quickening were frequent in the underbrush. The shrill *peep* of the tree-frog came to him from afar through the almost silent woodland. The drumming of the red-headed woodpecker upon the hickory trunks showed that the fat white grubs were now hatching and moving underneath the bark. Close to the water's edge he scared up a snipe; and then, again, a little farther, he saw a hen hawk rise with sudden flappings from the clam-shell mound. Hark, too; that faint, swelling, distant beat! surely it was a partridge! He looked up into the trees, and searched for it diligently: and there true

enough, settling, after the transatlantic manner, on a tall butternut (oh, heterodox bird!), he caught a single glimpse of the beautiful fluttering creature, as it took its perch lightly upon the topmost branches.

It was so delightful, all of it, that Hiram never thought of the time or his dinner, but simply wandered on, as a boy will, for hour after hour in that tangled woodland. What did he care, in the joy of his heart, for the coming beating? His one idea was to see the trappers. At last, he saw an unwonted sight through the trees—two men actually pushing their way along beside the river. His heart beat fast within him: could they be the trappers? Spurred on by that glorious possibility, he crept up quickly and noiselessly behind them. The men were talking quite loud to one another: no, they couldn't be trappers: trappers always go softly, and speak in a whisper. But if they weren't

trappers, what on earth could they be do down here in the unbroken forest? Not felling wood, that was clear; for they had no axes with them, and they walked along without ever observing the lie of the timber. Not going to survey wild lands, for they had none of those strange measuring things with them (Hiram was innocent of the name theodolite) that surveyors are always peeping and squinting through. Not gunning either, for they had no guns, but only simple stout walking-sticks. 'Sech a re-markable, on-common circumstance I never saw, and that's true as Judges,' Hiram said to himself, as he watched them narrowly. He would jest listen to what they were sayin', and see if he could make out what on airth they could be doin' down in them woods thar.

'When I picked him up,' one of the men was saying to the other, in a clear, distinct, delicate tone, such as Hiram had never heard

before, 'I saw it was a wounded merganser, winged by some bad shot, and fallen into the water to die alone. I never saw anything more beautiful than its long slender vermilion bill, the very colour of red sealing wax ; and its clean bright orange legs and feet ; and its pure white breast just tinged at the tip of each feather with faint salmon, or a dainty buff inclining to salmon. I was sorry I hadn't got my colours with me : I'd have given anything to be able to paint him, then and there.'

Hiram could hardly contain himself with mingled awe, delight, and astonishment. He wanted to call out on the spur of the moment 'I know that thar bird. I know him. 'Tain't called that name you give him, down our section, though. We call him a fisherman diver.' But he didn't dare to in his perfect transport of surprise and amazement. It wasn't the strange person's tone alone that

pleased him so much, though he felt, in a vague indefinable way, that there was something very 'beautiful and refined and exquisitely modulated in it—the voice being in fact the measured, clearly articulate voice of a cultivated New England gentleman, such as he had never before met in his whole lifetime: it wasn't exactly that, though that was in itself sufficiently surprising: it was the astounding fact that there was a full-grown, decently clad man, not apparently a lunatic or an imbecile, positively interesting himself in such childish things as the very colours and feathers of a bird, just the same as he, Hiram Winthrop, might have done in the blackberry bottom. The deacon never talked about the bill of a merganser! The deacon never noticed the dainty buff on the breast, inclining to salmon! The deacon never expressed any burning desire to pull out his brushes and paint it! All the men he

had ever yet seen in Geauga County would have regarded the colours on the legs of a bird as wholly beneath their exalted and dignified adult consideration. Corn and pork were the objects that engaged their profound intellects, not birds and insects. Hiram had always imagined that an interest in such small things was entirely confined to boys and infants. That grown men could care to talk about them was an idea wholly above his limited experience, and almost above what the deacon would have called his poor finite comprehension.

‘Yes,’ the other answered him, even before Hiram could recover from his first astonishment. ‘It’s a lovely bird. I’ve tried to sketch him myself more than once. And have you ever noticed, Audouin, the peculiar way the tints are arranged on the back of the neck? The crest’s black, you know, glossed with green; but the nape’s white; and the

colours don't merge into one another, as you might expect, but cease abruptly with quite a hard line of demarcation at the point of junction.'

'Jest for all the world as ef they was sewed together,' Hiram mnrmed to himself inaudibly, still more profoundly astonished at this incredible and totally unexpected phenomenon. Then there were two distinct and separate human beings in the world, it seemed, who were each capable of paying attention to the coloration of a common merganser. As Hiram whispered awestruck to his own soul, 'most mirac'lous!'

He followed them up a little farther, hanging anxiously on every word, and to his continued astonishment heard them notice to one another such petty matters as the flowering of the white maples, the twittering of the red-polls among the fallen pine-needles, the wider and ever wider circles on the water

where the pickerel had leaped, nay, even the tracks left upon the soft clay that marked the nightly coming and going of the stealthy wood-chuck. Impossible : unimaginable : utterly un-diaconal : but still true ! Hiram's spirit was divided within him. At last the one who was addressed as Audouin said casually to his companion, ' Let's sit down here, Professor, and have our lunch. I love this lunching in the open woods. It brings us nearer to primitive nature. I suppose the chord it strikes within us is the long latent and unstruck chord of hereditary habit and feeling. It's centuries since our old English ancestors lived that free life in the open woods of the Teutonic mainland ; but the unconscious memory of it reverberates dimly still, I often think, through all our nature, and comes out in the universal love for escape from conventionality to the pure freedom of an open-air existence.'

‘Perhaps so,’ the Professor answered with a laugh: ‘but if you’ll leave your Boston philosophy behind, my dear unpractical Audouin, and open your sandwich-case, you’ll be doing a great deal more good in the cause of hungry humanity than by speculating on the possible psychological analysis of the pleasure of picnicking.’

Hiram didn’t quite know what all that meant; but from behind the big alder he could, at least, see that the sandwiches looked remarkably tempting (by the way, it was clearly past dinner-time, to judge by the internal monitor), and the Professor was pouring something beautifully red and clear into a metal cup out of the wicker-covered bottle. It wasn’t whisky, certainly; nor spruce beer, either: could it really be that red stuff, wine, that people used to drink in Bible times, according to the best documentary authorities?

‘Don’t, pray, reproach me with the original

sin of having been born in Boston,' Audouin answered, with a slight half-affected little shiver. 'I can no more help that, of course, than I can help the following of Adam, in common with all the rest of our poor fallen humanity.' (Why, that was jest like the deacon!) 'But at least I've done my very best to put away the accursed thing, and get rid, for ever, of our polluted material civilisation. I've tried to flee from man (except always you, my dear Professor), and take refuge from his impertinent inanity in the bosom of my mother nature. From the haunts of the dry-goods man and the busy throng of drummers, I've come into the woods and fields as from a solitary desert into society. I prefer to emphasise my relations to the universe, rather than my relations to the miserable toiling ant-hill of petty humanity.'

'Really, Audouin,' the Professor put in, as he passed his friend the claret, 'you're grow-

ing positively morbid ; degenerating into a wild man of the woods. I must take you back for a while to the city and civilisation. I shall buy you a suit of store clothes, set you up in a five-dollar imported hat, and make you promenade State Street, afternoons, keeping a sharp eye on the Boston ladies and the Boston fashions.'

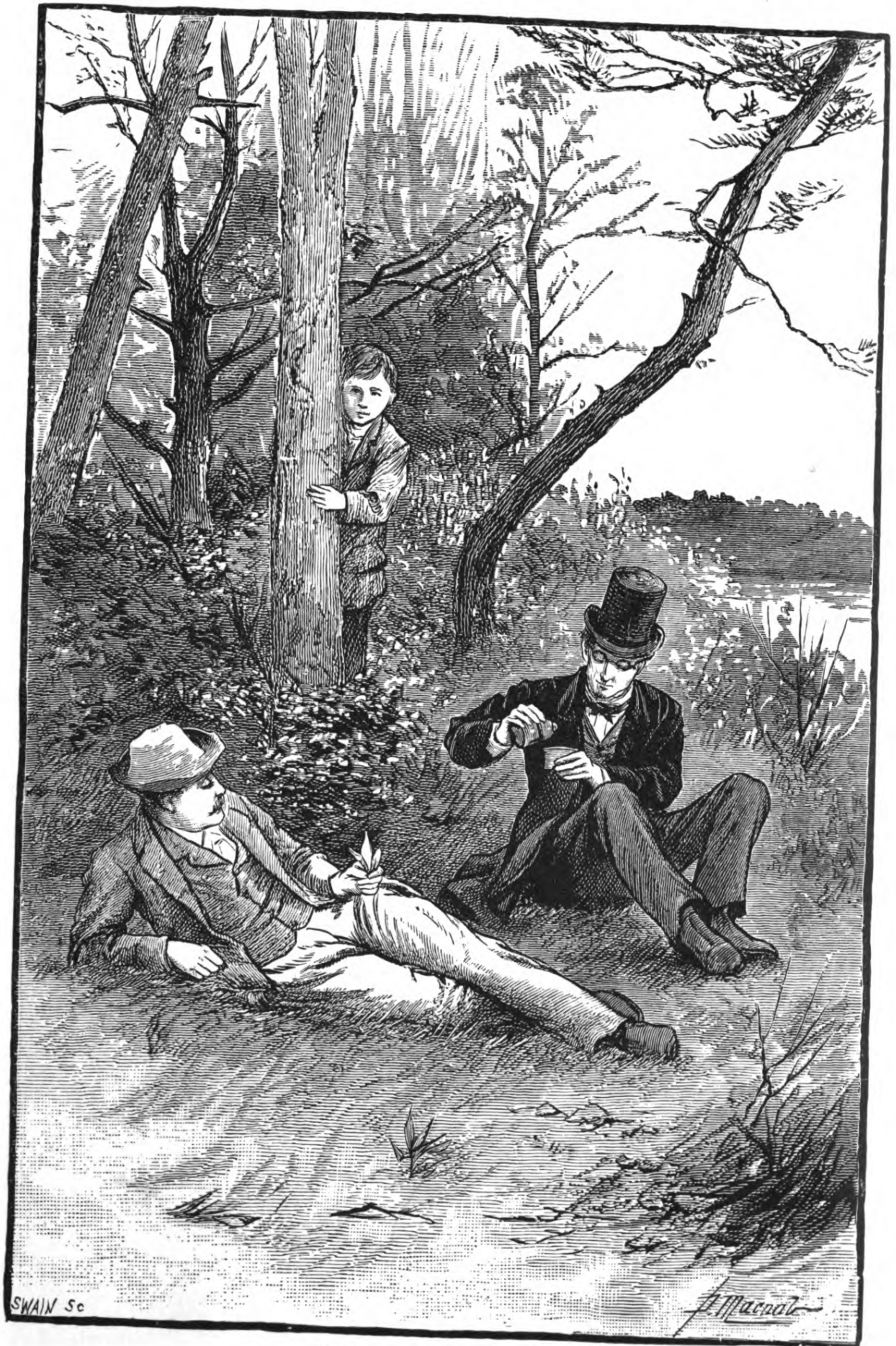
'No, no, Professor,' Audouin answered, with a graceful flourish of his small white hand : (Hiram noticed that it *was* small and white, though the dress the stranger actually wore was not a 'store suit' but a jacket and trousers of the local home-spun); 'no, no ; that would never do. I refuse to believe in your civilisation. I abjure it : I banish it. What is it? A mere cutting down of trees and disfiguring of nature, in order to supply uninteresting millions with illimitable pork and beans. The object of our society seems to be to provide more and more luxuriously

for our material wants, and to shelve all higher ideals of our nature for an occasional Sunday service and a hypothetical future existence. I turn with delight, on the other hand, from cities and railroad cars to the forest and the living creatures. They are the one group of beautiful things that the great Anglo-Saxon race, in civilising and vulgarising this vast continent, has left us still undesecrated. *They* are not conventionalised; *they* don't go to the Old Meeting House in European clothes Sunday mornings; they speak always to me in the language of nature, and tell me our lower wants must be simplified that the higher life may be correspondingly enriched. The only true way of salvation, after all, Professor, lies in perfect fidelity to one's own truest inner promptings.'

Hiram listened still, all amazed. He didn't fully understand it all; some of it sounded to him rather affectedly sentimental and finnikin;

but on the whole what struck him most was the strange fact that this fine-spoken town-bred gentleman seemed to have ideas about the world and nature—differently expressed, but fundamentally identical—such as he himself felt but never knew before anybody else in the whole world was likely to share with him. ‘That’s pretty near jest what I’d have said myself,’ the boy thought wonderingly, ‘if I’d knowed how: only I shouldn’t ever have bin able to say it so fine and high-falutin.’

They finished their lunch, and sat talking a while together under the shadow of the leafless hickories. The boy still stopped and watched them, spell-bound. At last Audouin pulled a head of flowers from close to the ground, and looked at it pensively, with his head just a trifle theatrically on one side. ‘That’s a curious thing, Professor,’ he said, eyeing it at different distances in his hand: ‘what do you call it now? I don’t know it.’



'Hiram listened still.'



‘I’m sure I can’t tell you,’ the Professor answered, taking it from him carelessly. ‘I don’t pretend to be much of a botanist, you see, and I’m out of my element down here among the lake-side flora.’

Hiram could contain himself no longer. ‘It’s skunk-cabbage,’ he cried, in all the exultation of boyish knowledge, emerging suddenly from behind the big alder. ‘Skunk-cabbage, the trappers call it. Ain’t it splendid? You kin hear the bees hummin’ an’ buzzin’ around it, fine days in spring, findin’ it out close to the ground, and goin’ into it, one at a time, before the willows has begun to blossom. I see lots as I kem along this mornin’, putting out their long tongues into it, and scarin’ away the flies as they tried to get a bit o’ the breakfast.’

Audouin laughed melodiously. ‘What’s this?’ he cried. ‘A heaven-born observer dropped suddenly upon us from the clouds!’

You seem to know all about it, my young friend. Skunk-cabbage, is it? But surely the bees aren't out in search of honey already, are they?'

'Tain't honey they get from it,' the boy answered quickly. 'It's bee-bread. Jest you see them go in, and watch 'em come out again, and thar you'll find they've all got little yaller pellets stickin' right on to the small hairs upon their thighs. That's bee-bread, that is, what they give to the maggots. All bees is born out of maggots.'

Audouin laughed again. 'Why, Professor,' he said briskly, 'this is indeed a phenomenon. A country-bred boy who cares for and watches nature! Boston must have set her mark on me deep, after all, for I'm positively surprised to find a lover of nature born so far from the hub of the universe. Skunk-cabbage, you call it; so quaint a flower deserves a rather better name. Do you know

the tassel-flower, my young fellow-citizen? (we're both citizens of the woods, it seems). Do you know tassel-flower? is it out yet? I want to find some.'

'I know it, some,' Hiram answered, delighted, 'but it ain't out yet; it comes a bit later. But I kin draw it for you, if you like, so's you can know it when it comes into blossom.' And he felt in his pocket for some invisible object, which he soon produced in the visible shape of a small red jasper arrow-head. The boy was just beginning to scratch a figure with it on a flat piece of water-rolled limestone when Audouin's quick eye caught sight, sideways, of the beautifully chipped implement.

'Ha, ha,' he cried, taking it from Hiram suddenly, 'what have we here, eh? The red man: his mark: as plain as printing. The broad arrow of the aboriginal possessor of all America! Why, this is good; this is

jasper. Where on earth did you get this from ? ’

‘ Whar on airth, ’ Hiram echoed, astonished anew ; ‘ why jest over thar : I picked it up as I kem along this morning. Thar’s lots about, ’specially in spring time. ’Pears as if the Injuns shot ’em off at painters and bars and settlers and things, and missed sometimes, and lost ’em. Then they lie thar in the ground a long time till some hard winter comes along to uncover ’em. Hard winters, the frost throws ’em up ; and when the snow melts, the water washes ’em out into the furrers. I’ve got crowds of ’em to home ; arrowheads and tommyhawks, aud terbacker pipes, an’ all sorts. I pick ’em up every spring, reglar.’

Audouin looked at the boy with a far more earnest and searching glance for a moment ; then he turned quickly to the Professor. ‘ There’s something in this, ’ he said, in a serious tone, very different from his

previous half-unreal banter. 'The bucolic intelligence evidently extends deeper than its linguistic faculties might at first lead one to suspect.' He spoke intentionally in hieroglyphics, aiming his words above the boy's head; but Hiram caught the general sense notwithstanding, and flushed slightly with ingenuous pride. 'Well, let's see your drawing,' Audouin went on, with a gracious smile, handing the boy back his precious little bit of pointed jasper.

Hiram took the stone weapon between finger and thumb, and scratching the surface of the waterworn pebble lightly with its point in a few places, produced in a dozen strokes a rough outline of the Canadian tassel-flower. Audouin looked at the hasty sketch in evident astonishment. It was his turn now to be completely surprised. 'Why, look here, Professor,' he said very slowly: 'this is—yes, this is—actually a drawing.'

The Professor took the pebble from his hands, and scanned it closely. 'Why, yes,' he said, in some surprise. 'There's certainly a great deal of native artistic freedom about the leaf and flower. It's excellent; in fact, quite astonishing. I expected a diagrammatic representation; this is really, as you say, Audouin, a drawing.'

Hiram looked on in perfect silence: but the colour came hot and bright in his cheek with very unwonted pleasure and excitement. To hear himself praised and encouraged for drawing was indeed a wonder. So very unlike the habits and manners of the deacon.

'Do you ever draw with a pencil?' Audouin asked after a moment's pause, 'or do you always scratch your sketches like this on flat bits of pebble?'

'Oh, I hev a pencil and book in my pocket,' Hiram answered shyly; 'only I kinder didn't care to waste the paper on a

thing like that; an' besides, I was scar't that you two growed-ups mightn't think well of my picturs that I've drawed in it.'

'Produce the pictures,' Audouin said in a tone of authority, leaning back against the trunk of the hickory.

Hiram drew them from his pocket timidly. 'Thar they are,' he murmured, with a depreciatory gesture. 'They ain't much, but they're all the picturs I knowed how to draw.'

Audouin took the book in his hand—Sam Churchill's ten-cent copybook—and turned over the well-filled pages with a critical eye. The Professor, too, glanced at it over his shoulder. Hiram stood mute and expectant before them, with eyes staring blankly, and in the expressive uncouth attitude of a naïf shamefaced American country boy.

At last Audouin came to the last page. 'Well, Professor'—he said inquiringly.

‘Something in them, isn’t there, eh? This boy’ll make a painter, I surmise, won’t he?’

The Professor answered only by opening a small portfolio, and taking out a little amateur water-colour drawing. ‘Look here, my son,’ he said, holding it up before Hiram. ‘Do you think you could do that sort of thing?’

‘I guess I could,’ Hiram answered, with the unhesitating confidence of inexperienced youth, ‘ef I’d on’y got the right sort of colours to do it with.’

The Professor laughed heartily. ‘Then you shall have them, anyhow,’ he said promptly. ‘Native talent shall not go unrewarded for the sake of a paltry box of Prussian blue and burnt sienna. You shall have them right off and no mistake. Where do you live, Mr. Melibœus?’

‘My name’s Hiram,’ the boy answered, a little smartly, for he somehow felt the unknown nickname was not entirely a courteous

one: 'Hiram Winthrop, and I live jest t'other side of Muddy Creek deepo.'

'Winthrop,' Audouin put in gaily. 'Winthrop. I see it all now. Good old Massachusetts name, Winthrop: connected with the hub of the universe after all, it seems, in spite of mere superficial appearances to the contrary. But it's a pretty far cry to Muddy Creek dépôt, my friend. You must be hungry, ain't you? Have you had your dinner?'

'No, I ain't.'

'Then you sit down right there, my boy, and pitch into those sandwiches.'

Hiram lost no time in obeying the seasonable invitation.

'How do you find them?' asked Audouin.

'Real elegant,' Hiram answered.

'Have some wine?'

'I never tasted none,' the boy replied. 'But it looks real nice. I don't mind ef I investigate it.'

Audouin poured him out a small cupful. The boy took it with the ease of a freeborn citizen, very unlike the awkwardness of an English plough-boy—an awkwardness which shows itself at once the last relic of original serfdom. ‘Tain’t bad,’ he said, tasting it. ‘So that’s wine, then! Nothing so much to go gettin’ mad about either. I reckon the colour’s the best thing about it, any way.’

They waited till the boy had finished his luncheon, and then Audouin began asking him a great many questions, cunningly devised questions to draw him out, about the plants, and the animals, and the drawings, and the neighbourhood, and himself, till at last Hiram grew quite friendly and confidential. He entered freely into the natural history and psychology of the deacon. He told them all his store of self-acquired knowledge. He omitted nothing, from the cuffs and reprobation to Sam Churchill and the bald-headed

eagles. At each fresh item Audouin's interest rose higher and higher. 'Have you gone to school, Hiram?' he asked at last.

'Common school,' Hiram answered briefly.

'Learnt much there?'

'Readin', writin', spellin', 'rithmetic, scrip-tur', jography, an' hist'ry an' const'tooshun of the United States,' Hiram replied, with the sharp promptitude begotten of rote learning.

Audouin smiled a sardonic Massachusetts smile. 'A numerous list of accomplishments, indeed,' he answered, playing with his watch-chain carelessly. 'The history of the United States in particular must be intensely interesting. But the Indians—you learnt about *them* yourself, I suppose—that's so, isn't it, Hiram? What we learn of ourselves is always in the end the best learning. Well, now look here, my boy; how'd you like to go to college, and perhaps in time teach school yourself?'

'I'd like that fust-rate,' Hiram answered;

‘but I think I’d like best of all to go to sea, or to be a painter.’

‘To be a painter,’ Audouin murmured softly; ‘to be a painter. Our great continent hasn’t produced any large crop of prominent citizens who wanted to be painters. This one might, after all, be worth trying. Well, Hiram, do you think if I were to ask your father, there’s any chance that he might possibly be willing to let you go to college?’

‘Nary chance at all,’ Hiram answered vigorously. ‘Why, father couldn’t spare me from the peppermint an’ the pertaters; an’ as to goin’ to college, why, it ain’t in the runnin’ any way.’

‘Professor,’ Audouin said, ‘this boy interests me. He’s vital: he’s aboriginal: he’s a young Antæus fresh from the bare earth of the ploughed fields and furrows. Let’s till him; without cutting down all the trees, let’s lay him out in park and woodland. I’ll have

a try, anyhow, with this terrible father of yours, Hiram. Are you going home now?’

‘I reckon I must,’ the boy answered with a nod. ‘He’ll be mad enough with me as it is for stopping away so long from him.’

‘You’ll get a thrashing, I’m afraid, when you go home?’

‘I guess that’s jest the name of it.’

‘Professor,’ Audouin said, rising resolutely, ‘this means business. We must see this thing right through immediately to the very conclusion. The boy must not have his thrashing. I’ll go and see the father—beard the Geauga County agriculturist in his very lair: dispute his whelp with him: play lambent lightning round him: save the young Antæus from sinking in the natural course of things into one more pickler of pork and contented devourer of buttered buckwheat pancakes. There’s a spark in him somewhere: I’m going to try whether I can manage to blow it up into a full-fed flame.’

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEACON FALTERS.

BOSTON has worn itself out. The artificial centre of an unnatural sickly exotic culture ever alien to the American soil, it has gone on studying, criticising, analysing, till all the vigour and spontaneity it may ever have possessed has utterly died out of it from pure inanition. The Nemesis of sterility has fallen upon its head in the second generation. It has cultivated men, fastidious critics, receptive and appreciative intellects by the thousand; but of thinkers, workers, originalities, hardly now a single one.

Lothrop Audouin was the very embodiment of the discontent and mocking intellectual

nihilism begotten of this purely critical un-originate attitude. Reaction against American materialism was the mainspring of his inner being. He felt himself out of harmony with the palace cars on the New York Central Railroad; jarring and conflicting with the big saloons of the Windsor Hotel; unappreciative of the advertising enterprise on the rocks of the Hudson River; at war with mammoth concerns, gigantic newspapers, Presidential booms, State legislatures, pop corn, saw mills, utilisation of water power, and all the other component elements of the great American civilisation. Therefore, being happily endowed by fate and his ancestors with a moderate competence, even as moderate competences go on the other side of the Atlantic, he had fled from Boston and the world to take refuge in the woods and the marshes. For some years he had hidden himself in the western hill district of Massachusetts; but

being driven thence by the march of intellect (enthroned on a steam plough), he had just removed to a new cottage on the shore of Muddy Creek, not far from its entry into Lake Ontario. There he lived a solitary life, watching the birds and beasts and insects, sketching the trees and shrubs and flowers, and shunning for the most part his fellow-man, save only his friend, the distinguished ornithologist, Professor Ezra P. Hipkiss, of Harvard College, Massachusetts.

The Professor had left them, intending to return home by himself; and Audouin walked back alone with the boy, noticing at every step his sharp appreciation of all the natural signs and landmarks around him. At last a sudden thought seemed to strike Hiram. He drew back a second in momentary hesitation. 'Say,' he said falteringly, 'you ain't one of Father Noyes's crowd at Oneida, are you?'

Audouin smiled half contemptuously.

Father Noyes is a New Haven fanatic who has established an Agapemone of his own in northern New York ; and to Hiram, who had heard the Oneida community spoken of with vague horror by all the surrounding farmers from his babyhood upward, the originally separate and distinct notions of Father Noyes and the Devil had so coalesced that even now in his maturer years they were not completely differentiated or demarcated. ‘No, no,’ Audouin answered reassuringly : ‘I’m not one of the Oneida people, my boy : I’m quite free from any taint of that sort. I’m a Boston man ; a Boston man, I said ; even in the woods that sticks to me. “Patriæ quis exul,” I think the line runs, “se quoque fugit.”’

Hiram didn’t understand exactly what he was driving at, but he went along satisfied at least that his strange acquaintance, though he spoke with tongues, was not directly connected either with Father Noyes or the Devil.

By-and-by they reached the high-road, and came at last opposite the bare gate that gave access to Deacon Winthrop's yard. Audouin gazed about him drearily at the dreary prospect. 'A very American view, Hiram,' he said slowly: 'civilisation hard at work here; my boy, we must try to redeem you out of it.'

Hiram looked up in the stranger's face curiously. He had grown up among his native surroundings so unquestioningly, after the fashion of boys, that, though he knew it was all very ugly, hopelessly and hideously ugly, it would never even have occurred to him to say so in so many words. He took it for granted that all the world was of course dull and uninteresting, except the woods, and the weeds, and the marshes, and the vermin. He expected always to find all man's handicraft a continuous course of uglification, and he never suspected that there could by any

possibility be anything beautiful except untouched and unpolluted nature. If you had told him about the wonders and glories of art, he would simply have listened to you then in mute incredulity.

Audouin lifted up the latch of the gate and walked into the yard ; and the deacon, seeing him approach, strode to meet him, in no very amiable frame of mind, thinking it probable that this was only another one of Hiram's undesirable trapper acquaintances. To say the truth, the misapprehension was a natural one. Audouin was coarsely dressed in rough country clothes, and even when he spoke a nature like the deacon's was hardly of the sort to be much impressed by his quiet cultivated manner. 'Wal, cap'n,' the deacon said, coming towards them, 'what might you be lookin' after this mornin', eh? I presume you air on the look-out for horses?'

Audouin smiled and bowed with a dignity

which suited strangely with his rude outer aspect. 'No, sir,' he answered in his bland voice. 'I'm not looking out for horses. I met your son here—a very interesting boy—down by the Creek, and I have come up here with him because his individuality attracted me. I wanted to have a talk with you about him.'

As it happened, to speak well of Hiram, and before his face too (the scapegrace!), wasn't exactly the surest path to the deacon's esteem and affection. He coughed nervously, and then inquired in his dry manner, 'Trapper?'

'No, not exactly a trapper,' Audouin replied, smiling again faintly. The faint smile and the 'exactly' both misled and exasperated the deacon.

'Farmer, then?' he continued laconically, after the fashion of the country.

'No, nor farmer either,' the New Englander answered in his soft voice. 'I am Mr. Audouin, of Lakeside Cottage.'

The deacon scanned him contemptuously from head to foot. 'Oh, *Mister* Audouin,' he said significantly. 'Wal, *Mister* Audouin, so you've bought up that thar ramshackle place of Hitchcock's, hev you? And what air you goin' to dew with it naow you've got it? Clear off the timber, I reckon, and set up rafting.'

'God forbid,' Audouin replied hastily. (The deacon frowned slightly at such obvious profanity.) 'I've taken the place just because of its very wildness, and I merely wish to live in it and watch and sympathise with nature. I see your son loves nature, too, and that has formed a bond of union between us.'

'Wal,' the deacon murmured meditatively, 'that's all accordin' to taste. Hiram is my own son, an' if the Lord has bin pleased to afflict us in him, mother an' me ain't the ones to say nothin' agin him to casual strangers, anyway. But I don't want to part with him,

Mister Audouin ; we ain't lookin' out for a place for him yet. Thar's work enough for him to do on this farm, I kin tell you, ef on'y he'd do it. You wasn't in want of any butter or eggs now, was you ?'

'No, Mr. Winthrop,' Audouin answered seriously, leaning against the gate as he spoke. 'I see you quite misunderstand me. Allow me a moment to explain the position. I'm a Boston man, a man of independent means, and I've taken Lakeside because I wish to live alone, away from a world in which I have really very little interest. You may possibly know, by name at least, my uncle, Senator Lothrop, of Syracuse ;' (that was a horrid bit of snobbery, worthy almost of the old world, Audouin thought to himself as he uttered it ; but it was necessary if he was to do anything for Hiram). 'Well, that's my card—some use in civilisation after all—Lothrop Audouin ; and I was wandering in the woods by the

Creek this morning with my friend, Professor Hipkiss of Harvard, when I happened to fall in quite accidentally with your son here. He charmed us by his knowledge of nature all around, and, indeed, I was so much interested in him that I thought I would just step over and have a little conversation with you about his future.'

The deacon took the little bit of paste-board suspiciously, and looked with slowly melting incredulity at Audouin's rough dress from head to foot. Even upon his dense, coarse, materialised mind the truth began to dawn slowly that he was dealing with a veritable gentleman. 'Wal, Mr. Audouin,' he said, this time without the ironical emphasis upon the 'Mister,' 'what do yer want to dew with the boy, eh, sir? I don't see as I kin spare him; 'pears to me, ef he's goin anywhar, he may as well go to a good farmer's.'

'You mistake me still,' Audouin went on.

‘My meaning is this. Your son has talked to the Professor and myself, and has shown us some of his sketches.’ The deacon nodded ominously. ‘Now, his conversation is so intelligent and his drawings so clever, that we both think you ought to make an effort to give him a good education. He would well repay it. We have both a considerable influence in educational quarters, and we would willingly exert it for his benefit.’

The deacon opened his eyes with astonishment. That lad intelligent? Why, he was no judge at all of a bullock, and he knew scarcely anythin’ more about fall wheat ’n a greenhorn that might hev kem out from Ireland by the last steamer. However, he contented himself upon that head with smiling sardonically, and muttered half to himself, ‘Edoocation; edoocational influence; not with members of the Hopkinsite connection, I reckon.’

Audouin carefully checked the smile that threatened to pull up the corners of his delicate mouth. He was beginning to understand now what manner of man he had got to deal with, and for Hiram's sake he was determined to be patient. Fancy such a lad living always exposed to the caprices of such a father! 'No,' he said gravely, 'not with the Hopkinsites, but with the Congregationalists and others, where your boy would not be interfered with in his religious convictions.'

'Tain't entirely satisfactory,' the deacon continued. 'Consider my persition as one set in authority, as it were, in the Hopkinsite connection. Hiram ain't bin nowhar so far, 'ceptin' to common school, an' I dunno as I hev made up my mind ever to send him anywhar else. Boys loses a lot o' time over this here edoocation. But ef I was to, I guess I should send him to Bethabara Seminary. We hev a seminary of our own, sir—we of the

Believin' Church, commonly known as the Hopkinsite connection—at Athens in Madison County, which we call Bethabara, because we surmise it's the on'y place in America whar the Gospel is taught on thorough-goin' Baptist principles. We air not only for immersion as agin sprinklin', mister, but also for scriptooral immersion in runnin' water as agin the lax modern practice of or'nary immersion in tanks or reservoyers. That's why we call our seminary Bethabara—Athens bein' sitoated on the Musk-rat river close above its junction with the Jordan; an' that's why, ef I was goin' to send Hiram anywhar, I should send him whar he could hear the Gospel expounded accordin' to the expositions an' opinions of Franklin P. Hopkins, of Massachusetts, which air the correck ones.'

'This question will take a little time to thrash out,' Audouin answered with unruffled gravity. 'May I ask, deacon, whether you

will courteously permit me to take a chair in your house and talk it over fully with you?’

‘Why, certainly,’ the deacon answered with a doubtful look that clearly belied his spoken words. ‘Hiram, you jest go an’ drive up the cows, sonny, an’ mind you put up the fence behind you, jest the same as you find it.’

They went together into the dreary living-room, a room such as Audouin had seen in duplicate ten thousand times before, with a bare wooden floor, bare walls, a white pine table, a rocking-chair, a bunk, some cane seats, a stove, and a cheap lithograph of a vacant-looking gentleman in a bag-wig and loose collar, whom an inscription surmounted by a spread eagle declared largely to have been first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen. (Lithographs of the sort are common in American farmhouses, and are understood to be posthumous libels on the in-

telligence and personal appearance of George Washington.) Audouin seated himself humbly on the bunk, and the deacon took his accustomed place in the rocking-chair, where he continued to sway himself violently to and fro during the whole interview.

Audouin began by pleading hard for education for Hiram, and suggesting, as delicately as he was able, that if pecuniary difficulties barred the way, they might perhaps be easily smoothed over. (As a matter of fact, he would willingly have given freely of that dirty paper, stamped with the treasury stamp, that they call money, to free such a lad as Hiram Winthrop from the curse of that material civilisation that they both so cordially detested.) He praised Hiram's intelligence and his wonderful talent for drawing: spoke of the wrongfulness of not allowing full play to his God-given faculties: and even condescended to point out that Hiram educated would prob-

ably make a much larger fortune (ugh! how he shuddered over it) than Hiram set to do the drudgery of a farm which he hated and always would hate. The deacon listened, half-wrathful; such open aiding and abetting of sinful rebelliousness and repining was almost too much for him; his only consolation was that Hiram wasn't along to listen to it all and drink in more unfilial sentiments from it.

But Audouin soon made one convert at least. Mrs. Winthrop, with her hard unlovable face, sat silently listening beside the stove, and picking over the potatoes for the spring planting. In her shrivelled mother's heart, she had always been proud of Hiram; proud even of his stubbornness and rebellion, which in some dim, half-unconscious fashion she vaguely knew to be really a higher, nobler sort of thing at bottom than the deacon's stern, unbending fidelity to the principles of Solomon and the Hopkinsite Confession. Somewhere

away down in the dark unfathomed depths of Mehitabel Winthrop's stunted personality there lay a certain stifled, undeveloped, long-since-smothered germ of human romance and feminine sympathy, which had blossomed out in Hiram into true love of art and of nature. Deadened as it was in her by the cruel toilsome life of Muddy Creek, with its endless round of dull monotonous labour, as well as by the crushing defeat experienced by all her girlish ideals in the awful reality of the married state with Zephaniah Winthrop, the deacon's wife still retained in some half-buried corner of her soul a little smouldering spark of the divine fire which enabled her in a doubtful half-frightened fashion to sympathise with Hiram. It was very wrong and weak of her, she knew : father was right, and Hiram was a no-account, idle loiterer : but still, when he spoke up to father, to his very face, about his novel-reading, and his birds-nesting, and his drawing, Mrs.

Winthrop was somehow aware of a sneaking admiration and pride in him which she never felt towards the deacon, even during his most effective and unctuous exhortation. And now, when she heard Audouin praising and speaking well of her boy for those very things that the deacon despised and rejected, she felt that here was somebody else who could appreciate Hiram, and that perhaps, after all, her own instinct had not in the end entirely misled her.

‘Zeph,’ she said at last—it was many years since she had called him ‘Zeph’ habitually, instead of ‘Father’ or ‘Deacon’—‘Zeph, I think we might manage to send Hiram to college.’

The deacon started. *Et tu, Brute!* This was really almost too much for him. He began to wonder whether the universe was turned upside down, and all the powers that be were hereafter to be ranged on the side

of rebelliousness and opposition. To say the truth, his godly horror was not altogether feigned. According to his lights, his dusky and feeble lights, the deacon wished and believed himself to be a good father. He held it his clear duty, as set forth in his reading of the prophets and apostles, to knock this idle nonsense out of Hiram, and train him up in the way he should go, to be a respectable corn-raising farmer and shining light of the Hopkinsite connection. These habits of hunting 'coons and making pictures of rattlesnakes, into which the boy had lapsed, were utterly abhorrent to the deacon's mind as idle, loitering, vagabond ways, deserving only of severe castigation. His reading of English classics appeared as a crime only one degree less heinous than frequenting taverns, playing cards, or breaking the Sabbath. The boy was a bad boy, a hopelessly bad boy, given him as a thorn

in the flesh to prevent spiritual boasting: on that hypothesis alone could the deacon account for such a son of perdition being born of such believing and on the whole (as poor worms go) extremely creditable parents.

And now, here was this fine-spoken, incomprehensible Boston critter, who had took that ramshackle place of Hitchcock's, and didn't even mean to farm it—here was this unaccountable phenomenon of a man positively interested in and pleased with Hiram, just because of these very self-same coon-hunting, snake-drawing, vagabond proclivities. The Deacon's self-love and self-respect were deeply wounded. Audouin had already been talking with the boy: no doubt he had set him even more agin his own father than ever. No doubt he had told Hiram that there was something fine in his heathenish love for Injun tommy-hawks, in his Bohemian longings for inter-

course with ungodly trappers (men to whom the Sabbath was absolutely indifferent), in his wicked yearning after Pickwick's Papers, and the Complete Dramatic Works of William Wakefield. The deacon couldn't bear to stultify himself after all, by sending Hiram to school at the request of this favourer of rebellion, this vile instigator of revolt against paternal authority, this Ahithophel who would lure on a foolish Absalom with guileful counsel to his final destruction.

'Wal, Het,' the Deacon said slowly, 'I dunno about it. We must take time to consider and to wrastle over it.'

But Audouin, now thoroughly in earnest, his sense of plot-interest vividly aroused, would hear of no delay, but that the question must be settled that very evening. He saw the deacon wouldn't entertain the idea of Hiram being sent somewhere to prepare for Yale or Harvard, where Audouin

would have liked him to go: and so, with a diplomatic cleverness which the deacon, if he could have read his visitor's mind, would doubtless have characterised as devilish, he determined to shift his ground, and beg only that Hiram might be sent to Bethabara. In a year or two, he said to himself, the boy would be older and would have a mind of his own; and then it would be possible, he thought, to send him to some college where his intellectual and artistic nature might have freer development than at the Hopkin-site Seminary. Bit by bit, the Deacon gave way: he couldn't as a consistent church member and a father with the highest interests of his son at heart, refuse to let him go to Bethabara, when a mere stranger declared he saw in him signs of talent. He yielded ungraciously at last, and told Audouin he wouldn't stand in the way of the boy's receivin' a good edoocation, purvided allus it

wa'n't contrary to the principles of Franklin P. Hopkins.

'Very well,' Audouin said with a sigh of relief. 'I'll write and inquire about the matter myself this very evening.'

'Address the Secatary,' Mr. Winthrop put in officially, 'Bethabara Seminary, Athens, N.Y.'

Audouin made a note in his memorandum book of the incongruous address with a stifled sigh.

'Mother,' the deacon said, 'call in Hiram.'

Mrs. Winthrop obeyed. Hiram, who had been loitering about the wood-shed in wonder at what this long interview could portend, slunk in timidly, and stood with his ragged hat in his hand beside the table.

'Hiram,' said the deacon, solemnly, with the voice and air of a judge publicly addressing a condemned criminal, 'that gentleman thar has been conversin' with mother an' me relatively to the desirability of sendin' you to

an edoocational establishment, whar you may, p'raps, be cured from your present oncommonly idle and desultory proclivities. Though you hev allus bin, as I confess with shame, a most lazy lad, sonny, an' hev never done anything to develop your nat'ral talents in any way, that gentleman thar, who has received a college edoocation hissself at one of our leadin' American Universities, an' who is competent by trainin' an' experience to form an opinion upon the subjeck, believes that you dew possess nat'ral talents of which you ain't yet giv any open indication. 'Tain't for me to say whether you may hev inherited them or not : it is sufficient to point out that that thar gentleman considers you might, with industry and application, dew credit in time to an edoocational institoot. Such an institoot of our own denomination is Bethabara Seminary, located at Athens, New York. Thar you would receive instruction not at variance

with the religious teachin' you hev enjoyed in your own residence an' from your own parents. An eminent Hopkinsite pastor is installed over that institoot as President; I allood to Elder Ezra W. Coffin, with whose commentary on the prophet Ezekiel you air already familiar. Mother an' me has decided, accordingly, that it will be for your good, both temporal and sperritooal we hope, to enter junior at Bethabara Seminary. That gentleman thar will make inquiries relatively to the time when you kin be received into the institootion. We trust that when you he ventered upon this noo stage in your career, you will drop them habits of idleness an' insubordination for which it has been my dooty on a great many occasions to correck you severely.'

Hiram stood there dazed and trembling, listening with blank amazement to the deacon's exhortation (the same as if it was conference), and only vaguely taking in the general idea

that he was to be sent away shortly to some school or other somewhere. Audouin saw at a glance the lad's timid hesitation, and added kindly : 'Your father and mother think, Hiram, that it would be well to send you to Bethabara ' (he suppressed his rising shudder), 'so that you may have opportunities of learning more about all the things in which you're already so much interested. You'll like it, my boy, I'm sure ; and you'll get on there, I feel confident.'

The boy turned to him gratefully : 'That's so, I guess,' he answered, with his awkward country gratitude ; 'I shall like it better 'n this, anyhow.'

The deacon frowned, but said nothing.

And so, before a week was over, Hiram had said good-bye to his mother and Sam Churchill, and was driving over in the deacon's buggy to Muddy Creek deepo, ong rowt for Athens, Madison County.

CHAPTER VIII.

WOOD AND STONE.

COLIN CHURCHILL'S first delight at the wood-carver's at Exeter was of the sort that a man rarely feels twice in a lifetime. It was the joy of first emancipation. Hitherto, Colin had been only a servant, and had looked forward to a life of service. Not despondently or gloomily—for Colin was a son of the people, and he accepted servitude as his natural guerdon—but blankly and without eagerness or repining. The children of the labouring class expect to walk through life in their humble way as through a set task, where a man may indeed sometimes meet with stray episodes of pleasure (especially that one human episode of love-making), but where for the most part

he will come across nothing whatsoever save interminable rules and regulations. Now, however, Colin felt himself free and happy: he had got a trade and a career before him, and a trade and a career into which he could throw himself with his utmost ardour. For the first time in his life Colin began dimly to feel that he too had something in him. How could he possibly have got up an enthusiasm about the vicar's boots, or about the proper way to deliver letters on a silver salver? But when it came to carving roses and plums out of solid mahogany or walnut, why, that of course was a very different sort of matter.

Even at Wootton Mandeville, the boy had somehow suspected, in his vague inarticulate fashion (for the English agricultural class has no tongue in which to express itself), that he too had artistic taste and power. When he heard the vicar talking to his friends about paintings or engravings, he recognised that he

could understand and appreciate all that the vicar said ; nay, more : on two or three occasions he had even boldly ventured to conceive that he saw certain things in certain pictures which the vicar, in his cold, dry, formal fashion, with his coldly critical folding eyeglass, could never have dreamt of or imagined. In his heart of hearts, even then, the boy somehow half-knew that the vicar saw what the vicar was capable of seeing in each work, but that he, Colin Churchill the page-boy, penetrated into the very inmost feeling and meaning of the original artist. So much, in his inarticulate way, the boy had sometimes surprised himself by dimly fancying ; but as he had no language in which to speak such things, even to himself, and only slowly learnt that language afterwards, he didn't formulate his ideas in his own head for a single minute, allowing them merely to rest there in the inchoate form of shapeless feeling.

Now, at Exeter, however, all this was quite altered. In the aisles of the great cathedral, looking up at the many-coloured saints in the windows, and listening to the long notes of the booming organ, Colin Churchill's soul awoke and knew itself. The gift that was in him was not one to be used for himself alone, a mere knack of painting pictures to decorate the bare walls of his bedroom, or of making clay images for little Minna to stick upon the fisherman's wooden mantelshelf: it was a talent admired and recognised of other people, and to be employed for the noble and useful purposes of carving pine-apple posts for walnut bedsteads or conventional scrolls for fashionable chimneypieces. To such great heights did emancipated Colin Churchill now aspire. Even his master allowed him to see that he thought well of him. The boy was given tools to work with, and instructed in the use of them; and he learnt how to employ

them so fast that the master openly expressed his surprise and satisfaction. In a very few weeks Colin was fairly through the first stage of learning, and was set to produce bits of scroll work from his own design, for a wainscoted room in the house of a resident canon.

For seven months Colin went on at his wood-carving with unalloyed delight, and wrote every week to tell Minna how much he liked the work, and what beautiful wooden things he would now be able to make her. But at the end of those seven months, as luck would have it (whether good luck or ill luck the future must say), Colin chanced to fall in one day with a strange companion. One afternoon a heavy-looking Italian workman dropped casually into the workshop where Colin Churchill was busy carving. The boy was cutting the leaves of a honeysuckle spray from life for a long moulding. The Italian

watched him closely for a while, and then he said in his liquid English : 'Zat is good. You can carve, mai boy. You must come and see me at mai place. I wawrk for Smeez and Whatgood.'

Colin turned round, blushing with pleasure, and looked at the Italian. He couldn't tell why, but somehow in his heart instinctively, he felt more proud of that workman's simple expression of satisfaction at his work than he had felt even when the vicar told him, in his stiff, condescending, depreciatory manner, that there was 'some merit in the bas-relief and drawings.' Smith and Whatgood were stonecutters in the town, who did a large trade in tombstones and 'monumental statuary.' No doubt the Italian was one of their artistic hands, and Colin took his praise with a flush of sympathetic pleasure. It was handicraftsman speaking critically and appreciatively of handicraftsman.

‘What’s your name, sir?’ he asked the man, politely.

‘You could not pronounce it,’ answered the Italian, smiling and showing his two fine rows of pure white teeth: ‘Giuseppe Cicolari. You cannot pronounce it.’

‘Giuseppe Cicolari,’ the boy repeated slowly, with the precise intonation the Italian had given it, for he had the gift of vocal imitation, like all men of Celtic blood (and the Dorsetshire peasant is mainly Celtic). ‘Giuseppe Cicolari! a pretty name. Do you carve figures for Smith and Whatgood?’

‘I am zair sculptor,’ the Italian replied, proudly. ‘I carve for zem. I carve ze afflicted widow, in ze classical costume, who bends under ze weeping willow above ze oorn containing ze ashes of her decease husband. You have seen ze afflicted widow? Ha, I carve her. She is expensive. And I carve ze basso-rilievo of Hope, gazing toward ze

sky, in expectation of ze glorious resurrection. I carve also busts ; I carve ornamental figures. Come and see me. You are a good workman. I will show you mai carvings.'

Colin liked the Italian at first sight : there was a pride in his calling about him which he hadn't yet seen in English workmen—a certain consciousness of artistic worth that pleased and interested him. So the next Saturday evening, when they left off work early, he went round to see Cicolari. The Italian smiled again warmly, as soon as he saw the boy coming. 'So you have come,' he said, in his slow English. 'Zat is well. If you will be artist, you must watch ozzer artist. Ze art does not come of himself, it is learnt.' And he took Colin round to see his works of statuary.

There was one little statuette among the others, a small figure of Bacchus, ordered from the clay by a Plymouth shipowner, that

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pleased Colin's fancy especially. It wasn't remotely like the Thorwaldsen at Wootton; that he felt intuitively; it was a mere clever, laughing, merry figure, executed with some native facility, but with very little real delicacy or depth of feeling. Still, Colin liked it, and singled it out at once amongst all the mass of afflicted widows and weeping children as a real genuine living human figure. The Italian was charmed at his selection. 'Ah, yes,' he said; 'zat is good. You have choosed right. Zat is ze best of ze collection. I wawrk at zat from life. It is from ze model.' And he showed all his teeth again in his satisfaction.

Colin took a little of Cicolari's moist clay up in his hand and began roughly moulding it into the general shape of the little Bacchus. He did it almost without thinking of what he was doing, and talking all the time, or listening to the Italian's constant babble; and Cicolari, with a little disdainful smile playing

round the corners of his full lips, made no outward comment, but only waited, with a complacent sense of superiority, to see what the English boy would make of his Bacchus. Colin worked away at the familiar clay, and seemed to delight in the sudden return to that plastic and responsive material. For the first time since he had been at Begg's wood-carving works, it suddenly struck him that clay was an infinitely finer and more manageable medium than that solid, soulless, intractable wood. Soon, he threw himself unconsciously into the task of moulding, and worked away silently, listening to Cicolari's brief curt criticisms of men and things, for hour after hour. In the delight of finding himself once more expending his energies upon his proper material (for who can doubt that Colin Churchill was a born sculptor?) he forgot the time—nay, he forgot time and space both, and saw and felt nothing on earth but the

artistic joy of beautiful workmanship. Cicolari stood by gossiping, but said never a word about the boy's Bacchus. At first, indeed (though he had admired Colin's wood-work), he expected to see a grotesque failure. Next, as the work grew slowly under the boy's hands, he made up his mind that he would produce a mere stiff, lifeless, wooden copy. But by-and-by, as Colin added touch after touch with his quick deft fingers, the Italian's contempt passed into surprise, and his surprise into wonder and admiration. At last, when the boy had finished his rough sketch of the head to his own satisfaction, Cicolari gasped a little, open-mouthed, and then said slowly: 'You have wawrked in ze clay before, mai friend?'

Colin nodded. 'Yes,' he said, 'just to amuse myself, don't 'ee see? Only just copyin' the figures at the vicarage.'

The Italian put his head on one side, and then on another, and looked critically at the

copy of the Bacchus. Of course it was only a raw adumbration, as yet, of the head and bust, but he saw quite enough to know at a glance that it was the work of a born sculptor. The vicar had half guessed as much in his diletante hesitating way; but the workman, who knew what modelling was, saw it indubitably at once in that moist Bacchus. 'Mai friend,' he said decisively, through his closed teeth, 'you must not stop at ze wood-carving. You must go to Rome and be a sculptor. Yes. To Rome. To Rome. You must go to Rome and be a sculptor.'

The man said it with just a tinge of jealousy in his tone, for he saw that Colin Churchill could not only copy but could also improve upon his Bacchus. Still, he said it so heartily and earnestly, that Colin, now well awakened from his absorbing pursuit, laughed a boyish laugh of mingled amusement and exultation. 'To Rome!' he cried gaily. 'To

Rome! Why, Mr. Cicolari, that's where all the pictures are, by Raffael and Michael Angelo and them that I used to see at the vicarage. Rome! why isn't that the capital of Italy?' For he put together naïvely the two facts about Rome which he had yet gathered: the one from the vicar's study, and the other from the meagre little geography book in use at the Wootton national school.

'Ze capital of Italy!' cried the Italian contemptuously. 'Yes, mai friend, it is ze capital of Italy. And it is somesing more zan zat. I tell you, it is ze capital of art.'

Colin Churchill was old enough now to understand the meaning of those words; and from that day onward, he never ceased to remember that the goal of all his final endeavours must be to reach Rome, the capital of art, and then learn to be a sculptor.

CHAPTER IX.

CONSPIRACY.

AFTER that, Colin went many days and evenings to see Cicolari: and the more he talked with him and the more he watched him, the more dissatisfied did the boy get with the intractability of wood, and the more enamoured did he become of the absolute plasticity of clay and marble. How could he ever have been such a fool, he thought to himself, after having once known what he could do with the kneaded mud of Wootton lake, as to consent—nay, to consent gladly—to work in stupid, hard, irresponsive walnut, instead of in his own familiar, plastic, all-potential material? Why, wood, do what

you would to it, was wood still: clay, and after clay marble, would answer immediately to every mood and fancy and idea of the restless changeable human personality. The fact was the ten or twelve months Colin Churchill had spent at Exeter had made a vast difference to his unfolding intellect. He was going to school now—to the university of native art; he was learning himself and his own powers; learning to pit his own views and opinions against those of other and less artistic workmen. Every day, though he couldn't have told you so himself, the boy was beginning to understand more and more clearly that while the other artificers he saw around him had decent training, he himself had instinctive genius. He ought to have employed that genius upon marble, and now he was throwing it away upon mere wood. When one of the canons called in one day patronisingly to praise his wooden roses, he

could scarcely even be civil to the good man : praising his wooden roses, indeed, when he saw that fellow Cicolari engaged in modelling from the life a smiling Bacchus ! It was all too atrocious !

‘ Mai friend,’ Cicolari said to him one day, as he was moulding a bit of clay in his new acquaintance’s room, into the counterfeit presentment of Cicolari’s own bust, ‘ you should not stop at ze wood wawrk. You have no freedom in ze wood, no liberty, no motion. It is all flat, stupid, ungraceful. You are fit for better sings. Leave ze wood and come here and wawrk wiz me.’

Colin sighed deeply. ‘ I wish I could, Mr. Cicolari,’ he said eagerly. ‘ I was delighted with the wood at first, and now I’m disgusted at ’un. But I can’t leave ’un till I’m twenty-one, because I’m bound apprentice to it, and I’ve got to go on with the thing now whether I like ’un or not.’

Cicolari made a wry face, expressive of a very nasty taste, and went through a little pantomime of shrugs and open hand-lifting, which did duty instead of several vigorous sentences in the Italian language. Colin readily translated the pantomime as meaning in English: 'If I were you, I wouldn't trouble myself about that for a moment.'

'But I can't help it,' Colin answered in his own spoken tongue; 'I'm obliged to go on whether I choose to or not.'

Cicolari screwed himself up tightly, and held his hands, palms outward, on a level with his ears, in the most suggestive fashion. 'England is a big country,' he observed enigmatically.

Colin's face flushed at the vague hint, but he said nothing.

'You see,' Cicolari went on quickly, 'you are a boy yet. When you come to Exeter, you are still a child. You come from your

own village, your country, and you know nossing of ze wawrld. Zis master and ze priest of your village between zem, zey bind you down and make you sign a paper, indenture you call it, and promise to wawrk for zem zese six years. It is ridiculous. When you come here, you do not know your own mind: you do not understand how it differs, wood and marble. Now you are older: you understand zat; it is absurd zat you muss stand by ze agreement.'

Colin listened and took in the words eagerly. 'But what can I do, Mr. Cicolari?' he asked in suspense. 'Where can I go to?'

'England is a big country,' the Italian repeated, with yet another speaking pantomime. 'Zere are plenty railways in England. Zere is wawrk for clever lads in London. I have friends zere who carve in marble. Why should you not go zere?'

'Run away?' Colin said, interrogatively.

‘Run away, if you call it zat,’ Cicolari replied, bowing with his curved hands in front of his breast, apologetically. ‘What does it matter, ze name? Run away if zey will not let you go. I care not what you call it. Zey try to keep you unjustly; you try to get away from zem. Zat is all.’

‘But I’ve got no money to go with,’ Colin cried, faltering

‘Zen get some,’ Cicolari answered with a shrug.

Colin thought a good deal about that suggestion afterwards, and the more he thought about it, the more did it seem to him just and proper. A week or two later, little Minna came over to Exeter for a trip, nominally to do a few errands of household shopping, but really of course to see Colin; and to her the boy confided this difficult case of conscience. Was the signature obtained from him when he first came to Exeter binding on

him now that he knew more fully his own powers, and rights, and capabilities?

Colin was by this time a handsome lad of sixteen, while little black-eyed gipsy-faced Minna, though two years younger than him, was already budding out into a pretty woman, as such dark types among the labouring classes are apt to do with almost Oriental precocity.

‘What should you do, Colin?’ she repeated warmly, as the boy propounded his question in casuistry to her for her candid solution. ‘Why, just you go and do what Mr. Chickaleary tells you, won’t ’ee, sure?’

‘But would it be right, Minna?’ Colin asked. ‘You know I signed the agreement with them.’

‘What’s the odds of that, stupid?’ Minna answered composedly. ‘That were a year ago an’ more, weren’t it? You weren’t no more nor a boy then, Lord bless ’ee.’

‘A year older nor you are now, Minna,’ Colin objected.

‘Ah, but you didn’t know nothing about this sculpturin’ then, you see, Colin. They tooked advantage of you, that’s what they did. They hadn’t ought to have done it.’

‘But I say, Minna, why shouldn’t I wait till I’m twenty-one, an’ then take up the marble business, eh?’

‘What rubbish the boy do talk,’ Minna cried, imperiously. ‘Twenty-one indeed! Talk about twenty-one! Why, by that time you’d ’a’ got fixed in the wood-carving, and couldn’t change your trade for marble or nothin’. If you’re goin’ to change, you must do it quickly.’

‘I hate the wood-carving,’ Colin said, gloomily.

‘Then run away from it and be done wi’ it.’

‘Run away from it! Oh, Minna, do you

know that they could catch me and put me in prison?’

‘I’d go to prison an’ laugh at ’em, sooner nor I’d be bound for all those years against my will,’ Minna answered firmly. ‘Leastways I would if I was a man, Colin.’

That last touch was the straw that broke the camel’s back with poor Colin. ‘I’ll go,’ he cried; ‘but where on earth can I go to? It’s no use goin’ back to Wootton. Vicar ’d help ’em to put me in prison.’

‘I’d like to see ’em,’ Minna answered, with her little eyes flashing. ‘But why can’t you go to London like Mr. Chickaleary told you?’

‘Cicolari, Minna,’ Colin said, correcting her as gravely and distinctly as the vicar had corrected Miss Eva. ‘The Italians call it Cicolari. It’s as well to be right whenever we can, ain’t it? Well, I can’t go to London, because I’ve got no money to go with. I don’t know as I could get any

work when I got there; but I know I can't get there without any money; so that settles it.'

Minna rose from the seat in the Northernhay where they were spending Colin's dinner-hour together and walked slowly up and down for a minute or two without speaking. Then she said, with a little hesitation, 'Colin!'

'Well, Minna.'

'I could lend 'ee—lend you—nine shillin'.'

'Nine shillings, Minna! Why, where on earth did you get 'em from?'

'Saved 'em,' Minna answered laconically.

'Fish father give me. In savin's bank.'

'What for, Minna?'

Minna hesitated again, still more markedly. Though she was only fourteen, there was a good deal of the woman in her already. 'Because,' she said at last timidly, 'I thought it was best to begin savin' up all my money

now, in case—in case I should ever want to furnish house if I was to get married.’

Country boy as he was, and child as she was, Colin felt instinctively that it wouldn’t be right of him to ask her anything further about the money. ‘But, Minna,’ he said, colouring a little, ‘even if I was to borrow it all from you, all your nine shillings, it wouldn’t be enough to take me to London.’

Minna had a brilliant idea. ‘Wait for a ’scursion,’ she said simply.

Colin looked at her with admiring eyes. ‘Well, Minna,’ he cried enthusiastically, ‘you *are* a bright one, and no mistake. That’s a good idea, that is. I should never have thought of that. I could carve you, Minna, so that a stranger anywhere ’d know who it was the minute he set eyes on it; but I should never have thought of *that*, I can tell you.’

Minna smiled and nodded, the dimple in her brown cheek growing deeper, and the

light in her bright eye merrier than ever. What a vivacious, expressive little face it was, really! 'I'll tell you what I'd do,' Minna said, with her sharp determination as if she were fifty. 'I'd go first and ask Mr. What's-his-name to let me off the rest of my 'prenticeship. I'd tell him I didn't like wood, an' I wanted to go an' make statues. Then if he said to me: "You go on with the wood-carvin' an' don't bother me," I'd say: "No, I don't do another stroke for you." Then if he hit me, I'd leave off, I would, an' refuse to work another turn till he was tired of it. But if he hardened his heart then, an' wouldn't let 'ee go still, I'd wait till there was a 'scursion, I would, and then I'd run away to Mr. Chick-o-lah-ree's friends in London. That's what I'd do if I was you, Colin.'

'I will, Minna,' Colin faltered out in reply;
'I will.'

'Do 'ee, Colin,' Minna cried eagerly, catch-

ing his arm. 'Do 'ee, Colin, and I'll send 'ee the money. Oh, Colin, I know if you'd only get 'prenticed to the sculpturin', you'd grow to be as grand a man—as grand as parson.'

'Minna,' Colin said, taking her hand in his as if it were a lady's, 'thank you very much for the money, an' if I have to work my fingers to the bone for it, I'll send it back to 'ee.'

'Don't 'ee do that, Colin, oh don't 'ee do that,' Minna cried eagerly. 'I'd a great deal rather for you to keep it.'

When Colin told Cicolari of this episode (suppressing so much of it as he thought proper), the Italian laughed and showed all his teeth, and remarked with a smile that Colin was very young yet. But he promised staunchly to keep the boy's secret, and to give him good introductions to his former employer in London.

The die was cast now, and Colin Churchill

resolutely determined in his own mind that he would abide by it. So a few days later he screwed up courage towards evening to go to Mr. Begg, his master, and for form's sake, at least, ask to be let off the remainder of his apprenticeship. 'At any rate,' he thought to himself, 'I won't try running away till I've tried in a straightforward way to get him to cancel the indentures I signed when I didn't really know what I was signing.'

Mr. Begg, that eminently respectable Philistine cabinet-maker, opened his eyes in blank astonishment when he actually heard with his two waking ears this extraordinary and unprecedented request. 'Let you off the rest of your time, Churchill!' he cried, incredulously. 'Was that what you said, boy? Let—you—off—the rest—of—your—time?'

'Yes,' Colin answered, with almost dogged firmness, 'I said that.'

‘And why, Churchill?’ Mr. Begg asked again, lost in amazement. ‘And why?’

‘Because, sir, I don’t like wood-carving, and I feel I could do a great deal better at marble.’

Mr. Begg gazed up at him (he was a little man and Colin was tall) in utter surprise and hesitation. ‘You’re not mad, are you, Churchill?’ he inquired cautiously. ‘You’re not mad, are you?’

‘No, sir,’ Colin replied stoutly; ‘but I think I must have been when I signed them indentures.’

The cabinet-maker went into his little office, called Colin in, and then sat down in a dazed manner to hear this strange thing out to its final termination. Colin burst forth, then, with his impassioned pleading, astonishing himself by the flood of native eloquence with which he entreated Mr. Begg to release him from that horrid wood-carving, and let

him follow his natural calling as a sculptor in clay and marble. He didn't know what he was doing when he signed the indentures; he had only just come fresh from his life as a servant. Now he knew he had the makings of a sculptor in him, and a sculptor alone he wished to be. Mr. Begg regarded him askance all the time, as a man might regard a stray dog of doubtful sanity, but said never a single word, for good or for evil. When Colin had worn himself out with argument and exhortation, the cabinet-maker rose from his high seat, unlocked his desk mechanically, and took out of it his copy of Colin's indentures. He read them all through carefully to himself, and then he laid them down with the puzzled air of one who meets for the first time in his life with some inexplicable practical enigma. 'This is very strange, Churchill,' he muttered, coolly, half to himself; 'this is really most remarkable. There's no mistake or flaw of

any sort in those indentures ; nothing on earth to invalidate 'em or throw doubt upon them in any way. Your signature's there as clear as daylight. I can't understand it. You've always been a good workman — the best apprentice, take you all round, I've ever 'ad 'ere ; and Canon Melville, he's praised your carving most uncommonly, and so they all do. A good, honest-working, industrious lad I've always found you, one time with another ; not such a great eater neither ; and I was very well satisfied altogether with you till this very evening. And now you come and say you want to cancel your indentures, and go to the stone-cutting ! Never heard anything so remarkable in all my life ! Why, you're worth more than a hundred pounds to me ! I couldn't let you go, not if you was to pay me for it.'

Poor Colin ! how he wished at that moment that he had been idle, careless,

voracious and good-for-nothing! His very virtues, it seemed, were turning against him. He had thrown himself so heartily into the wood-carving at first that his master had found him worth half a dozen common apprentices. He fumbled in his pocket nervously at little Minna's poor nine shillings which he had changed that very morning from her post-office order.

'Can't you understand, Mr. Begg,' he said at last, despairingly, 'that a fellow may change his mind? He may feel he can do one thing a great deal better than another, and he may have a longing to do that thing and nothing else, because he loves it?'

Mr. Begg gazed at him stolidly. 'Cabinet-making 's a very good trade,' he said in his dull methodical bourgeois tone; 'and so, no doubt, 's stone-cutting. But these indentures 'ere bind you down to the cabinet-making, Churchill, and not to the sculpture business.

There's your signature to 'em ; and you've got to stick to it. So that's the long and the short of it.'

'But it's not the end of it,' Colin answered in his most stubborn voice (and your Dorsetshire man can be very stubborn indeed when he pleases) : 'if you don't let me off my indentures as I ask you, you'll have to put up in future with what you can get out of me.'

Next morning, when it was time to begin work, Colin marched as usual into the workshop, and took up a gouge as if to continue carving the panel on which he was engaged. But instead of doing anything to the purpose, he merely kept on chipping off small splinters of wood in an aimless fashion for half an hour. After a time, Mr. Begg observed him, and came up to see what he was doing, but said nothing. All through the day Colin went on in the same manner, and from time to time Mr. Begg looked in and found the work no

further advanced than it had been last evening ; still, he said nothing. When the time came to shut up the shop, Mr. Begg looked at him sternly, but only uttered a single sentence : ‘ We shall have the law of you, Churchill ; we shall have the law of you.’

Colin stared him back stolidly and answered never a word.

For a whole week, this passive duel between the man and boy went on, and towards the end of that time Mr. Begg began to grow decidedly violent. He shook Colin fiercely, he boxed his ears, he even hit him once or twice across the head with his wooden ruler ; but Colin was absolutely immovable. To all that Mr. Begg said the boy returned only one answer : ‘ I mean to be a sculptor, not a wood-carver.’ Mr. Begg had never seen anything like it.

‘ The obstinacy and the temper of that boy Churchill,’ he said to his brother-trades-

men, 'is really something altogether incredulous.' (It may be acutely conjectured that he really meant to say 'incredible.')

Sunday came at last, and on Sundays Colin went round to visit Cicolari. The Italian listened sympathetically to the boy's story, and then he said, 'I have an idea of mai own, mai friend. Let us both go to London together. I have saved some money; I want to set up on mai own account as a sculptor. You will go wiz me. I have quarrelled wiz Smeez. We will start to-morrow morning. I will pay you wages, good wages, and you will wawrk for me, and be mai assistant.'

'But I've only got nine shillings,' Colin answered.

'I will lend you the rest,' Cicolari said.

Colin closed with the offer forthwith, and went home to Mr. Begg's trembling with excitement.

Early next morning, he tied up his clothes in his handkerchief, crept downstairs noiselessly and let himself out by the backdoor. Then he ran without stopping all the way to the St. David's station, and found Cicolari waiting for him in the booking office. As the engine steamed out of the station, Colin felt that he was leaving slavery and wood-carving behind him for ever, and was fairly on his way to London, Rome, and a career as a sculptor.

Mr. Begg, when he found that Colin was really gone, didn't for a moment attempt to follow him. It was no use, he said, to throw good money after bad: the boy had made up his mind not to work at wood-carving; he was as stubborn as a mule; and nothing on earth would ever make him again into a good apprentice. So, though he felt perfectly sure that that nasty foreigner fellow had enticed away the boy for his own

purposes, he wouldn't attempt to bring him back or take the trouble to have him punished. After all, he reflected to himself philosophically, as things had lately turned out it was a good riddance of bad rubbish. Besides, it would be rather an awkward thing to come out before the magistrate that he had hit the boy more than once across the head with a wooden ruler.

Two days later, it was known in Wootton Mandeville that that lad o' Churchill's had gone and broke his indentures and runned away from Exeter along of a furrener chap o' the name of Chickaleary. The vicar received the news with the placid contentment of a magnanimous man, who has done his duty and has nothing to reproach himself with, but who always told you so from the very beginning. 'I quite expected it, Eva,' he said loftily; 'I fully expected it. Those Churchills were always a bad radical lot, and this

boy's just about the very worst among them. When I discovered his slight taste for carving, I feared it was hardly right to encourage the lad in ideas above his station : but I was determined to give him a chance, and now this is how he goes and repays us. I did my best for him : very respectable man, Begg, and well recommended by Canon Harbottle. But the boy has no perseverance, no application, no stability. Put him to one thing, and he runs away at once and tries to do another. Quite what I expected, quite what I expected.'

'Perhaps,' Eva ventured to say suggestively, 'if you'd sent him to a sculptor's in London at first, uncle, he might have been perfectly ready to stop there. But you see his natural taste was for sculpture, not for wood-carving ; and I'm not altogether surprised myself to hear he should have left Exeter.'

The vicar put up his double eyeglass and

surveyed Eva from head to foot, as though she were some wild animal, with a stare of mingled amazement and incredulity. 'Well,' he said slowly, opening the door to dress for dinner. 'Upon my word! What the young people of this generation are coming to is really more than I can answer for.'

CHAPTER X.

MINNA IMPROVES HERSELF.

FIVE years is a long slice out of a young man's life, but the five years that Colin Churchill spent with Cicolari in London were of a sort that he need never have regretted; for though the work he learnt to do in the Italian's little shop and studio in the Marylebone Road was mainly self-taught, he found Cicolari always sympathetic and anxious to help him, and he had such opportunities of study and improvement at the British Museum, and the South Kensington, and the great houses in the suburban counties, as he could never have obtained in the artless wilds of his native west country. It was a grand

day for Colin, the day when he first entered the smoky galleries in Great Russell Street and feasted his eyes on those magnificent Hellenic torsos, carved by the vivifying chisel of Pheidias himself. Cicolari was an easy master: he had an Italian's love of art for art's sake and he was proud of 'mai Englishman,' as he used to call him; the boy whom he had himself discovered in the midst of a profoundly inartistic race, and released from the petty drudgery of an uncongenial vulgar calling. He felt a genuine interest in Colin's success; so he allowed the boy as much time as possible for visiting the places where he could see the finest works of art in England, and helped him to see those which are usually locked up in rich men's tasteless houses from the eyes of all who would most appreciate them.

Colin's own taste and love for art, too, were daily developing. He saw all that he could see, and he read about all that he

couldn't see, spending every penny of his spare money (after he had repaid poor little Minna's nine shillings) on books about sculpture and painting; and making frequent visits to the reading-room and galleries at the great Museum. Now and then, too, when the trade in mourning widows was slack, when busts were flat and statuettes far from lively, Cicolari would run down into the country with him, and explore the artistic wonders of the big houses. At Deepdene they could look at Thorwaldsen's Jason and Canova's Venus: at Knole they gazed upon Vandycks, and Reynolds's, and Constables, and Gainsboroughs; in London itself they had leave to visit the priceless art collections at Stafford House, and half a dozen other great private galleries. So Colin Churchill's mind expanded rapidly, in the midst of the atmosphere it should naturally have breathed. Not books alone, but the mighty works of the mightiest workers,

were the documents from which he spelt out slowly his own artistic education. Later on, men who met Colin Churchill at Rome—men who had gone through the regular dull classical round of our universities—were astonished to find that the Dorsetshire peasant-sculptor, of whom they had heard so much, was a widely cultivated and well-read man. They expected to see an inspired boor wielding a sculptor's mallet in a rude labourer's hand: they were surprised to meet a handsome young man, of delicate features and finely-stored mind, who talked about *Here* and *Aphrodite*, and the nymphs who came to visit the bound *Prometheus*, as if he had known them personally and intimately all his life long in their own remote Hellenic dwelling places.

And indeed, though the university where Colin Churchill took his degree with honours was not one presided over by doctors in red

hoods and proctors in velvet sleeves, one may well doubt whether he did not penetrate quite as deeply, after all, into the inmost recesses of the great Hellenic genius as most men who have learnt to write iambic trimeters from well-trained composition masters, with the most careful avoidance of that ugly long syllable before the cretic in the two last feet, to which the painstaking scholar attaches so much undue importance. Do you think, my good Mr. Dean, or excellent Senior Censor, that a man cannot learn just as much about the Athens of Pericles from the Elgin Marbles as from a classical dictionary or a dog-eared Thucydides? Do you suppose that to have worked up the first six Iliads with a Liddell and Scott brings you in the end so very much nearer the heart and soul of the primitive Achæans than to have studied with loving care the vases in the British Museum, or even to have followed with a sculptor's eye

the exquisite imaginings of divine John Flaxman? Why, where do you suppose Flaxman himself got his Homer from, except from the very same source as poor, self-taught Colin Churchill—Mr. Alexander Pope's correctly colourless and ingenious travesty? Do you really believe there is no understanding the many-sided essentially artistic Greek idiosyncrasy except through the medium of the twenty-four written signs from alpha to omega? Colin Churchill didn't believe so, at least: and who that has seen his *Alcestis*, or his *Agamemnon* and *Clytemnestra*, or his *Death of Antigone*, can fail to admit that they are in very truth the direct offshoots of the Hellas of Sophocles, and Æschylus, and Pheidias?

All Colin Churchill's reading was, in its way, sculpturesque. Of poetry, he loved Milton better than Shakespeare. Shakespeare is the painter's poet, Milton the sculp-

tor's; and he wearied out his soul because he could never rise in clay to his own evasive mental image of the Miltonic Satan. He read Shelley, too, most Greek of Englishmen, and took more than one idea for future statues from those statuesque tragedies and poems. But best of all he loved Æschylus, whom he couldn't read in the original, to be sure, but whom he followed through half a dozen translations till he had read himself into the very inmost spirit of the Agamemnon and the Persæ and the Prometheus. The man who has fed his fancy on Æschylus, Milton, and Shelley, and his eyes on Michael Angelo, Thorwaldsen, and Flaxman, is not, after all, wholly wanting in the elements of the highest and purest culture.

Two years after Colin went to live at the little workshop in the Marylebone Road, another person came to swell the population of the great metropolis by a unit, and to

correspondingly diminish the dwindling account at Wootton Mandeville. Minna Wroe was now sixteen, and for a year past she had been living out at service as kitchen-maid at the village doctor's. But Minna was an ambitious small body, and had a soul above dish-cloths. So she kept the precious nine shillings that Colin had returned to her well hoarded in her own little purse, and added to them from time to time whatever sums she could manage to save from her small wages—for wages are low in Dorsetshire, and white caps cost money both for the buying and washing, you may be certain. When her sixteenth birthday had fairly come and gone Minna gave notice to her mistress, and at the end of her month started off to London, like so many other young people of both sexes, to seek her fortune.

‘Dear Colin,’ she wrote to him a day or two before from the doctor's at Wootton, ‘I

am coming up to London to look out for a situation on Monday next, and I should be very glad if you could meet me at Paddinton Station at 6.30. I have not got a situation but I hope soon to get one there is lots to be had in London and has you are their I should like to be in London. Please dear Colin come to meet me as I am going to Mrs. Woods of Wootton till I get a situation to lodge with love from all so no more at present from your old Friend, Minna.'

Colin took the letter from the postman, as he was working at the clay of a little bas-relief for a mural tablet, and read it over twice to himself with very mingled and uncertain feelings. . On the first reading he felt only a glow of pleasure to think that little Minna, his old playmate, would now be within easy reach of him. Colin had never considered himself exactly in love with Minna (he was only eighteen), and he had even

indulged (since the sad truth must out) in a passing flirtation with the young lady at the open greengrocer's shop just round the corner ; but he was very fond of Minna for all that, and in an indefinite way he had always felt as if she really belonged to him far more than anybody else did. So his first feeling was one of unmixed pleasure at the prospect of having her to live so near him. On the second reading, however, it did strike even Colin, who was only just beginning his own self-education in literary matters, that the letter might have been better spelt and worded and punctuated. He had been rising in the social scale so gradually that, for the first time in his life, he then felt as if Minna were just one single level below him, intellectually and educationally.

He pocketed the letter with a slight sigh, and went on moulding the drapery of St. Mary Magdalene, after the design from a

fresco in St. John Port Lateran. Would Minna care at all about Flaxman, he wondered to himself mutely ; would she interest herself in that admirable replica by Bartolini ; would she understand his torso of Theseus, or his copy in clay of the Florentine Boar, or his rough sketch for a Cephalus and Aurora ? Or would she be merely a London housemaid, just like all the girls he saw of a morning cleaning the front door-steps in Harley Street, and stopping to bandy vulgar chaff with the postman, and the newspaper boy, and the young policeman ? Two years had made a great deal of difference, no doubt, to both of them ; and Colin wondered vaguely in his own soul what Minna would think of him now, and what he would think of Minna.

On Monday, he was down at the station true to time, and waiting for the arrival of the 6.30 from Dorchester. As it drew up at the platform, he moved quickly along the third-class

carriages, on the look-out for anybody who might answer to the memory of his little Minna. Presently he saw her jump lightly, as of old, from the carriage—a mignonne little figure, with a dark, round, merry face, and piercing black eyes as bright as diamonds. He ran up to greet her with boyish awkwardness and bashful timidity. ‘Why, Minna,’ he cried, ‘you’ve grown into such a woman that I’m afraid to kiss you; but I’m very glad indeed to see you.’

Minna drew herself up so as to look as tall as possible, and answered with dignity: ‘I should hope, Colin, you wouldn’t want to kiss me in any case here in the station. It was very kind of you to come and meet me.’

Colin observed at once that she spoke with a good accent, and that her manner was, if anything, decidedly less embarrassed than his own. Indeed, as a rule, the young men of the working classes, no matter how much

intellectual or artistic power they may possess, are far more shy, gauche, and awkward than the young women of the same class, who usually show instinctively a great deal of natural refinement of manner. He was immediately not a little reassured as to Minna's present attainments.

'I want to go to Mrs. Wood's,' Minna said, as calmly as if she had been accustomed to Paddington Station all her lifetime; 'and I've got two boxes; how ought I to get there?'

'Where is Mrs. Wood's?' Colin asked.

'At Dean Street, Marylebone.'

'Why, that's quite close to our place,' Colin cried. 'Are they big boxes? I could carry 'em, maybe.'

'No, you couldn't carry them, Colin. Why, what nonsense. It wouldn't be respectable.'

Colin laughed. 'I should have done it at

Wootton, anyhow, Minna,' he answered ; ' and a working stone-cutter needn't be ashamed of anything in the way of work, surely.'

' But a sculptor 's got to keep up his position,' Minna put in firmly.

Colin smiled again. Already he had a nascent idea in his own head that even a sculptor could not bemean himself greatly by carrying a wooden box through the streets of London for a lady—he was getting to believe in the dignity of labour—but he didn't insist upon this point with Minna ; for, young as he was, he had a notion even then that the gospel for men isn't always at the same time the gospel for women. Even a good woman would feel much less compunction against many serious crimes than against trundling a wheelbarrow full of clean clothes up Regent Street of an afternoon in the height of the season.

So Colin was for calling a porter with a truck ; but even that modified measure of

conveyance did not wholly suit Minna's aristocratic fancy. 'Are they things cabs, Colin?' she asked quietly.

'*Those* things are,' Colin answered with a significant emphasis. Minna blushed a trifle.

'Oh, those things,' she repeated slowly; 'then I'll have one.' And in two minutes more, Colin, for the first time in his life, found himself actually driving along the public streets in the inside of a hansom. Why, you imperious, extravagant little Minna, where on earth are you going to find money for such expenses as these in our toilsome, under-paid, workyday London?

When they reached Mrs. Wood's door, Colin, feeling that he must rise to the situation, pulled out his purse to pay for the hansom, but Minna waved him aside with a dignified air of authority. 'No no,' she said, 'that won't do; take my purse, Colin. I

don't know how much to pay him, and like enough he'd cheat me; but you know the ways in London.'

Colin took the purse, and opened it. The first compartment he opened contained some silver, wrapped up in a scrap of tissue paper. Colin undid the paper and took out a shilling, which he was going to hand the cabman, when Minna laid her hand upon his arm and suddenly checked him. 'No, no,' she said, 'not that, Colin. From the other side, please, will you?'

Colin looked at the contents of the little paper once more, and rapidly counted it. It was nine shillings. He caught Minna's eye at the moment, and Minna coloured crimson. Then Colin knew at once what those nine shillings were, and why they were separately wrapped in tissue paper.

He paid the cabman, from the other half, and put the boxes inside Mrs. Wood's door

way. 'And now may I kiss you, Minna?' he asked, in the dark passage.

'If you like, Colin,' Minna answered, turning up her full red lips and round face with child-like innocence,

Colin Churchill kissed her : and when he had kissed her once, he waited a minute, and then he took her plump little face between his own two hands and kissed her rather harder a second time. Minna's face tingled a little, but she said nothing.

The very next morning Minna came round, by Colin's invitation, to Cicolari's workshop. Colin was busy at work moulding, and Minna cast her eye around lightly as she entered on all the busts and plaster casts that filled the room. She advanced to meet him as if she expected to be kissed, so Colin kissed her. Then, with a rapid glance round the room, her eye rested at last upon the *Cephalus* and *Aurora*, and she went straight over to look at

it with wondering eyes. 'Oh, Colin,' she cried, did you do that? What a lovely image!'

Colin was pleased and flattered at once. 'You like it, Minna?' he said. 'You really like it?'

Minna glanced carefully round the room once more with her keen black eyes, and after scanning every one of the plaster casts and unfinished busts in a comprehensive survey, answered unhesitatingly: 'I like it best of everything in the room, Colin, except the image of the man with the plate over yonder.'

Colin smiled a smile of triumph. Minna was not wholly lacking in taste, certainly; for the Cephalus was the best of his compositions, and the man with the plate was a plaster copy of the Discobolus. 'You'll do, Minna,' he said, patting her little black head with his cleanest hand (to the imminent danger of the

small hat with the red rose in it). 'You'll do yet, with a little coaching.'

Then Colin took her round the studio, as Cicolari ambitiously called it, and explained everything to her, and showed her plates of the Venus of Milo, and the Apollo Belvedere, and the Laocoon, and the Niobe, and several other ladies and gentlemen with very long names and no clothes to speak of, till poor Minna began at last to be quite appalled at the depth of his learning and quite frightened at her own unquestioning countrified ignorance. For as yet Minna had no idea that there was anything much to learn in the world except reading and writing, and the art of cookery, and the proper use of the English language. But when she heard Colin chattering away so glibly to her about the age of Pheidias, and the age of the Decadence, and the sculptors of the Renaissance, and the absolute necessity of going to Rome, she began

to conceive that perhaps Colin in his own heart might imagine she wasn't now good enough for him ; which was a point of view on the subject that had never before struck the Dorsetshire fisherman's pretty black-eyed little daughter.

By-and-by, Colin began to talk of herself and her prospects ; and to ask whether she was going to put herself down at a registry office ; and last of all to allude delicately to the matter of the misspelt letter. ' You know, Minna,' he said apologetically, feeling his boyish awkwardness far more than ever, ' I've tried a lot to improve myself at Exeter, and still more since I came to London. I've read a great deal, and worked very hard, and now I think I'm beginning to get on, and know something, not only about art, but about books as well. Now, I know you won't mind my telling you, but that letter wasn't all spelt right, or stopped right. You ought to

be very particular, you know, about the stopping and the spelling.'

Before he could say any more, Minna looked full in his face and stopped him short immediately. 'Colin,' she said, 'don't say another word about it. I know what you mean, and I'm going to attend to it. I never felt it in my life till I came here this morning; but I feel it now, and I shall take care to alter it.' She was a determined little body was Minna; and as she said those words, she looked so thoroughly as if she meant them that Colin dropped the subject at once and never spoke to her again about it.

Just at that moment two customers came to speak to Colin about a statuette he was working at for them. It was an old gentleman and a grand young lady. Minna stood aside while they talked, and pretended to be looking at Cephalus and Aurora with a critical eye, but she was really listening with all her ears to the

conversation between Colin and the grand young lady. She was a very grand young lady, indeed, who talked very fine, and drawled her vowels, and clipped her r's, and mangled the English language hideously, and gave other indubitable signs of the very best and highest breeding: and Minna noticed almost with dismay that she called Colin 'Mr. Churchill,' and seemed to defer to all his opinions about curves and contours and attitudes. 'You have such lovely taste, you know, Mr. Churchill,' the grand young lady said; 'and we want this copy to be as good as you can make it, because it's for a very particular friend of ours, who admired the original so much at Rome last winter.'

Minna listened in awe and trembling, and felt in her heart just a faint twinge of feminine jealousy to think that even such a grand young lady should speak so flattering like to our Colin.

‘And there’s the Cephalus, Papa,’ the grand young lady went on. ‘Isn’t it beautiful? I do hope some day, Mr. Churchill, you’ll get a commission for it in marble. If I were rich enough, I’d commission it myself, for I positively doat upon it. However, somebody’s sure to buy it some time or other, so it’s no use people like me longing to have it.’

Minna’s heart rose, choking, into her mouth, as she stood there flushed and silent.

When the grand young lady and her papa were gone, Minna said good-bye a little hastily to Colin, and shrank back, crying: ‘No, no, Colin,’ when he tried to kiss her. Then she ran in a hurry to Mrs. Wood’s in Dean Street. But though she was in a great haste to get home (for her bright little eyes had tears swimming in them), she stopped boldly at a small bookseller’s shop on the way, and invested two whole shillings of her little hoard in a valuable work bearing on its cover the

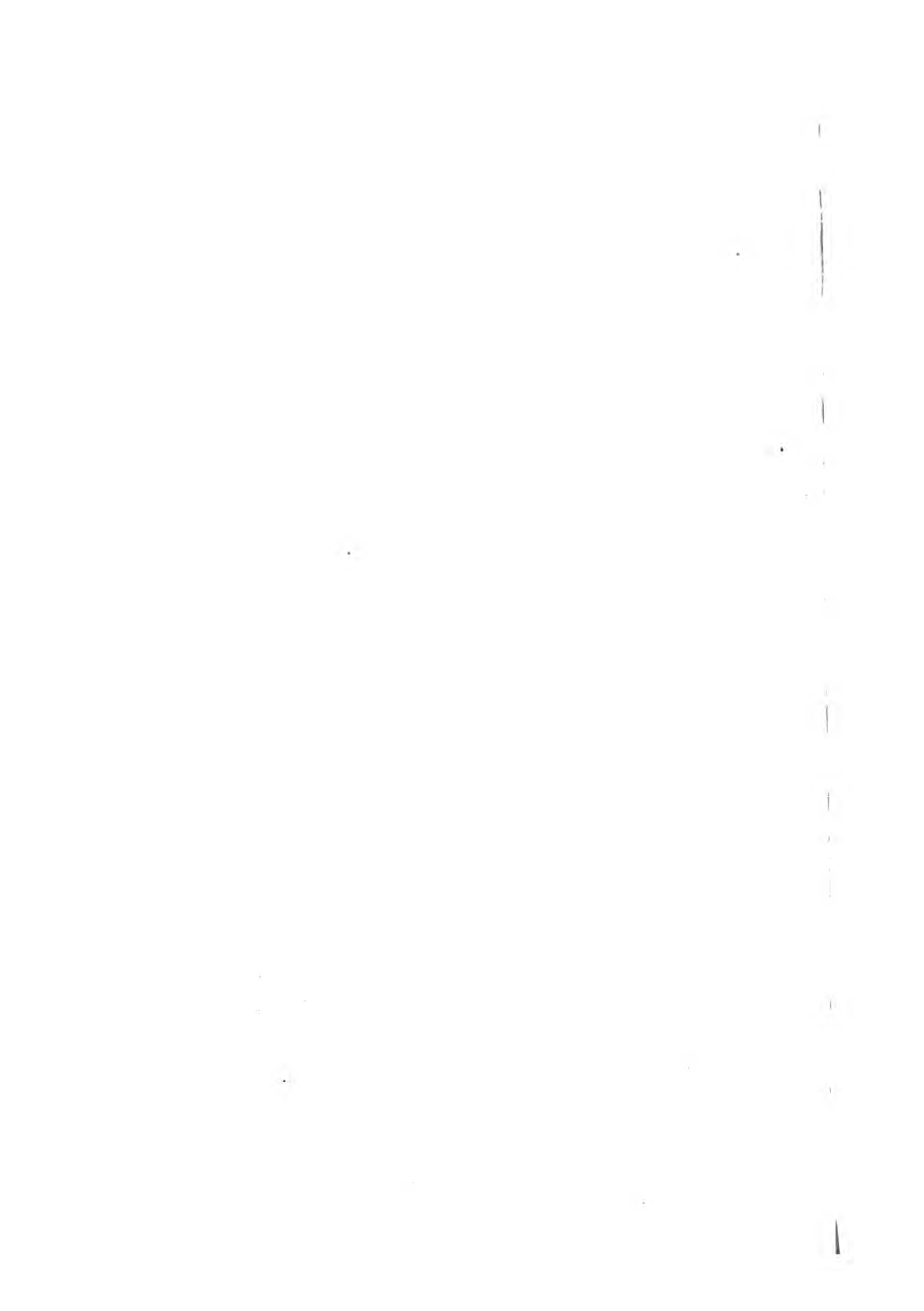
title, 'The Polite Correspondent's Complete Manual of Letter Writing.' 'He shall never kiss me again,' she said to herself firmly, 'until I can feel that I've made myself in every way thoroughly fit for him.'

It wasn't a very exalted model of literary composition, that Complete Manual of Letter Writing, but at least its spelling and punctuation were immaculate; and for many months to come after she had secured her place as parlour-maid in an eminently creditable family in Regent's Park, Minna sat herself down in her own bedroom every evening, when work was over, and deliberately endeavoured to perfect herself in those two elementary accomplishments by the use of the Polite Correspondent's unconscious guide, philosopher, and friend. First of all she read a whole letter over carefully, observing every stop and every spelling; then she copied it out entire, word for word, as well as she could recollect it,

entirely from memory ; and finally she corrected her written copy by the printed version in the Complete Manual, until she could transcribe every letter in the entire volume with perfect accuracy. It wasn't a very great educational effort, perhaps, from the point of view of advanced culture ; but to Minna Wroe it was a beginning in self-improvement, and in these matters above all others the first step is everything



'A beginning in self-improvement.'



CHAPTER XI.

EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGES.

AND now, while Minna Wroe was waiting at table in Regent's Park, and while Colin Churchill was modelling sepulchral images for his Italian master, Cicolari, how was our other friend, Hiram Winthrop, employing his time beyond the millpond?

'Bethabara Seminary, at the time when Hiram Winthrop, the eminent American artist, was enrolled among its alumni' (writes one of his fellow-students), 'occupied a plain but substantially built brick structure, commodiously located in the very centre of a large cornfield, near the summit of a considerable eminence in Madison County, N.Y. It

had been in operation close on three years when young Winthrop matriculated there. He secured quarters in a room with four fellow-students, each of whom brought his own dipper, plate, knife, fork, and other essential requisites. Mr. Winthrop was always of a solitary, retiring character, without much command of language, and not given to attending the Debating Forum or other public institutions of our academy. Nor was he fond of the society of the lady students, though one or two of them, and notably the talented Miss Almeda A. Stiles, now a prominent teacher in a lyceum at Smyrna, Mo., early detected his remarkable gifts for pictorial art, and continually importuned him to take their portraits, no doubt designing them for keepsakes to be given to the more popular male students. Young Winthrop always repelled such advances: indeed, he was generally considered in the

light of a boorish rustic; and his singular aversion towards the Hopkinsite connection (in which he had nevertheless been raised by that excellent man, his father, late Deacon Zephaniah Winthrop, of Muddy Creek, N.Y.) caused him to be somewhat disliked among his college companions. His chief amusement was to retire into the surrounding country, oddly choosing for the purpose the parts remotest from the roads and houses, and there sketch the animated creation which seemed always to possess a greater interest for his mind than the persons or conversation of his fellow-citizens. He had, indeed, as facts subsequently demonstrated, the isolation of a superior individual. Winthrop remained at Bethabara, so far as my memory serves me, for two years only.'

Indeed, the Hopkinsite Seminary was not exactly the sort of place fitted to suit the peculiar tastes of Hiram Winthrop. The

boys and girls from the farms around had hardly more sympathy with him than the deacon himself. Yet, on the whole, in spite of the drawbacks of his surroundings, Athens was a perfect paradise to poor Hiram. This is a universe of relativities: and compared with life on the farm at Muddy Creek, life at Bethabara Seminary was absolute freedom and pure enjoyment to the solitary little artist. Here, as soon as recitation was over, he could wander out into the woods alone (after he had shaken off the attentions of the too sequacious Almeda), whenever he liked, no man hindering. The country around was wooded in places, and the scenery, like all that in Madison County, was beautifully undulating. Five miles along the leafy highroad brought him to the banks of Cananagua Lake, one of those immeasurable lovely sheets of water that stud the surface of Western New York for miles together; and there Hiram

would sit down by the shore, and watch the great divers disappearing suddenly beneath the surface, and make little pictures of the grey squirrels and the soldier-birds on the margin of Cyrus Choke's 'Elements of the Latin Language,' which he had brought out with him, presumably for purposes of preparation against to-morrow's class-work. But best of all there was a drawing-master at Athens, and from him, by Audouin's special arrangement, the boy took lessons twice a week in perspective and the other technical matters of his art—for, as to native ability, Hiram was really far better fitted to teach the teacher. Not a very great artist, that struggling German drawing-master at Athens, with his formal little directions of how to go jig-jig for a pine-tree, and to-whee, whee, whee, for an oak; not a very great artist, to be sure; but still, a grand relief for Hiram to discover that there were people in the world

who really cared about these foolish things, and didn't utterly despise them though they *were* so irrelevant to the truly important questions of raising corn, and pork, and potatoes.

The great joy and delight of the term, however, was Audcuin's periodical visit to his little *protégé*. Audouin at least was determined to let Hiram's individuality have fair play. He regarded him as a brand plucked from the burning of that corn-growing civilisation which he so cordially detested; and he had made up his own mind, rightly or wrongly, that Hiram had genius, and that that genius must be allowed freely to develop itself. Hiram loved these quarterly visits better than anything else in the whole world, because Audouin was the one person he had met in his entire life (except Sam Churchill) who could really sympathise with him.

Two years after Hiram Winthrop went to Bethabara, Audouin wrote to ask whether he would come and spend a week or two at Lakeside during the winter vacation. Hiram cried when he read the letter ; so much pleasure seemed almost beyond the possibilities of this world, and the deacon would surely never consent ; but to his great surprise, the deacon wrote back gruffly, yes ; and as soon as term was finished, Hiram gladly took the cars on the New York Central down to Nine Mile Bottom, the depôt for Lakeside. Audouin was waiting to meet him at the depôt, in a neat little sleigh ; and they drove away gaily to the jingling music of the bells, in the direction of Audouin's cottage.

‘A severe artist, winter,’ Audouin said, glancing around him quickly over the frozen fields. ‘No longer the canvas and the colours, but the pure white marble and the flowing chisel. How the contours of the country

soften with the snow, Hiram ; what a divine cloak the winter clouds spread kindly over the havoc man has wrought upon this desecrated landscape ! It was beautiful, once, I believe, in its native woodland beauty ; and it's beautiful even now when the white pall comes down, so, to screen and cover its artificial nakedness. The true curse of Ham (and worse) is upon us here ; we have laughed at the shame of our mother earth.'

Hiram hardly understood him—he seldom quite understood his friend—but he answered, with a keen glance over the white snow, 'I love the winter, Mr. Audouin ; but I apprehend I like the summer an' autumn best. You should jest have seen the crimson and gold on Cananagua Lake last fall ; oh, my, the colours on the trees ! nobody could ever have painted 'em. I took out my paints an' tried, but I wasn't anywhere like it, I can tell you ; Mr. Mooller, he said he didn't b'lieve

Claude or Turner could ever have painted a bit of Amurrican fall scenery.'

'Mr. Müller isn't a conclusive authority,' Audouin answered gravely, removing his cigar as he spoke; 'but on this occasion I surmise, Hiram, he was probably not far from a correct opinion. Still, Mr. Müller won't do for you any longer. The fact is, Hiram, sooner or later you must go to Europe. There's no teaching here good enough for you. I've made up my mind that you must go to Europe. Whether the deacon likes it or not, you've got to go, and we must manage one way or another.'

To Europe! Hiram's brain reeled round at the glorious, impossible notion. To Europe! Why, that was the wonderful romantic country where Tom Jones ran away with Amelia, where Mr. Tracy Tupman rode to Ipswich on top of the mail-coach, where Moses bought the gross of green spectacles

from the plausible vagabond at the country fair. Europe! There were kings and princes in Europe; and cathedrals and castles; and bishops and soldiers; ay, he could almost believe, too, there were giants, ogres, ghosts, and fairies. In Europe, Sam Wellers waited at the wayside inns; mysterious horsemen issued darkling from arched castle gates; Jews cut pounds of flesh, Abyssinian fashion, from the living breasts of Venetian ship-owners; and itinerant showmen wandered about with Farley's waxworks across a country haunted by masked highwaymen and red-coated squires, who beat you half to death for not telling them immediately which way the hare ran. As such a phantasmagoria of incongruous scenes did the mother continent of the American race present itself in some swimming panorama to Hiram's excited brain. It was almost as though Aladdin and the one-eyed calender had suddenly appeared to him.

in the familiar woods of Geauga County, and invited him forthwith to take the cars for Bagdad at the urgent personal request of the good Caliph Haroun al Raschid.

The boy held his breath hard, and answered in his self-restrained American manner, 'To Europe, Mr. Audouin! Well, I guess I should appreciate that, consid'able.'

'Yes, Hiram,' Audouin went on, 'I've made my mind up to that. Sooner or later you must go to Europe. But not just at once, my boy. Not till you're about nineteen, I should say; it wouldn't do you so much good till then. Meanwhile, we must put you to some other school. Bethabara has done its little best for you: you must go elsewhere, meanwhile. I mean that you shall go to some one of the eastern colleges, Yale if possible.'

'But what about father?' Hiram asked.

'Your father must be made to do as I tel

him. Look here, Hiram, the fact is this. You're a boy whose individuality must be developed. The deacon mustn't be allowed to prevent it. I've taken you in hand, and I mean to see you through it. Look yonder, my boy, at the edge of the ice there on the creek; look at the musquash sitting in the sun on the brink of the open water eating a clam, and the clamshells he has left strewed along the shore and beach behind him. See him drop in again and bring up another clam, and stride sleek and shining from the water on to his little cliff of ice again. You and I know that that sight is beautiful. You and I know that it's the only thing on earth worth living for—that power of seeing the beautiful in art and nature—but how many people do you suppose there are in all America that would ever notice it? What percentage, Hiram, of our great, free, intelligent, democratic people, that sing their own praises daily.

with so shrill a voice in their ten thousand "Heralds," and "Tribunes," and "Courants," and "Mirrors"? How small a percentage, Hiram; how small a percentage!

The boy coloured up crimson to the very roots of his shaggy hair. It was such a very new point of view to him. He had always known that he cared for these things towards which all other boys and men were mere dull materialistic Gallios; but it had never before occurred to him that his doing so was any mark of a mental superiority on his part. Rather had he thought that it betokened some weakness or foolishness of his own nature, for he wasn't like other boys; and not to be like other boys is treated so much as a crime in junior circles that it almost seems like a crime at last even to the culprit himself in person. So Hiram coloured up with the shame of a first discovery of his own betterness, and merely answered in the same quiet

self-restrained fashion, 'I apprehend, Mr. Audouin, there ain't many folks who pay much attention to the pecooliarities of the common American musk-rat.'

All the rest of the way home, Audouin plied the boy with such subtle flattery—not meant as flattery, indeed, for Audouin was incapable of guile; if he erred, it was on the side of too outspoken truthfulness: yet, in effect, his habit of speaking always as though he and Hiram formed a class apart was really flattery of the deepest sort to the boy's nature. At last they drew up at a neat wooden cottage in a small snow-covered glen, where the circling amphitheatre of spruce pines opened out into a long sloping vista in front, and the frozen arm of the great lake spread its limitless ice sheet beyond, away over in weird perspective toward the low unseen Canadian shore. The boy uttered a little sharp cry of delight at the exquisite prospect. Audouin

noticed it with pleasure. 'Well, Hiram,' he said, 'here we are at last at my lodge in the wilderness.'

'I never saw anything in all my life,' the boy answered truthfully, 'one-thousandth part so beautiful.'

Audouin was pleased at the genuine tone of the compliment. 'Yes, Hiram,' he said, looking with a complacent smile down the pine-clad glen toward the frozen lake, 'it certainly does help to wash out Broadway.'

Hiram's three weeks at Lakeside Cottage were indeed three weeks of unalloyed delight to his eager, intelligent nature. There were books there, books of the most delicious sort; Birds of America with coloured plates; Flora of New York State with endless figures; poems, novels, histories—Prescott's 'Peru,' and Macaulay's 'England.' There were works about the Indians, too; works written

by men who actually took a personal interest in calumets and tomahawks. There were pictures, books full of them; pictures by great painters, well engraved; pictures, the meaning of which Audouin explained to him carefully, pointing out the peculiarities of style in each, so far as the engravings could reproduce them. Above all, there was Audouin's own conversation, morning, noon and night, as well as his friend the Professor's, who was once more staying with him on a visit. That was Hiram's first extended glimpse of what a cultivated and refined life could be made like, apart from the sordid, squalid necessities of raising pork and beans and Johnny cake.

Best of all, before Hiram left Lakeside, Audouin had driven him over to the Deacon's in his neat little sleigh, and had seriously discussed the question of his further education. And the result of that interview was that

Hiram was to return no more to Bethabara, but (being now nearly sixteen) was to go instead to the Eclectic Institute at Orange. It was with great difficulty that this final step was conquered, but conquered it was at last, mainly by Audouin's masterful persistence.

'Tain't convenient for me, mister,' the deacon said snappishly, 'to go on any longer without the services of that thar boy. I want him to home to help with the farm work. He's progressing towards citizenship now, an' I've invested quite a lot of capital in his raisin', an' it's time I was beginnin' to see some return upon it.'

'Quite true and very natural,' Audouin answered with his diplomatic quickness. 'Still, you must consider the boy's future. He won't cost you much, deacon. He's a smart lad, and he can help himself a great deal in the off seasons. There's a great call

for school-teachers in the winter, and college students are much sought after.'

'What might be the annual expense to an economical student?' asked the deacon dubiously.

'A hundred dollars a year,' Audouin replied boldly. He murmured to himself that whatever the difference might be between this modest estimate and the actual truth, he would pay it out of his own pocket.

The deacon gave way grudgingly at last, and to the end neither he nor Hiram ever knew that Hiram's three years at the Eclectic Institute cost his unsuspected benefactor some two hundred dollars annually.

CHAPTER XII.

AN ARTISTIC ENGAGEMENT.

THREE years at Orange passed away quickly enough, and Hiram enjoyed his time there far better than he had done even in the solitude of Bethabara Seminary. He didn't work very hard at the classics and mathematics, it must be admitted: Professor Hazen complained that his recitations in Plato were not up to the mark, and that his Cicero was seldom prepared with sufficient diligence: but though in the dead languages his work was most too bad, the Professor allowed that in English literatoor he did well, and seemed to reach out elastically with his faculties in all directions. He spent very little time over

his books to be sure, but he caught the drift, appropriated the kernel, and let the rest slide. Fact was, he created his own culture. He didn't debate in the lyceum, or mix much in social gatherings of an evening (where the female students entertained the gentlemen with tea, and Johnny cake, and crullers, and improving conversation), but he walked a great deal alone in the hills, and interested himself with sketching, and the pursuit of natural history. Still, he wasn't social; so much Professor Hazen was compelled by candour to admit. When the entire strength of the Eclectic Institute went in carriages to the annual grove-meeting at Rudolph, Hiram Winthrop was usually conspicuous by his absence. The lady students fully expected that a gentleman of such marked artistic and rural proclivities would on such occasions be the life and soul of the whole party: that he would burst out occasionally into a rapturous

strain at the sight of an elegant bird, or a trailing vine, or a superb giant of the primæval forest. They calculated confidently on his reciting poetry appropriate to the scene and the social occasion. But Hiram generally stopped away altogether, which operated considerable disappointment on the ladies; or if he went at all, accompanied the junior students in the refreshment waggon, and scarcely contributed anything solid to the general entertainment. In short, he was a very bashful and retiring person, who didn't amalgamate spontaneously or readily with the prevalent tone of life at the Eclectic Institoot.

Nevertheless, in spite of the solitude, Hiram Winthrop liked the Institute, and often looked back afterwards upon the time he had spent there as one of the happiest portions of his life. He worked away hard in all his spare moments at drawing and

painting; and some of the lady students still retain some of his works of this period, which they cherish in small gilt frames upon the parlour wall, as mementoes of their brief acquaintance with a prominent American artistic gentleman. Miss Almeda A. Stiles in particular (who followed Hiram from Bethabara to Orange, where she graduated with him in the class of 18—) keeps even now two of his drawings in her rooms at the lyceum at Smyrna, Mo. One of them represents a large Eurōpian bird, seated upon the bough of a tree in winter; it is obviously a copy from a drawing-master's design: the other, which is far finer and more original, is a sketch of Chattawauga Falls, before the erection of the existing sawmills and other improvements. Hiram was singularly fond of Chattawauga; but strange to say, from the very first day that the erection of the sawmills was undertaken, he refused to go near

the spot, alleging no other reason for his refusal except that he regarded these useful institutions in the light of a positively wicked desecration of the work of nature. There was a general feeling at Orange that in many respects young Winthrop's sentiments and opinions were in fact painfully un-American.

In the holidays—no, vacation—(one mustn't apply European names to American objects), Hiram found enough to do in teaching school in remote country sections. Nay, he even managed to save a little money out of his earnings, which he put away to help him on his grand project of going to Europe—that dim, receding, but now far more historical and less romantic Europe towards which his hopes were always pointing. Audouin would gladly have sent him on his own account—Hiram knew that much well; for Audouin was comfortably rich, and he

had taken a great fancy to his young *protégé*. But Hiram didn't want to spend his friend's money if he could possibly help it: he had the honest democratic feeling strong upon him, that he would like to go to Europe by his own earnings or not at all. So as soon as his three years at Orange were over, he determined to go to Syracuse (not the Sicilian one, but its namesake in New York State), and start in business for the time being as a draughtsman on the wood. He was drawn to this scheme by an advertisement in the 'Syracuse Daily Independent,' requiring a smart hand at drawing for a large block-engraving establishment in that city.

'My dear Hiram,' Audouin exclaimed in dismay, when his young friend told him of his project, 'you really mustn't think of it. At Syracuse, too! why, what sort of work do you conceive people would want done at Syracuse? Nothing but advertisement draw-

ings of factories for the covers of biscuit tins, or flaring red and yellow fruits for the decoration of canned peaches.'

'Well, Mr. Audouin,' Hiram answered with a smile, 'I guess I must go in for the canned peaches, then, if nothing better offers. I've got to earn enough to take me across to Europe, one way or the other;—no, don't say that now,' for he saw Audouin trying to cut in impatiently with his ever friendly offer of assistance: 'don't say that,' and he clutched his friend's arm tightly. 'I know you would. I know you would. But I can't accept it. This thing has just got to be done in the regular way of business or not at all; and what's more, Mr. Audouin, I've just got to go and do it.'

'But, Hiram,' Audouin cried, half angrily, 'I want you to go to Europe and learn to paint splendid pictures, and make all America proud of your talent. I found you out, and

I've got a sort of proprietary interest in you ; and just when I expect you to begin doing something really great, you calmly propose to go to Syracuse, and draw designs for canned peaches ! You ought to consider your duty to your country.'

'I'm very sorry, Mr. Audouin,' Hiram answered with his accustomed gravity, 'if I disappoint you personally ; but as for the rest of America, I dare say the country'll manage to hold on a year or two longer without my pictures.'

So Hiram really went at last to Syracuse (pronounced Sirrah-kyooze), and duly applied for the place as draughtsman. The short boy who showed him in to the office went off to call one of the bosses. In a few minutes, the boss in question entered, and in a quiet American tone, with just a faint relic of some English country dialect flavouring it dimly in the background, inquired if this was the

young man who had come about the drawing. 'For if so, mister,' he said with the true New Yorker ring, 'just you step right back here with me, will 'ee, a minute, and we'll settle this little bit of business right away, smart and handy.'

Hiram knew the boss in a moment, in spite of his altered voice and manner. 'Sam,' he said, taking his hand warmly (for he hadn't had so many friends in his lifetime that he had forgotten how to be grateful to any single one of them): 'Sam, don't you remember me? I'm Hiram Winthrop.'

Sam's whole voice and manner changed in a moment, from the sharp, official, Syracuse business man to something more like the old simple, easygoing, bucolic Sam Churchill, who had come out so long ago from Dorsetshire. 'Why, bless my soul, Hiram,' he exclaimed, grasping both his hands at once in an iron grip, 'so it's you, lad, is it? Well, I *am* glad

to see you. You step right back here and let's have a look at you! Why, how you've grown, Hiram! Only don't call me Sam, too open, here; here, I'm one of the bosses, and get called Mr. Churchill. And how's the deacon, and the missus, and old Major (you don't mind old Major? he was the off-horse at the plough, always, he was). And how are *you*? Been to college, I reckon, by the look of you. You come right back here and tell me all about it.'

So Hiram went right back (behind the little counter in the front office), and told Sam Churchill his whole story. And Sam in return told his. It wasn't very long, but it was all prosperous. He had left the deacon soon after Hiram went to live at Bethabara Seminary; he had come to Syracuse in search of work; had begun trying his hand as draughtsman for a wood-engraver; had gone into partnership with another young man, on

his own account ; had risen as fast as people in America do rise, if they have anything in them ; and was now joint boss of the biggest woodcut establishment in the whole Lake Shore section of New York State. ‘ See here,’ he cried with infinite pride to Hiram. ‘ Just you look at all these labels. Hemmings’ Patent Blacking — nigger woman admiring her own teeth in her master’s boots—that’s ours. And this : Chicago General Canning Company ; Prime Fruit : I did that myself. And this : Philbrick’s Certain Death to Rats : good design, rather, that one, ain’t it ? Here’s more : Potterton’s Choke-cherry Cordial ; Old Dr. Hezekiah Bowdler’s Elixir of Winter-green ; Eselmann and Schneider’s Eagle Brand Best Old Bourbon Whiskey ; Smoke None but Cyrus A. Walker’s Original and Only Genuine Old Dominion Honeydew. That’s our line of business, you see, Hiram. That’s where we’ve got on. We’ve put mind into it. We’ve

struck out a career of our own. We've determined to revolutionise the American advertisement illustration market. When we took the thing in hand, it was all red and yellow uglinesses. We've discarded crudeness and vulgarity, we have, and gone in for artistic colouring and the best sentiments. Look at Philbrick's *Certain Death*, for example. That's fine, now, isn't it? We've made the fortune of the *Certain Death*. When we took it up, advertising I mean, there wasn't a living to be got out of Philbrick's. They had a sort of comic picture of four rats, poisoned, with labels coming out of their mouths, saying they were gone coons, and so forth. Vulgar, vulgar, very. We went in for the contract, and produced the chaste and elegant design you see before you. It has succeeded, naturally,' and Sam looked across at Hiram with the serious face of profound conviction with which he was always wont to confront

the expected customer, in the interests of the joint establishment.

Poor Hiram ! his heart sank within him a little when he looked at the chaste and elegant design ; but he had put his hand to the plough, and he would not look back : so before the end of that day Sam Churchill had definitely engaged him as chief draughtsman to his rising establishment.

That was how Hiram came to spend two years as an advertisement draughtsman at Syracuse. He didn't deny, afterwards, that those two years were about the dreariest and most disappointing of his whole lifetime. In his spare moments, to be sure, he still went on studying as well as he was able ; and on Sundays he stole away with his easel and colours to the few bits of decently pretty scenery that lie within reach of that flat and marshy mushroom city : but for the greater part of his time he was employed in designing

neat and appropriate wrappers for quack medicine bottles, small illustrations for catalogues or newspaper advertisements, and huge flaring posters for mammoth circuses or variety dramatic entertainments. It was a grinding, horrible work ; and though Sam Churchill did his best to make it pleasant and bearable for him, Hiram cordially detested it with all his heart. The only thing that made it any way endurable was the image of that far-off promised European journey, on which Hiram Winthrop had fixed all his earthly hopes and ambitions.

Sam often told him of Colin, for Colin had kept up a correspondence with his thriving American brother ; and it was a sort of day-dream with Hiram that one day or other Colin Churchill and he should go to Rome together. For Audouin's encouragement and Colin's eagerness had inspired Hiram with a like desire : and he saved and hoarded in

hopes that the time would at last come when he might get rid of advertisements, and take instead to real painting. Meanwhile he contented himself with working at his art by himself, or with such little external aid as he could get in a brand-new green-and-white American city, and hoping for the future that never came but was always coming.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EVE IN EDEN.

ONCE a year, and once only, Hiram had a holiday. For a glorious fortnight every summer, Sam Churchill and his partner gave their head draughtsman leave to go and amuse himself wheresoever the spirit led him. And on the first of such holidays, Hiram went with Audouin to the Thousand Islands, and spent a delightful time boating, fishing, and sketching, among the endless fairy mazes of that enchanted region, where the great St. Lawrence loses itself hopelessly in innumerable petty channels, between countless tiny bosses of pine-clad rock. It was a fortnight of pure enjoyment for poor drudging advertisement-

drawing Hiram, and he revelled in its wealth of beauty as he had never revelled in anything earthly before during his whole lifetime.

One morning Hiram had taken his little easel out with him from Alexandria Bay to one of the prettiest points of view upon the neighbouring mainland—a jutting spit of ice-worn rock, projecting far into the placid lake, and thickly overhung with fragrant brush of the beautiful red cedar—and was making a little water-colour sketch of a tiny islet in the foreground, just a few square yards of smooth granite covered in the centre with an inch deep of mould, and crowned by a single tall straight stem of sombre spruce fir. It was a delicate, dainty little sketch, steeped in the pale morning haze of Canadian summer ; and the scarlet columbines, waving from the gnarled roots of the solitary fir tree, stood out like brilliant specks of light against the brown bark and dark green foliage that formed the back-

ground. Hiram was just holding it at arm's length, to see how it looked, and turning to ask for Audouin's friendly criticism, when he heard a clear bright woman's voice close behind him, speaking so distinctly that he couldn't help overhearing the words.

'Oh, papa,' the voice said briskly, 'there's an artist working down there. I wonder if he'd mind our going down and looking at his picture. I do so love to see an artist painting.'

The very sound of the voice thrilled through Hiram's inmost marrow as he heard it, somewhat as Audouin's voice had done long ago, when first he came upon him in the Muddy Creek woodland—only more so. He had never heard a woman's voice before at all like it. It didn't in the least resemble Miss Almeda A. Stiles's, or any other one of the lady students at Bethabara or Orange, who formed the sole standard of female society that Hiram Winthrop had ever yet met with. It was a rich,

liquid, rippling voice, and it spoke with the soft accent and delicate deliberate intonation of an English lady. Hiram, of course, didn't by the light of nature recognise at once this classificatory fact as to its origin and history, but he did know that it stirred him strangely, and made him look round immediately to see from what manner of person the voice itself ultimately proceeded.

A tall girl of about nineteen, with a singularly full ripe-looking face and figure for her age, was standing on the edge of the little promontory just above, and looking down inquisitively towards Hiram's easel. Her cheeks had deeper roses in them than Hiram had ever seen before, and her complexion was clearer and more really flesh-coloured than that of most pale and sallow American women. 'What a beautiful skin to paint!' thought Hiram instinctively; and then the next moment, with a flush of surprise, he

began to recognise to himself that this unknown girl, whose eyes met his for an infinitesimal fraction of a second, had somehow immediately impressed him—nay, thrilled him—in a way that no other woman had ever before succeeded in doing. In one word, she seemed to him more womanly. Why, he didn't know, and couldn't have explained even to himself, for Hiram's forte certainly did not lie in introspective analysis; but he felt it instinctively, and was conscious at once of a certain bashful desire to speak with her, which he had never experienced towards a single one of the amiable young ladies at Bethabara Seminary.

'Gwen, my dear,' the father said in a dried-up Indian military tone, 'you will disturb these artists. Come away, come away; people don't like to be watched at their duties, really.'

Gwen, by way of sole reply, only bent

over the edge of the little bluff that overhung the platform of rock where Hiram was sitting, and said with the same clear deliberate accent as before, 'May I look? Oh, thank you. How very, very pretty!'

'It isn't finished yet,' Audouin said, taking the words out of Hiram's mouth almost, as he held up the picture for Gwen's inspection. 'It's only a rough sketch, so far: it'll look much worthier of the original when my friend has put the last little touches to it. In art, you know, the last loving lingering touch is really everything.'

Hiram felt half vexed that Audouin should thus have assumed the place of spokesman for him towards the unknown lady; and yet at the same time he was almost grateful to him for it also, for he felt too abashed to speak himself in her overawing presence.

'Yes, the original's beautiful,' Gwen answered, taking her father's arm and lead-

ing him down, against his will, to the edge of the water : ‘ but the sketch is very pretty too, and the point of view so exquisitely chosen. What a thing it is, papa, to have the eye of an artist, isn’t it? You and I might have passed this place a dozen times over, and never noticed what a lovely little bit it is to make a sketch of ; but the painter sees it at once, and picks out by instinct the very spot to make a beautiful picture.’

‘ Ah, quite so,’ the father echoed in a cold unconcerned voice, as if the subject rather bored him. ‘ Quite so, quite so. Very pretty place indeed, an excellent retired corner, I should say, for a person who has a taste that way, to sit and paint in.’

‘ It *is* beautiful,’ Audouin said, addressing himself musingly to the daughter, ‘ and our island in particular is the prettiest of all the thousand, I do believe.’

‘ Your island?’ Gwen cried interroga-

tively. 'Then you own that sweet little spot there, do you?'

'My friend and I, yes,' Audouin answered airily, to Hiram's great momentary astonishment. 'In the only really worthy sense of ownership, we own it most assuredly. I dare say some other man somewhere or other keeps locked up in his desk a dirty little piece of crabbed parchment, which he calls a title-deed, and which gives him some sort of illusory claim to the productive power of the few square yards of dirt upon its surface. But the island itself and the enjoyment of it is ours, and ours only: the gloss on the ice-grooves in the shelving granite shore, the scarlet columbines on the tall swaying stems, the glow of the sunlight on the russet boles of the spruce fir—you see my friend has fairly impounded them all upon his receptive square of cartridge paper here for our genuine title-deed of possession.'

‘ Ah, I see, I see,’ the old gentleman said testily. ‘ You and your friend claim the island by prescription, but your claim is disputed by the original freeholder.’

The three others all smiled slightly. ‘ Oh dear, no, papa,’ Gwen answered with a touch of scorn and impatience in her tone. ‘ Don’t you understand? This gentleman——’

‘ My name is Audouin,’ the New Englander put in with a slight inclination.

‘ Mr. Audouin means that the soil is somebody else’s, but the sole enjoyment of the island is his friend’s and his own.’

‘ The so-called landowner often owns nothing more than the dirt in the ditches,’ Audouin explained with a wave of the hand, in his romantic mystifying fashion, ‘ while the observer owns all that is upon it, of any real use or beauty. For our whole lifetime, my friend and I have had that privilege and pleasure. The grass grows green for us in

spring ; the birds build nests for us in early summer ; the fire-flies flit before our eyes on autumn evenings ; the stoat and hare put on their snow-white coat for our delight in winter weather. I've seen a poet enjoy for a whole season the best part of a farm, while the crusty farmer supposed he had only had out of it a few worthless wild apples. *We* are the real freeholders, sir ; the man with the title-deeds has merely the usufruct.'

'Oh, ah,' the military gentleman repeated, as if a light were beginning slowly to dawn upon his bewildered intelligence. 'Some reservation in favour of rights of way and royalties and so forth, in America, I suppose. Only owns the dirt in the ditches, you say,—the soil presumably. Now, in England, every landowner owns the mines and minerals and springs and everything else beneath the soil, to the centre of the earth, I believe, if I've been rightly instructed.'

‘It can seldom be worth his while to push his claims so far,’ Audouin replied with great gravity, still smiling sardonically.

Gwen coloured slightly. Hiram noticed the delicate flush of the colour, as it mantled all her cheek for a single second, and was hardly angry with his friend for having provoked so pretty a protest. Then Gwen said with a little cough, as if to change the subject : ‘These islands are certainly very lovely. They’re the most beautiful thing we’ve seen in a six weeks’ tour in America. I don’t think even Niagara charmed me so much, in spite of all its grandeur.’

‘You’re right,’ Audouin went on (a little in the Sir Oracle vein, Hiram fancied); ‘at any rate, the islands are more distinctly American. There’s nothing like them anywhere else in the world. They’re the final word of our level American river basins. You have grand waterfalls in Europe; you have

broad valleys ; you have mountains finer than any of ours here east at least ; but you've nothing equal in its way to this flat interwoven scenery of river and foliage, of land and water. It has no sublimity, not a particle ; it's utterly wanting in everything that ordinarily makes beautiful country ; but it's absolutely fairy like in its endless complexity of channels and islands, and capes and rocks and lakelets, all laid out on such an infinitesimally tiny scale, as one might imagine the sylphs and gnomes or the Lilliputians would lay out their ground plan of a projected paradise.'

'Yes, I think it's exquisite in its way,' Gwen went on. 'My father doesn't care for it because it's so flat : after Naini Tal and the Himalayas, he says, all American scenery palls and fades away into utter insignificance. Of course I haven't seen the Himalayas—and don't want to, you know—but I've been in Switzerland ; and I don't see why, because

Switzerland is beautiful as mountain country, this shouldn't be beautiful too in a different fashion.'

'Quite so,' Audouin answered briskly. 'We should admire all types of beauty, each after its own kind. Not to do so argues narrowness—a want of catholicity.'

The military gentleman fidgeted sadly by Gwen's side; he had caught at the word 'catholicity,' and he didn't like it. It savoured of religious discussion; and being, like most other old Indian officers, strictly evangelical, he began to suspect Audouin of High Church tendencies, or even dimly to envisage him to himself in the popular character of a Jesuit in disguise.

As for Hiram, he listened almost with envy to Audouin's glib tongue, as it ran on so lightly and so smoothly to the beautiful overawing stranger. If only, now, he himself dared talk like that, or rather if only he dared talk

after his own fashion—which, indeed, to say the truth, would have been a great deal better! But he didn't dare, and so he let Audouin carry off all the conversation unopposed; while Audouin, with his easy Boston manners, never suspected for a moment that the shy, self-restraining New Yorker countryman was burning all the time to put in a little word or two on his own account, or to attract some tiny share of the beautiful stranger's passing attention. And thus it came to pass that Audouin went on talking for half an hour or more uninterruptedly to Gwen, the military gentleman subsiding meanwhile into somewhat sulky silence, and Hiram listening with all his ears to hear what particulars he could glean by the way as to the sudden apparition, her home, name, and calling. They had come to America for a six weeks' tour, it seemed, 'Papa' having business in Canada, where he owned a little property, and having leave of absence for the

purpose from his regiment at Chester. That was almost all that Hiram gathered as to her actual position ; and that little he treasured up in his memory most religiously against the possible contingency of a future journey to England

‘ And you contemplate returning to Europe shortly ? ’ Hiram ventured to ask at last of the English lady. It was the first time he had opened his lips during the entire conversation, and he was surprised even now at his own temerity in presuming to say anything.

Gwen turned towards the young artist carelessly. Though she had been evidently interested in Audouin’s talk, she had not so far even noticed the painter of the little picture which had formed the first introduction to the entire party. ‘ Yes,’ she said, as unconcernedly as if Europe were in the same State ; ‘ we sail next Friday.’

It was the only sentence she said to him, but she said it with a bright frank smile, which

Hiram could have drawn from memory a twelvemonth after. As a matter of fact, he did draw it in his own bedroom at the Alexandria Bay Hotel that very evening: and he kept it long in his little pocket-book as a memento of a gleam of light bursting suddenly upon his whole existence. For Hiram was not so inexperienced in the ways of the world that he couldn't recognise one very simple and palpable fact: he was in love at first sight with the unknown English lady.

'Really, Gwen,' the military gentleman said at this point in the conversation, 'we must go back to lunch, if we're going to catch our steamer for Montreal. Besides, you're hindering our friend here from finishing his picture. Good morning—good morning; thank you so very much for the opportunity of seeing it.'

Gwen said a little 'Good morning' to Audouin, bowed more distantly to Hiram,

and taking her father's arm jumped lightly up the rocks again, and disappeared in the direction of the village. When she was fairly out of sight, Hiram sat down once more and finished his water-colour in complete silence.

‘Pretty girl, Hiram,’ Audouin said lightly, as they walked back to their quarters at lunch-time.

‘I should think, Mr. Audouin,’ Hiram answered slowly, with even more than his usual self-restraint, ‘she must be a tolerably favourable specimen of European women.’

Audouin said no more; and Hiram, too, avoided the subject in future. Somehow, for the first time in his life, he felt just a little bit aggrieved and jealous of Audouin. It was he, Hiram, who had painted the picture which first caught Gwen's fancy—he called her ‘Gwen’ in his own mind, quite simply, having no other name by which to call her. It was he who was the artist and the selector of that

particular point of view ; and yet Audouin, all unconsciously as it seemed, had stepped in and appropriated to himself, by implication, the artistic honours of the situation. Audouin had talked his vague poetical nature-worship talk—it seemed to Hiram a trifle affected somehow, to-day ; and had monopolised all Gwen's interest in the interview, and had left him, Hiram (the founder of the feast, so to speak), out in the cold, while he himself basked in the full sunshine of Gwen's momentary favour. And yet to Audouin what was she, after all, but a pretty passing stranger ? while to him she was a revelation, a new birth, a latter-day Aphrodite, rising unbidden with her rosy cheeks from the very bosom of the smiling lake. And now she was going back again at once to Europe, that great, unknown, omnipotential Europe ; and perhaps Hiram Winthrop would never again see the one woman who had struck him at first sight with

the instantaneous thrill which the man who has once experienced it can never forget. Colin Churchill hadn't once yet even asked himself whether or not he was in love with Minna ; but Hiram Winthrop acknowledged frankly forthwith to his own heart that he was certainly and undeniably in love with Gwen.

Who was she? that was the question. He didn't even know her surname: his sole information about her amounted exactly to this, that she was called Gwen, and that her father had been quartered at Chester. Hiram smiled to himself as he recollected the old legend of how St. Thomas à Becket's mother, a Saracen maiden, had come to England from the East, in search of her Christian lover, knowing only the two proper names, Gilbert and London. Was he, Hiram Winthrop, in this steam-ridden nineteenth century, in like manner to return to the old home of his fore-

fathers, and make inquiry with all diligence for Gwen, Chester? The notion was of course too palpably absurd (though Audouin would have been charmed with it). Yet there can be no denying that from the moment Hiram met that beautiful English girl by the Lake of the Thousand Islands, his desire to see Europe was quickened by yet one more unacknowledged, but very powerful private attraction. If anybody had talked to him about marrying Gwen, he would have honestly laughed at the improbable notion, but in the indefinite way that young men often feel, he felt as though some vague influence drew him on towards Gwen, not as a woman to be wooed and won, but as a central object of worship and admiration.

At the hotel, they didn't know the name of the English gentleman and his daughter; the clerk said they only came for a day and expected no letters. Another guest had

asked about them, too, he mentioned casually ; but Hiram, accustomed to looking upon his friend as so much older than himself as to have outgrown the folly of admiring female beauty, never dreamt of supposing that that other guest was Lothrop Audouin. He searched the 'Herald,' indeed, a week later, to see if any English officer and his daughter had sailed from New York on the Friday, but there were no passengers whom he could at all identify with Gwen and her father. It didn't occur to him that they might have sailed, as they did sail, by the Canadian mail steamer from Quebec, where he couldn't have failed to discover them in the list of passengers ; so he was left in the end with no other memorial of this little episode save the sketch of that sunny face, and the two names, Gwen and Chester. To those little memorials Hiram's mind turned back oftener than less

solitary people could easily imagine during the next long twelve months of dreary advertisement-drawing at long, white, dusty, sun-smitten Syracuse.

CHAPTER XIV.

MINNA GIVES NOTICE.

‘COLIN,’ Minna Wroe said to the young workman one evening, as they walked together through the streets of London towards the Regent’s Park: ‘do you know what I’ve actually gone and done to-day? I’ve give notice.’

‘Given notice, Minna! What for, on earth? Why, you seemed to me so happy and comfortable there. I’ve never seen you in any other place where you and your people seemed to pull so well together, like.’

‘Ah, that’s just what She said to me, Colin.’
(*She* in this connection may be familiarly recognised as a pronoun enclosing its own

antecedent.) ‘She said she couldn’t imagine what my reason could be for leaving; and so I just up and told her. And as it isn’t any use keeping it from you any longer, I think I may as well up and tell you too, Colin. Colin, I don’t mean any more to be a servant.’

Colin looked at her, dazzled and stunned a little by the suddenness and conciseness of this resolute announcement. Half a dozen vague and unpleasant surmises ran quickly through his bewildered brain. ‘Why, Minna,’ he exclaimed with some apprehension, looking down hastily at her neat little figure and her pretty, dimpled gipsy face, ‘you’re not going—no you’re not going to the drapery, are you?’

Minna’s twin dimples on the rich brown cheeks grew deeper and deeper, and she laughed merrily to herself a wee musical ringing laugh. ‘The drapery, indeed,’ she cried, three-quarters amused and one-quarter indig-

nant. 'The drapery, he says to me! No, Mr. Colin, if you please, sir, I'm not going to be a shop-girl, thank you. A pretty shop-girl I should make now, shouldn't I? That's just like all you men: you think nobody can go in for bettering themselves, only yourselves. If a girl doesn't want to be a parlour-maid any longer, you can't think of anything but she must want to go and be a shop-girl. I wonder you didn't say a barmaid. If you don't beg my pardon at once for your impudence, I won't tell you anything more about it.'

'I beg your pardon, I'm sure, Minna,' Colin answered submissively. 'I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.'

'And good reason, too, sir. But as you've got the grace to do it, I'll tell you all the rest. Do you know what I do with my money, Colin?'

'You save it all, I know, Minna.'

'Well, I save it all. And then, I've got

grandmother's eleven pound, what she left me ; and the little things I've been given now and again by visitors and such like. And I've worked all through the "Complete Manual of Letter Writing," and the "English History," and the "First School Arithmetic" : and now, Miss Woollacott—you know ; her at the North London Birkbeck Girls' Schools—she says she'll take me on as a sort of a pupil-teacher, to look after the little ones and have lessons myself for what I can do, if only I'll pay her my own board and lodging.'

Colin gazed at the girl aghast. 'A pupil-teacher, Minna !' he cried in astonishment. 'A pupil-teacher ! Why, my dear child, what on earth do you mean to do when you're through it all ?'

Minna dropped her plump brown hand from his arm at the gate of the park, and stood looking up at him pettishly with bright eyes flashing. 'There you are again,' she said,

with a little touch of bitterness in her pretty voice. ‘Just like you men always. You think it’s all very well for Colin Churchill to want to go and be a sculptor, and talk with fine ladies and gentlemen, and make his fortune, and become a great man by-and-by, perhaps, like that Can-over, or somebody: that’s all quite right and proper; of course it is. But for Minna Wroe, whose people are every bit as good as his, to save up her money, and do her best to educate herself, and fit herself to be his equal, and become a governess,—why, that of course is quite unnatural. *Her* proper place is to be a parlour-maid: *she* ought to go on all her life long cleaning silver, and waiting on the ladies and gentlemen, and changing the plates at dinner—that’s just about what she’s fit for. She’s only a woman. You’re all alike, Colin, all you men, the whole lot of you. I won’t go any further. I shall just go home again this very minute.’

Colin caught her arm gently, and held her still for a minute by quiet force. ‘My dear Minna,’ he said, ‘you don’t at all understand me. If you’ve really got it in your mind to better yourself like that, why, of course, it’s a very grand thing in you, and I admire you for your spirit and resolution. Besides, Minna,’ and Colin looked into her eyes a little tenderly as he said this, ‘I think I know, little woman, what you want to do it for. What I meant was just this, you know : I don’t see what it’ll lead to, even when you’ve gone and done it.’

‘Why,’ Minna answered, trying to disengage herself from his firm grasp, ‘in the first place,—let me go, Colin, or I won’t speak to you ; let me go this minute I say ; yes, that’ll do, thank you—in the first place, what I want most is to get the education. When I’ve got that, I can begin to look out what to do with it. Perhaps I’ll be a

governess, or a Board-school teacher, or such-like. But in the second place, one never knows what may happen to one. Somebody might fall in love with me, you see, and then I should very likely get married, Colin.' And Minna said this with such a saucy little smile, that Colin longed then and there, in the open park, to stoop down and kiss her soundly.

'Then you've really arranged it all, have you, Minna?' he asked wonderingly. 'You've really decided to go to Miss Woollacott's?'

Minna nodded.

'Well, Minna,' Colin said in a tone of genuine admiration, 'you may say what you like about us men being all the same (I suppose we are, if it comes to that), but I do admire you immensely for it. You've got such a wonderful lot of spirit and determination. Now, I know what you'll say; you'll go and take it wrong again; but, Minna, it's a great deal harder and more remarkable for a

woman to try to raise herself than for a man to go and do it. Why, now I come to think of it, little woman, I've read of lots of men educating themselves and rising to be great people—George Stephenson, that made the steam-engines on railways, and Gibson the sculptor, and lots of painters and architects and people—but really and truly, I believe, Minna, I never read yet of a woman who'd been and done it.'

'That's because the books are all written by men, stupid, you may be certain,' Minna answered saucily. 'Anyhow, Colin, I'm going to try and do it. I'm going to leave my place at the end of the month, and go for a pupil-teacher at Miss Woollacott's. And I'm beginning the geography now, and the Second Grade English Grammar, so that I can get myself fit for it, Colin, a bit beforehand. I don't see why you should be reading all these fine books, you know, and I should be content

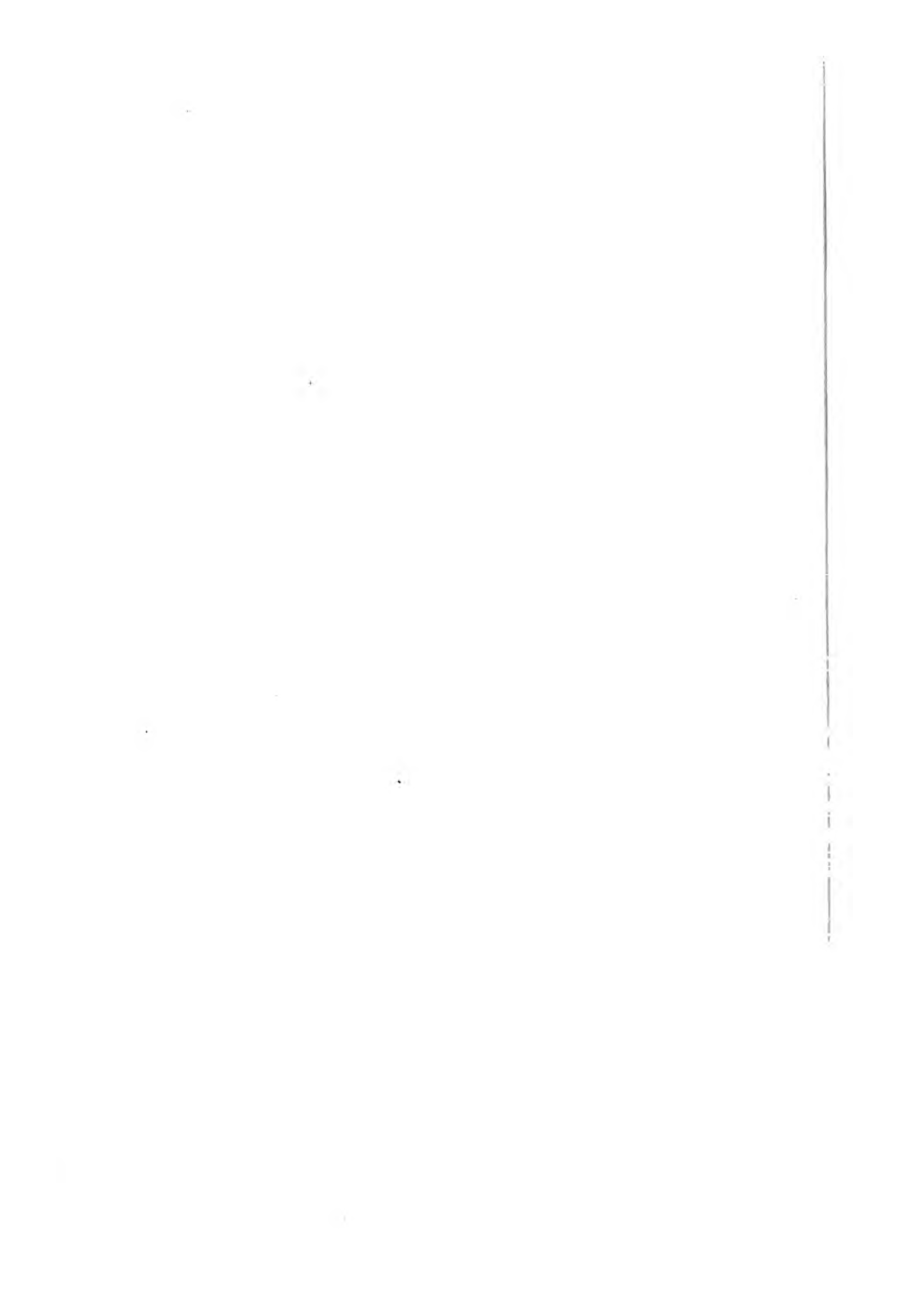
with being no more nor a common parlour-maid.'

It was in the park, but it was getting dusky, and lovers in London are not so careful of secrecy as in the unsophisticated and less limited country. The great perennial epic of each human heart must needs work itself out somehow or other even under the Argus eyes of the big squalid ugly city. So Colin stooped down beneath the shade of the plane trees and kissed Minna twice or three times over in spite of her pretended struggling. (It is a point of etiquette with girls of Minna's class that they should pretend to struggle when one tries to kiss them.) 'Minna,' he said earnestly, 'I'm proud of you. My dear little girl, I'm really proud of you.'

'What a funny thing it is,' thought Minna to herself, 'that he never makes love to me, though! I don't know even now whether he considers himself engaged to me or not.'



'Beneath the shade of the plane-trees.'



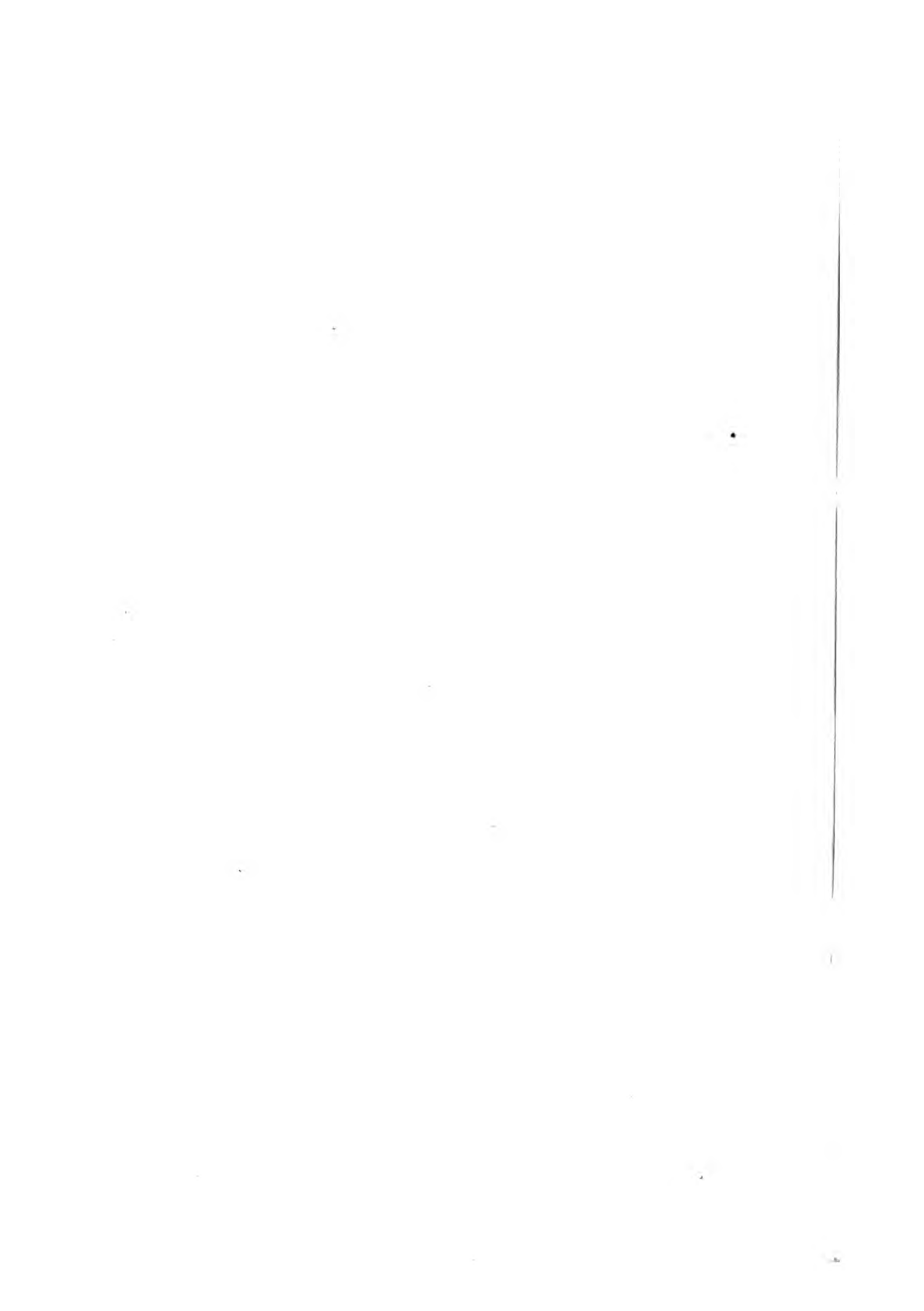
How queer it is that he never makes me a proper proposal!' For Minna had diligently read her 'London Herald,' and knew well that when a young man (especially of Colin's attainments) proposes to a young lady, he ought to do it with all due formalities, in a set speech carefully imitated from the finest literary models of the eighteenth century. Instead of which, Colin only kissed her now and again quite promiscuous like, just as he used to do long since at Wootton Man-deville, and called her 'Minna' and 'little woman.' Still she did think on the whole that 'little woman' sounded after all a great deal like an irregular betrothal. (She distinctly recollected that Mabel in the 'London Herald,' and Maud de Vere in the 'Maiden's Stratagem,' always called it a betrothal and not an engagement.)

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