The World's Greatest Books — Volume 01 — Fiction eBook

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Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Page 1

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE

A Complete Index of *the world's greatest books* will be found at the end of Volume XX.

INTRODUCTION

An enterprise such as *the world's greatest books* is to be judged from two different standpoints. It may be judged with respect to its specific achievement—the material of which it consists; or it may be judged with regard to its general utility in the scheme of literature to which it belongs.

In an age which is sometimes ironically called "remarkable" for its commercialism, nothing has been more truly remarkable than the advancement in learning as well as in material progress; and of all the instruments that have contributed to this end, none has been more effective, perhaps, than the practical popularisation of literature.

In *the world's greatest books* an attempt has been made to effect a *compendium* of the world's best literature in a form that shall be at once *accessible* to every one and still *faithful* to its originals; or, in other words, it has been sought to allow the original author to tell his own story over again in his own language, but in the shortest possible space.

Such a method differs entirely from all those in which an author is represented, either by one or more *extracts* from his work, or else by a formal summary or criticism of it in a language not his own. And, since the style and language of an original is what often constitutes the wings upon which alone its thought will fly, to have access to its thought without its form is too often to possess a skeleton without the spirit which alone could animate it.

Notwithstanding this, however, we are aware that even *the world's greatest books* will not escape the criticism of a small class of people who will profess to object to this, as to any kind of interference with an author's original—in reply to which it can only be said that such objections are seldom, if ever, made in the true interests of learning, or in a genuine spirit of inquiry, and too often only proceed from a knowledge of books or love of them which goes no deeper than their title-page.

Page 2

For better than all books are the truths which books contain, and to condense those truths into a form that makes them available is not only to invest them with new powers and an enlarged range of usefulness, but is also not necessarily to interfere with any of those essential qualities that make up the exquisite literary flavor of a fine original.

The selections in *the world's greatest books* have been collected, and are alphabetically arranged, in ten different divisions,—namely, Fiction, Lives and Letters, History, Religion, Philosophy, Economics, Science, Poetry and Drama, Travel and Adventure and Miscellaneous Literature.

An important additional feature of the work is *the brief, yet highly critical biographical and bibliographical note* which accompanies every author and every selection throughout the twenty volumes. To this must be also added the not less important *Introductories*, and other explanations written by experts, which often accompany the selections in the text—cardinal examples of which will be found in particular in the section of Religion of this work, in the articles dealing with such subjects as the Book of the Dead, Brahmanism, Confucianism, the Koran, Talmud, *etc*.

With respect to the selections themselves, it may be added that, even where they are derived from foreign originals, they have often been prepared from those originals rather than from any existing translations of them, as in the fine translation of Catullus by Professor Wight Duff, or the condensations from Euripides, Corneille, Kant, Tacitus, and very many more. In other cases, again, the selections have been *specially prepared for the world's greatest books by their authors* or their agents, such as the two selections by Major Martin Hume in History, by Dr. Bramwell and Sir Francis Galton in Science, by Mr. Robert Hichens in Fiction, *etc*. From this, and still more from the list of authors itself, it will be found, we hope, that besides a completely modern aim, a distinctly proper proportion of modern literature has found a place in the work, and that the best of French, German, Scandinavian, Russian, and other authors take rank in it with American and English, as do the best of the ancients with the best among the moderns.

As the aim of *the world's greatest books* has been directed first of all towards those forms of literature which were in the most need of condensation to make them readily available, it will not be expected that the Poetry section of the work will contain the shorter kind of poems. Moreover, even if the shortness of such poems and their general accessibility in present-day anthologies did not render their inclusion here a work of supererogation, it was felt that their place could be far better filled in a work like the present by the world's best *dramatic* literature,—as has been done. This does not apply, however, to translations from the shorter poems of ancient classical literature, which, however short they may be, cannot be said to be already generally available for everyday reading.

Page 3

Throughout, the claims of literature proper, or of fine writing, have been intimately considered in conjunction with the claims of pure learning, or of information, with the result, it is hoped, that to the authority of the world's best thinkers is added the picturesqueness of their fine writing. Plato, Spencer, Newton; Darwin, Haeckel, Virchow; AEschylus, Shelley, Ibsen; Burton, Mandeville, Loti; or Brandes, Matthew Arnold, and Demosthenes—from old and from modern times they yield up their pearls.

The notion of finality, or of an utter inclusiveness, for such a work as *the world's greatest books* may be readily disclaimed. To set it up even would seem ridiculous to any one acquainted with the enormous range of the subject. Not so ridiculous, however, may seem the claim to have established a standard and a form of achievement new in the annals of literary production; and one, moreover, *whose importance as an educative factor,* no less than as a test of the special needs of the era wherein we are living, may be as valid in its own way and in its own time as some of those other contributions which have helped along the revival of learning and of letters, from that first awakening of the Renascence humanists down to our own day.

* * * * *

EDMOND ABOUT

The King of the Mountains

Edmond About was the son of a grocer at Dieuze, in Lorraine, France, where he was born Feb. 14, 1828. Even in childhood he displayed the vivacity of mind and the irreverent spirit which were to make him the most entertaining anti-clerical writer of his period. His tales have the qualities of the best writing of the eighteenth century, enhanced by the modern interest of his own century. "The King of the Mountains" is the best-known of his novels, as it is also the best. In 1854 About was working as a poor archaeologist at the French School at Athens, where he noticed there was a curious understanding between the brigands and the police of modern Hellas. Brigandage was becoming a safe and almost a respectable Greek industry. "Why not make it quite respectable and regular?" said About. "Why does not some brigand chief, with a good connection, convert his business into a properly registered joint-stock company?" So he produced, in 1856, one of the most delightful of satirical novels, "The King of the Mountains." Edmond About died on January 17, 1885, shortly after his election to the French Academy.

I.—The Brigand and His Business

I am no coward; still, I have some regard for my life. It is a present I received from my parents, and I wish to preserve it as long as possible in remembrance of them. So, on my arrival at Athens, in April, 1856, I refrained from going into the country.

Page 4

Had the director of the Hamburg Botanical Gardens said to me when I left Germany: “My dear Hermann Schultz, I want you to go to Greece and draw up a report on the remarkable system of brigandage obtaining in that land,” I might bravely have begun by going for a ride outside Athens, as my American friends, John Harris and William Lobster, did. But I had merely been sent, at a salary of L10 a month, to collect the rarer specimens of the flora of Greece. I therefore began by studying the native plants in the royal gardens; and put off the work of searching for new species and varieties.

John Harris and William Lobster, who lodged with me at the shop of the pastry cook, Christodulos, in Hermes Street, were persons of a more adventurous temperament. Borrowing the only two horses that Christodulos possessed, they rode out into the country. But they had scarcely gone a mile when they were stopped by a band of brigands, and urgently invited to pay a visit to the King of the Mountains. The Americans refused to go, as the King of the Mountains had an unkindly way of holding his visitors to large ransoms, and killing them if the money were not quickly paid. But the brigands—there were fourteen of them—insisted, and got out ropes and began to bind their captives. Neither Harris nor Lobster was made of the kind of wood of which faggots are composed. They drew their revolvers, and used them with astonishing effect. They lost the horses, but got safely back to Athens.

“I suppose I mustn’t grumble over two horses,” said Christodulos. “I served under Hadgi Stavros, the King of the Mountains, in the War of Independence, and earned enough money to set up in business.”

Then, over a bottle of Santorin wine, Christodulos related the story of the great brigand chief. Hadgi Stavros was by far the most popular leader among the insurgent Greeks. His hatred of the Turks did not blind him to such a point that he passed through a Greek village without plundering it. A vigorous impartiality enabled him to advance his fame by increasing his wealth. Lord Byron dedicated an ode to him, and sympathisers with the Greek cause throughout Europe sent him subsidies. The result was that when Greece was at last liberated from the Turks, Hadgi Stavros returned to his old trade with a large capital, and a genius for organisation which enabled him to revolutionise the business of brigandage. He entered into arrangements with army officers and politicians, and saw to it that his allies were entrusted with the government of his free, enlightened and progressive country.

“But the pity of it is,” continued our honest host, “that poor Hadgi Stavros is growing very old and has no son to succeed him. For the sake of his only daughter, he is investing all his wealth in foreign stocks and shares, instead of using it to extend his business.”

“I say, I should be glad of an introduction to Miss Stavros,” said John Harris. “I wouldn’t mind throwing up my job as captain of the *Fancy*, now lying at the Piraeus, in order to marry the richest heiress in Greece. Do you think it is worth getting captured for the sake of meeting her?”

Page 5

As Christodulos was about to reply, the shop-bell rang, and a young lady entered. Like nine out of ten Athenian girls, she had plain features. Her teeth were white and even, and her hair was beautiful; but that was all. Happily, in this world of ours, the ugliest little goose generally finds some honest gander to admire her. Dimitri, the son of the pastry cook, ran forward with a cry of delight, exclaiming, “It’s Photini!”

“Gentlemen, let us talk of something else,” whispered Christodulos. “We must not alarm this charming girl with tales about brigands.”

He then introduced Photini to us. She was, it appeared, the daughter of one of his old companions-in-arms, Colonel John. Colonel John was apparently a man of means, for Photini was very fashionably dressed, and she was being educated at the best boarding-school in Athens. Her father had asked his old friend to allow Photini to come and chat with us, and improve Her knowledge of French and German. The girl, however, was too timid to enter into conversation, and, to judge by the direction of her glances, it was not French or German that she would have liked to speak if she could, but English.

John Harris, I admit, is a very good-looking man; but the way Photini began to devour him with her eyes, astonished me. I was sitting next to her at table; but she did not utter a word till the end of the meal. Then she asked if he were married.

“No, he isn’t,” I replied, adding with a touch of malice, “I think he would be glad of an introduction to you.”

For something had occurred which made me suspect that she was the richest heiress in Greece. During the meal, Dimitri came running in with a newspaper, and looking far from happy.

“Hadgi Stavros has been defeated,” he cried. “The troops have burnt his camp and broken up his army, and pursued him to the marshes of Marathon.”

“It’s a lie!” shouted Christodulos, his face red with anger. “The King of the Mountains could take Athens if he wanted to, and cut the throat of every man in it.”

This, I thought, was strange language from an honest pastry cook, who was also a lieutenant in the militia. I was still more surprised when I turned to Photini, and saw that her face was wet with tears.

“You see, my dear Harris,” I said, when he and Lobster and I were talking the matter over in my bedroom, “you have soon got the introduction you wanted.”

“That ugly little over-dressed thing!” exclaimed Harris. “I wouldn’t marry her to save my life.”

“Well, at all events,” I said, “I shall be able to begin my botanical researches to-morrow, now that her excellent father has retired to his mountains.”

II.—The King of the Mountains Company, Limited

The next morning, I strapped on my collecting-case, and explored Mount Parnassus. There I came upon Dimitri and two ladies.

“The old woman is Mrs. Simons, English, very rich,” said Dimitri to me. “The pretty girl is her daughter. I’m their guide. I chose this excursion in the hope of meeting you. But whatever is the matter with the women?”

Page 6

They shrieked, and stared, horror-stricken, at a clump of bushes. I looked in the same direction, and perceived half a dozen gun-barrels gleaming among the leaves. Then eight ruffians appeared; and I saw that the only difference between devils and brigands is that devils are less black than is said, and brigands much dirtier than is supposed. They took all our money and jewelery, and then allowed Dimitri to depart—I guessed why—and led the two ladies and myself down the hill, and up a winding path on to a high plateau, where Hadgi Stavros and his band were now encamped.

The King of the Mountains was sitting, cross-legged, on a square carpet beneath a pine-tree, a little way from his noisy, crowded camp. Four secretaries were writing on their knees to his dictation. He was undoubtedly a man of majestic appearance. He had a fine figure—tall, supple, and marvelously preserved—and calm, noble features. The only indications of old age were his long white hair and long white moustaches. His dress was very simple—a jacket of black cloth, immense blue cotton trousers, large boots of Russian leather, and a loose red cap. A jeweled belt was the only costly thing he wore.

He raised his head at our approach.

“You are very welcome,” he said with great gravity. “Please sit down while I finish dictating my letters.”

His servant brought us refreshments, consisting of coffee, Turkish delight, and preserved fruit. Having put us at our ease, the king went on with his correspondence.

“This,” he said, “is to Messrs. Barley and Co., 31 Cavendish Square, London.”

“Excuse me, sire,” said his secretary, bending over and whispering in his ear.

“What does it matter?” said the king in a haughty tone. “I’ve done nothing wrong. Let all the world come and listen if they want to. Now, take this down.”

And he dictated the following letter:

“*Gentlemen*,—I observe by your note of April 5 that I now have L22,750 on current account. Please invest half of this sum in 3 per cent. Consols and half in bearer bonds before the coupons are detached. I shall be obliged if you will sell my shares in the Bank of England, and put the proceeds in London omnibuses. That will be a safe investment and, I think, a profitable one. Your obedient servant,

> “*Hadgi Stavros*.
>
> “P. S. Oblige me by sending a hundred guineas to Messrs. Ralli Brothers as my subscription towards the Hellenic School at Liverpool.”

Mrs. Simons, who, like her daughter, did not speak Greek, leaned towards me.

“Mr. Schultz, is he dictating the terms of our ransom?” she asked.

“No, madam,” I replied. “He is writing to his bankers.”

Mrs. Simons turned to the box of Turkish delight. I found more pleasure in listening to the king’s business correspondence. It was extraordinarily interesting.

Page 7

The next letter was addressed to George Micrommati, Secretary of the King of the Mountains Co., Ltd., the Courts of Justice, Athens.

“I am sorry to say,” Hadgi Stavros dictated, “that the company’s operations have been much restricted owing to the bad harvest and to the occupation of a part of our beloved land by foreign troops.

“Our gross receipts from May 1, 1855, to April 30, 1856, amount only to:

fr.
261,482
“While our expenses come to 135,482

“Leaving fr. 126,000
Which I propose to divide as follows:
One-third of the profits payable to me as managing
director 40,000
Amount added to reserve fund at Bank of Athens 6,000
Amount available for dividend 80,000

“Total fr. 126,000

“This comes to about 70 per cent, on our present capital of 120,000 francs. It is, I know, the lowest dividend we have paid since the company was formed fourteen years ago. But the shareholders must consider the difficulties we have had to struggle against. Our business is so closely connected with the interests of the country that it can only flourish in times of general prosperity. From those who have nothing we can take nothing, or very little. The tourist season, however, has opened very favourably, and the affairs of the company will, I think, soon improve. I will send you a detailed statement in the course of a few days. I am too busy now.”

The king read over the letters, and affixed his seal to them. Then, with royal courtesy, instead of having us brought before him on the carpet, he came and sat down by our side. Mrs. Simons at once began to talk at him in English. I offered to act as interpreter with a view to protecting her from herself. The king, however, thanked me coldly, and called to one of his brigands who knew English.

As I had foreseen, Mrs. Simons spoke very largely about her great wealth and her high position. The result was that the king fixed her ransom and that of Mary Ann at L4,000. I was determined that he should not over-estimate my resources.

“It’s no good putting a ransom on me,” I exclaimed. “My father is a poor German innkeeper who has been ruined by the railway. I’ve been forced to leave home and come to Greece, where I earn a beggarly L10 a month.”

“If that is so,” said the king, very kindly, “you can return to Athens at once, or stay here for a few days.”

“I shall be happy to stay,” I replied, “if you will return the collecting-case your men took from me. I want to go botanising.”

“What! You are a man of science!” cried the king joyfully. “Ah, how I admire knowledge! Who sent you here to collect our plants? Some famous university, I’ll be bound.”

“I’m collecting on behalf of the Hamburg Botanical Gardens,” I answered.

Page 8

“And do you think, my dear friend,” said the king, “that a great institution like the Hamburg Botanical Gardens would let a man of your worth perish rather than pay his ransom of L600? Happy young man! You now see the value of a sound, scientific education. Had you been an utter ignoramus as I am, I wouldn’t have asked the ransom of a penny.”

The king listened neither to my objections nor to the cries of Mrs. Simons. He rose up and departed; and one of his secretaries led us to a plot of green sward, where a meal had been laid for us.

“The king has ordered everything to be done to make your sojourn as pleasant as possible,” he said. “He is sorry that his men were so ill-mannered as to rob persons of your importance. Everything they took will be returned to you. You have thirty days in which to pay your ransom. Write to your friends without delay, as the king never grants an extension of time.”

“But if I can’t get the money?” I asked.

“You will be killed,” said the secretary.

I did not know what to do. I knew nobody with L100, much less L600. Then I thought of John Harris.

“Tell Christodulos,” I wrote, “that Hadgi Stavros won’t let me go. If he will not intercede for me, I leave myself, dear friend, in your hands. I know you are a man of courage and imagination. You will find a way to get me out of this fix.”

All the same, I had very little hope; and Hadgi Stavros came up and found me looking very gloomy.

“Courage, my boy,” he said.

“You know I can’t raise L600,” I exclaimed. “It’s simply murder.”

“You’re a young fool,” said the King of the Mountains. “Were I in your place, my ransom would be paid in two days. Don’t you understand? Here you have an opportunity of winning a charming wife and an immense fortune.”

Mary Ann was sitting with her mother outside one of the caves in the rocky enclosure, which were to serve as bedrooms. Close at hand was a stream, which ran through a hole in the rocks, and went tumbling down the precipitous side of the plateau. I saw that the stretch of green sward between the rocks had been a lake. This suggested to me a way of escape.

“Suppose,” I said to Mary Ann, “that I closed up the hole in the rocks with turf, and let the water run into this hollow ground, do you think we would be able to climb down by the empty river bed?”

She got on the rocks and gazed over the precipice. “I could do it if you would help me.”

“But I couldn’t,” said Mrs. Simons, very snappishly. “The whole thing’s utterly ridiculous. I’ve written to the British Ambassador, and we shall be rescued by the royal troops in two days at the latest.”

I then told her of the “King of the Mountains Co., Ltd.”

“No doubt,” I said, “many of the gallant officers *in* the Greek Army have shares in it.”

III.—A Way of Escape

Page 9

And so it proved. Two days afterwards the king was explaining to me his scheme for transforming brigandage into a peaceful orderly system of taxation, when four shots were fired in the distance.

“Get out the Aegean wine,” he said. “Pericles is coming with some troops.”

Sixty soldiers came marching into the camp. Captain Pericles, whose figure I had often admired at Athens, ran up to Hadgi Stavros, and kissed him.

“Good news, my dear godfather! The paymaster-general is sending L1,000 to Argos this morning by the path near the Scironian Rocks,” said the captain.

“Splendid, my boy!” said the king. “I’ll go with all my men at once. Guard the camp, and write out the report of our battle. Defeat me if you like, but leave ten of your best troops dead on the field. I am in need of recruits. Look after the three prisoners. They’re worth L4,600.”

As Hadgi Stavros marched out at the head of his men, they sang a song composed by their king when he knew Lord Byron:

Down the winding valleys a hillsman went his way;
His eyes were black and flaming, his gun was clean and bright
He cried unto the vultures: “Oh, follow me to-day,
And you shall have my foeman to feed upon to-night!”

When Mrs. Simons saw that the brigands had gone, and the troops had arrived, she was wild with excitement. I told her of the real state of affairs; but she wouldn’t believe me, and gave Pericles her money and jewels when asked for them. In the evening the king returned with his men, and the troops departed. Mrs. Simons then broke down.

“If you were an Englishman, you would rescue us, and marry my daughter,” she exclaimed. “I suppose I must write to Barley & Co., and get Edward to send our ransom.”

“Barley & Co. of Cavendish Square?”

“Yes,” said Mary Ann. “Didn’t you know my mother and my uncle were bankers?”

“Then I have found a way of escape,” I exclaimed. “Hadgi Stavros banks with your firm. Do you remember the letter he was dictating when we arrived? That was to Barley & Co. about an investment.”

“I see. I must explain the position at once to him,” said Mrs. Simons.

“And he will want half a million or more ransom,” I said. “No! Write at once to your agents in Athens to send you L4,600. Pay Hadgi Stavros; make him give you a receipt. Enclose this in the next letter from Messrs. Barley & Co., with the note—’Item. L4,600 personally remitted by our partner, Mrs. Simons, as per enclosed receipt.’”

I raised my head, and saw the sweet brown eyes of Mary Ann looking at me, radiant with joy. I then went to Hadgi Stavros, and explained that the L4,600 would be paid into his account at the Bank of Athens on the production of his receipt for that amount. He refused at first to give a receipt. He had never done such a thing. Then I took him on his weak side, and said that perhaps it was more prudent not to give one. If ever he were captured it might be used against him. This touched him.

Page 10

“I will not give one receipt,” he cried. “I will give two—one for Mrs. and Miss Simons, one for Hermann Schultz.”

Alas! from my point of view the result was deplorable. The ransom of the two ladies was paid, and they were set free. But as Messrs. Barley & Co. could not recover any money on a receipt given to me, their agent refused to pay my ransom.

“It doesn’t matter,” said Mrs. Simons, as she and Mary Ann departed. “You can escape by the way down the cascade. Your first plan was impossible with two women, but now you are alone, it is admirable. Come and see us as soon as you get away.”

That night I made friends with the ruffian set to watch over me, and I plied him with wine until he fell on the grass and was unable to rise. I then dammed the stream, and climbed down its empty bed. It was difficult work, as the rocks were wet and the night was very dark. I was covered with bruises when I reached a platform of rock about ten feet from the bottom of the precipice. Just as I was about to jump down, a white form appeared below, and a savage growl came from it. I had forgotten the pack of fierce dogs, which, as the King of the Mountains had told me, were the best of all his sentries. Happily, I carried my collecting case, and in it was a packet of arsenic which I used for stuffing birds. I put some of the powder on a piece of bread, and threw the poisoned food to the dog; but arsenic takes a long time to act. In about half an hour’s time the creature began to howl in a frightful manner, and it did not expire until daybreak. It also succeeded in arousing the camp, and I was recaptured and brought before the king.

“I don’t mind your trying to escape,” he said, with a terrible look; “but in your wild prank you have, drowned the man I set to watch over you. Were I to give way to my feelings I would have you killed. But I will be merciful. You will merely be bastinadoed to prevent you from wandering out of bounds until your ransom is paid.”

I received twenty strokes on my feet. At the third I began to bleed. At the fourth I began to howl. At the tenth I was insensible to pain. When I came to I was in such an agony that I would have given my soul to kill Hadgi Stavros. I tried to, but failed. But I would hurt him, though I knew I should die for it. So, with a torrent of invectives, I explained how I tricked him over the ransom of Mrs. Simons and her daughter.

“She’s a partner in Barley’s Bank, you fool, you ass!” I shrieked. “She will get back all the L4,000 on your receipt.”

Hadgi Stavros turned pale and trembled.

“No,” he said, very slowly; “I will not kill you. You have not suffered enough. Four thousand pounds! It is a fortune. You have stolen my daughter’s fortune. What can I do to you? Find me, you brutes,” he cried, turning to his men, “a torture of L4,000.”

Then he left me in their hands.

“Treat him gently,” he said. “I don’t want him to get so exhausted that he dies before I begin to play with him.”

Page 11

As a beginning, they stripped me to the waist, and their cook put me close to a great fierce fire, where some lambs were being fried. The red cinders fell about me, and the heat was unsupportable. I dragged myself away on my hands—I could not use my feet—but the ruffian kicked me back. Then he left me for a moment to get some salt and pepper. I remembered that I had put the arsenic in my trousers pocket. With a supreme effort I rose up and scattered the powder over the meat.

“What are you doing?” said the cook. “Trying to cast a spell on our food?”

He had only seen, from a distance, the motion of my hand. I was avenged!

Suddenly I heard a cry: “The king! Where is the king?” And Dimitri, the son of Christodulos, came running up.

“Good God!” he said when he saw me. “The poor girl!”

The cook was so astonished that he forgot me for a minute; and I managed to crawl away and lay on the cold grass. Then Hadgi Stavros appeared. With a cry of anguish he took me gently in his arms, and carried me to the cave among the rocks.

“Poor boy!” he said. “How you have suffered! But you will soon be well. I once had sixty strokes of the bastinado, and two days afterwards I was dancing the Romaika. It was this ointment that cured me.”

“But what has happened?” I murmured.

“Read that!” he cried, throwing me a letter. “What a pirate! What an assassin! If I only had you and your friend, one in each hand! Oh, he won’t do it! Will he?”

The letter was from John Harris. It ran:

“Hadgi Stavros,—Photini is now on my ship, the *Fancy*, which carries four guns. She remains a hostage as long as Hermann Schultz remains a prisoner. As you treat my friend, so I will treat your daughter. She shall pay hair for hair, tooth for tooth, head for head. Answer at once, or I will come and see you.—JOHN HARRIS.”

“I know Photini,” I said to the king, “and I swear that she will not be harmed. But I must return to Athens at once. Get four of your men to carry me down the mountains in a litter.”

The king rose up, and then groaned and staggered. I remembered the arsenic. He must have eaten some of the meat. I tickled the inside of his throat, and he brought up most of the poison. Soon afterwards the other brigands came up to the enclosure, screaming with pain, and wanted to murder me. I had cast a spell over their meat, and it was torturing them, they cried. I must be killed at once, and then the spell would be

removed. The king commanded them to withdraw. They resisted. He drew his saber, and cut down two of the ringleaders. The rest seized their guns and began to shoot. There were about sixty of them, all suffering, more or less, from the effects of arsenic poisoning. We were only twelve in number, but our men had the steadier aim; and the king fought like a hero, though his hands and feet were swelling painfully.

Page 12

The fact was that he had eaten some time before his men, and I could not therefore get the poison completely out of his system. But it was the arsenic that saved his life. He had at last to come and lie down beside me. We heard the sound of rapid firing in the distance; and suddenly two men entered our enclosure, with revolvers in each hand, and shot down our defenders with an extraordinary quickness of aim. They were Harris and Lobster.

“Hermann, where are you?” Harris yelled at last, with all his strength, as he turned and found nothing more to shoot at.

“Here,” I replied. “The men you’ve just killed have been fighting for me. There has been civil war in the camp.”

“Well, we’ve stamped it out!” said Harris. “What’s the matter with the old scoundrel lying beside you?”

“It’s Hadgi Stavros,” I said. “He and his men have been eating some arsenic I had in my collecting case.”

My friends managed to carry me down the mountain, and at the first village we came to they got a carriage and took me to Athens. The ointment used by Hadgi Stavros was, as he had said, marvelous; and in two days I could walk as well as ever. I at once called on Mrs. and Miss Simons.

“They departed yesterday for Trieste,” said the servant, “on their way to London.”

As I was returning to Hermes Street I met Hadgi Stavros and Photini.

“How is it that the King of the Mountains is found walking in the streets of Athens?” I said.

“What can I do in the mountains now?” he replied. “All my men are killed, wounded or fled. I might get others. But look at my swollen hands. How can I use a sword? No; let some one younger now take my place. But I defy him to equal me in fame or fortune. And I have not done yet. Before six months are gone, you will see Hadgi Stavros, Prime Minister of Greece. Oh, there are more ways of making money than one!”

And that was the last I saw of the King of the Mountains. On the advice of Harris, I at once returned to Hamburg, lest some of the remaining brigands found me out, and take vengeance for the spell I had cast on their meat. But some day I hope to go to London, and call at 31, Cavendish Square.

* * * * *

HARRISON AINSWORTH

Tower of London

William Harrison Ainsworth, born at Manchester, England, Feb. 4, 1805, was a popular rather than a great writer. A solicitor's son, he was himself trained in the law, but some adventures in journalism led him finally to the literary life, his first success as a writer of romance being scored with "Rookwood" in 1834. "Tower of London" was the fourth work of the novelist, and, according to Ainsworth himself, it was written chiefly with the aim of interesting his fellow-countrymen in the historical associations of the Tower. From the popularity of the

Page 13

romance it is reasonable to suppose that it fulfilled its author's hopes in this respect, though it must be confessed its history leaves a good deal to be desired. Here is not the place to discuss the rights and wrongs of Ainsworth's bold liberties in respect to the historical personages he introduces; but there is no doubt that the romance is told with vigour and dramatic movement, and it is an excellent example of the novelist's spirited style of narrative, though, judged on purely literary merits, like his other works, the "Tower of London" will not bear comparison with the masterpieces of Sir Walter Scott in the field of historical romance. Ainsworth died at Reigate on January 3, 1882.

I.—Prisoners in the Tower

Edward VI. was dead, poisoned, it was rumoured, by the Duke of Northumberland, Grandmaster of the Realm. For three days had an attempt been made to keep his death secret, so that the proud and ambitious duke might seize the persons of the Princess Mary and the Princess Elizabeth. But the former, warned in time, had escaped the snare; and the Duke of Northumberland, finding further dissimulation useless, boldly proclaimed his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey, queen.

On July 10, 1553, Queen Jane, the wisest and most beautiful woman in the kingdom, though only sixteen years of age, was conducted in state to the Tower, where it was the custom for the monarchs of England to spend the first few days of their reign.

But the crowds who watched her departure from Durham House, in the Strand, were silent and sullen. Her youthful beauty and grace might win an involuntary cry of admiration, but the heart of the people was not hers. They recognised that she was but the tool of her father-in-law, whom, because of his overweening ambition, they hated.

All the pride and pomp of silken banners and cloth of gold could not mask the gloomy presage of the young queen's reign. The very heavens thundered; and owing to the press of boats that surrounded the procession, many small craft were overturned and their occupants thrown into the water. And if further signs of portending evil were wanted, they could be discerned in the uneasy whisperings of those lords of the Privy Council who were present, or in the sinister face of the Spaniard, Simon Renard, ambassador to the Emperor Charles V.

"This farce will not last long," he said to De Noailles, the French ambassador. "The Privy Council are the duke's secret enemies, and through them I shall strike the scepter from Jane's grasp and place it in the hand of Mary."

Elsewhere in the procession, Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, uttered in a low voice to Ridley, Bishop of London, his fears for the future; while certain lords of the Privy Council, who had planned the assassination of the Duke of Northumberland, and were

aware that their plot had been discovered, approached the portals of the Tower in fear and trembling.

Page 14

But there was one man at least who did not share the general depression and uneasiness. Cuthbert Cholmondeley, esquire to Lord Guildford Dudley, husband of Queen Jane, found much to interest him in the scene. The reception of her Majesty by Og, Gog, and Magog had already driven away the sense of portending evil from his mind when he caught sight of a girl's face in the crowd. It was only for a moment that he had sight of it; but it left such a deep impression on his mind that for the rest of the day he burned with impatience to discover who the girl might be.

Much had to happen before he could satisfy his curiosity. Once in the Tower, plots against Queen Jane and the Duke of Northumberland began to thicken. At a meeting of the Privy Council the duke compelled the lords, under threat of imprisonment, to sign a proclamation declaring Princess Mary illegitimate. Renard lost no time in turning to his own advantage the bad impression created by these tactics.

"Do you consent to Northumberland's assassination?" he whispered to Pembroke.

"I do," replied the Earl of Pembroke. "But who will strike the blow?"

"I will find the man."

This sinister fragment of conversation fell upon the ears of Cuthbert. He at once sent a warning missive to his master, telling him of the plot against the duke's life. Then, this duty performed, he set out to try and find the girl whose face had so impressed him. From the giant warders he learnt that she was the adopted daughter of Dame Potentia Trusbut, wife of Peter, the pantler of the Tower. A mystery surrounded her birth. Her mother had been imprisoned in the Tower by Henry VIII., and in her dungeon had given birth to Cicely—such was the name of the girl.

Magog, seeing Cuthbert's interest, good-naturedly carried him off with him to the pantler's quarters. Here a gargantuan feast was in progress, to which the three giants did full justice, devouring whole joints and pasties and quaffing vast flagons of wine, to the great delight of the pantler and his wife. But Cuthbert had no eyes except for Cicely. He was not content until he was by her side and was able to hear her voice. The attraction between them was mutual, and it was not long before they were whispering the first words of love into one another's ears.

While all was merriment, Renard and Pembroke made their appearance unobserved. They had intercepted Cuthbert's letter, and were anxious to satisfy themselves as to the identity of the rash youth who had dared to cross their path.

"Though we have intercepted his missive to Lord Dudley," whispered Renard, "he may yet betray us. He must not return to the palace."

“He shall never return, my lords,” said a tall, dark man, advancing towards them, “if you will entrust his detention to me.”

“Who are you?” demanded Renard, eyeing him suspiciously.

“Lawrence Nightgall, the chief gaoler.”

Page 15

“What is your motive for this offer?”

“Look there!” returned Nightgall. “I love that damsel. He has supplanted me, but he shall not profit by his good fortune.”

“You are the very man I want!” cried Renard, rubbing his hands gleefully. “Lead me where we can speak more freely.”

The three withdrew unobserved. Half an hour later Cuthbert dragged himself unwillingly from Cicely’s side and passed into the open air. As he did so he received a blow on the back of his head which stretched him unconscious on the ground.

When he came to his senses he found himself bound by a chain in a gloomy dungeon, a ghastly, dreadful place, but a few feet in height. His first instinct was to try to loosen his bonds, but after vainly lacerating his hands he sank down exhausted.

Terrible recollections flashed upon his mind of the pitiless sufferings he had heard that the miserable wretches immured in these dungeons endured before death.

For a time these mental tortures were acute; but at last nature asserted herself, and he sank exhausted into sleep. He was awakened by a cry, and perceived the tall, skeleton figure of a woman standing by him. She placed a thin and bony hand upon his shoulder. He shrank back as far as his chain would permit, horror-stricken. The figure pursued him, shrieking, “My child! My child! You have taken my child!”

Suddenly she stopped and stood erect. A distant footstep was heard.

“He comes! He comes!” she cried, and with a loud shriek dashed from the dungeon and disappeared.

In another second Nightgall stood before him. The gaoler made no attempt to disguise the motives which prompted him to imprison the young esquire. No threats that Cuthbert could use had the least effect on him. He quailed before the charge that Cuthbert made at random—that he had murdered the child of the unfortunate wretch who had disappeared at his coming, but on the question of his release he was obdurate. If Cuthbert would agree to give up Cicely he should be released; otherwise he should meet with a secret death at the hands of Mauger, the executioner.

At this juncture, Cicely, who had been directed by the dwarf, Xit, appeared. To save the man she loved she boldly declared that she would wed Nightgall, provided that he would conduct his prisoner outside the walls of the Tower.

“Bring me back some token that you have done so, and I am yours,” she said.

Nightgall consented, and agreed to withdraw while Cuthbert and Cicely arranged privately what the token should be.

Hurriedly Cuthbert gave her a ring to send to Lord Dudley, who, he knew, would at once effect his release. Then, accompanied by Nightgall, Cicely withdrew from the gloomy dungeon.

Unable to deliver the ring herself to Lord Dudley, Cicely entrusted that task to Xit. But the vanity of the dwarf prevented the execution of the plan. As he was exhibiting the ring to Og, Nightgall suddenly approached, and snatched it from him, and, without taking any notice of the little man's threats, made his way to Cicely. When he displayed the ring as the token that her lover had been set free, Cicely, shrieking "Lost! Lost!" fell senseless on the floor.

Page 16

II.—The Twelfth Day Queen

While Renard's intrigues were maturing, and the Duke of Northumberland had left the Tower on a campaign against the Princess Mary, Cuthbert Cholmondeley was kept languishing in his terrible dungeon.

At long intervals Nightgall visited him, and once the wretched prisoner, whom the gaoler called Alexia, came to him, entreating his help against Nightgall.

At last Cuthbert decided upon a daring plan of escape. After several days' imprisonment he feigned to be dead. Nightgall, seeing him stretched on the ground, apparently lifeless, chuckled with delight, and, releasing the chain that bound his leg, bent over him with the intention of carrying his body into the burial vault near the moat. But a suspicion crossed his mind, and he drew his dagger, determined to make sure that his prisoner had passed away. As he did so, the young esquire sprang to his feet, and wrested the poniard from his grasp. In another second Nightgall was lying chained to the floor, where his prisoner had been a moment before.

Despite the gaoler's threats, Cuthbert set out, determined to liberate Alexia and made good his own escape. He wandered through the terrible torture chambers, released an old man confined in a cell called Little Ease, a cell so low and so contrived that the wretched inmate could not stand, walk, sit, or lie at full length within, and then, unable to discover the whereabouts of the ill-fated Alexia, returned to the gaoler, and, possessing himself of his keys and cloak, started forth once more. After wandering for a long time, chance at last brought him to a secret door, which led into St. John's Chapel in the White Tower.

While these events were in progress Cicely, despairing of her lover's safety, sought an audience of Queen Jane, and poured out her story. Moved by compassion, the queen gave directions for a search to be made, and, delighted by the grace and charm of Cicely, appointed her one of her attendants. Lord Guildford Dudley, procuring the assistance of Magog, burst open the door leading to the subterranean dungeons beneath the Devilin Tower, and eventually discovered Nightgall, who made a full confession of his crime as the price of his release.

Cholmondeley's arrival in St. John's Chapel was opportune. Renard, with Pembroke by his side, had just demanded the resignation of the crown by Queen Jane, and the queen, helpless but courageous, had ordered Lord Pembroke to arrest the Spaniard. Pembroke had refused to move, and at this juncture Cholmondeley stepped forward, and, advancing towards the ambassador, said, "M. Simon Renard, you are the queen's prisoner."

The Spaniard drew his sword, and, with the assistance of the Earl of Pembroke, kept Cuthbert at bay until they were both able to slip through the secret door.

Page 17

Next day, Queen Jane was forced by the Privy Council to resign her crown, and that same night, accompanied by Cuthbert and Cicely, she escaped by a secret passage from the Tower, and, taking a boat, made her way to Sion House. Here, the following day, she and her husband were arrested, and learnt the news that the Duke of Northumberland was in captivity, and that Queen Mary had ascended the throne. Once more Lady Jane was led back to the Tower, and as she entered by the Traitors' Gate she saw Renard standing hard by, with a smile of bitter mockery in his face.

"So," he said, "Epiphany is over. The Twelfth Day Queen has played her part."

III.—The Price of Pardon

Simon Renard's influence was now for the time supreme. At his instigation the Duke of Northumberland was tricked into a confession of the Roman Catholic faith on the scaffold, and then executed. Ambitious that Mary should marry Philip of Spain, he contrived by intrigue to kill her affection for Courtenay, the young Earl of Devon, and succeeded so successfully that Courtenay was placed under arrest, and the Princess Elizabeth, with whom the earl had fallen in love, became the victim of her sister's jealousy. Cuthbert, though not confined in a cell, was kept prisoner in the Tower, and occupied quarters in the pantler's house. Cicely had disappeared, and nothing had been heard of her since the arrest of Lady Jane Grey at Sion House.

Consumed with anxiety for the safety of the girl he loved, the esquire began to suspect that she had been kidnapped by Nightgall. He determined to find her at all cost, and getting Xit to steal the gaoler's keys, he once more made his way to the subterranean dungeons.

Cell after cell he searched, but nowhere could he find a trace of his beloved Cicely. All that he discovered was the dead body of Alexia. He made haste to return to his quarters, and had almost reached them when Nightgall appeared, and at once placed him under arrest for stealing his keys.

His enemy was now at his mercy, and Nightgall, after burying the body of Alexia, sought out Cicely, whom be had kept for several weeks a close prisoner in the Salt Tower. He told her that he was about to remove her to another prison in the Tower leading to the Iron Gate.

"I will never go thither of my own accord," replied Cicely, shrinking terrified from him. "Release me, villain; I will die sooner than become your bride."

"We shall see that," growled the gaoler, seizing hold of her. "You shall never be set free unless you consent to be mine."

He carried her, shrieking and struggling in his arms, out of the room, and dragged her by main force down the secret staircase. She continued her screams, until her head, striking against the stones, she was stunned by the blow and became insensible. Nightgall raised her, and carried her quickly to the dark cell he had already prepared. Here she would have languished for months without seeing anybody save Nightgall, except for a curious chain of circumstances.

Page 18

Renard's plan of marrying Mary to Philip of Spain, to which end he had had Courtenay and the Princess Elizabeth imprisoned in the Tower, was bitterly opposed by De Noailles. The French ambassador determined to prevent the Spaniard's plans, and, by means of Xit, sent a communication to the princess just as she was leaving her prison for Ashbridge. Further, the little mannikin managed to creep, by way of the chimney, into the chamber where Courtenay was confined, and arrange a plan by which the Earl was able to escape. His share in these events, however, was discovered, and, much to his amazement, he was arrested and taken to the torture chamber. Though none of the instruments were small enough to inflict much pain upon him, he was so terrified that he answered every question that Renard asked him, giving those answers that he thought the Spaniard would approve. The examination over he was placed in a cell. Here he was visited by Nightgall, from whose girdle he managed to cut, unobserved, the bunch of keys.

Unlocking his own door, he hurried out into the labyrinth of passages and cells, and in his wanderings in search of an exit lighted upon the cell in which Cicely was confined. He was not able to effect her escape, for as they were setting out Nightgall appeared, and put an end to their hopes.

Cuthbert had meanwhile been released, together with Lady Jane and her husband. For a time they lived together quietly in Sion House, but De Noailles' plan to prevent the Spanish marriage at all costs dragged them once more into the whirlpool.

Under the leadership of Sir Thomas Wyatt, an insurrection took place, having for its nominal object the prevention of Mary's marriage with Philip of Spain; but it was joined by all the forces opposed to the crown. Courtenay shared in it because he hoped to wed Elizabeth, who would be made Queen on the deposition of Mary. Lord Guildford Dudley joined in it in the anticipation that his wife might once more mount the throne.

At first Wyatt carried everything before him. Mary was actually besieged in the Tower, which it was attempted to carry by force. Supported by Cuthbert, Lord Guildford led the assault, shouting, "Long live Queen Jane! Down with Renard and the See of Rome!" The attack had almost succeeded, when Dudley was struck from behind by Renard and taken prisoner.

Cuthbert only escaped by forcing himself through an aperture, and dropping into the moat, from where he managed to swim ashore. He made his way at once to Lady Jane, and related to her how the insurrection had collapsed, and how her husband had been taken prisoner. For her own safety Jane had no thought. She at once determined to seek out the queen, and beseech her to spare her husband.

Accompanied by Cuthbert, she presented herself at the Tower, and, obtaining an audience with Mary, flung herself at her feet.

“I am come to submit myself to your highness’s mercy,” she said, as soon as she could find utterance.

Page 19

“Mercy?” exclaimed Mary scornfully. “You shall receive justice, but no mercy.”

“I do not sue for myself,” rejoined Jane, “but for my husband. I have come to offer myself for him. If your highness has any pity for me, extend it to him, and heap his faults on my head.”

Queen Mary was deeply moved. Had not Gardiner intervened, she would undoubtedly have granted the request; but Gardiner suggested that the price of the pardon should be the public reconciliation of Lady Jane and her husband with the Church of Rome.

“I cannot,” said Jane. “I will die for him, but I cannot destroy my soul alive.”

IV.—The Torture Chamber and the Block

After a week’s imprisonment, Cuthbert was closely questioned, and his answers being deemed unsatisfactory, he was ordered to be examined under torture. With fiendish delight Nightgall took him to the horrible chamber. There, the first thing that he saw was the tortured, mangled figure of Lord Dudley, covered from head to foot by a blood-coloured cloth.

“You here?” cried the ghastly, distorted figure. “Where is Jane? Has she fled? Has she escaped?”

“She has surrendered herself,” replied Cholmondeley, “in the hope of obtaining your pardon.”

“False hope! Delusive expectation!” exclaimed Dudley, in tones of anguish, as he was carried from the room. “She will share my fate. Oh God! I am her destroyer!”

Cholmondeley, as soon as his master had been borne away, was seized by the torturers and placed on the rack. He determined that not a sound should escape him, and though his whole frame seemed rent asunder, he bravely kept his resolve.

“Go on,” cried Nightgall, as the torturers paused. “Turn the roller again.”

Even as he spoke Cholmondeley fainted, and, finding that no answers could be extracted from him, he was taken back to his cell and flung upon a heap of straw. As he lay there, Nightgall, with diabolical cruelty, brought Cicely to his side, and bade her look on his nerveless arms and crippled limbs, and mockingly offered to set him free if Cicely would marry him of her own free will. When at Cuthbert’s instigation she refused, he forced her away, shrieking for help.

Cuthbert sank once more into insensibility. He came to his senses again to find that men were chafing his limbs and bathing his temples, and that Renard was in his cell. At

the Spaniard's order he was given a cup of wine, and the rest having withdrawn, Renard questioned him further.

While this examination was going on the cell door opened softly, and a masked figure appeared. It was Nightgall, who, bribed by De Noailles, had come to assassinate Renard. He flung himself on his intended victim, and was about to dispatch him with his poniard, when Cuthbert, summoning up all his strength, intervened.

Finding that he had two men to deal with instead of one, the gaoler sprang to his feet, and rushed from the dungeon. Renard followed him, furious with rage, and Cuthbert at once took advantage of the opportunity to escape.

Page 20

After some search he discovered the whereabouts of Cicely, and together the lovers, happy once more at being united, if only for a short time, succeeded in finding their way out of the dungeons. As soon as they emerged into the open air they were arrested by the warders, and taken to the guard-room in the White Tower, where Cicely received a warm welcome from the three giants. There was no time to relate their adventures before Renard appeared, walking before a litter upon which was borne the mangled body of Nightgall, who, in his attempt to escape the Spaniard's sword, had been forced to jump from an embrasure of the White Tower.

The wretch was dying; but with his last breath he attempted to make some amends for all the evil he had done in his life. Bidding Cicely come to his side, he told her that she was the daughter of Alexia, whose real name was Lady Mountjoy, and he gave her papers, proving her right to the estates of her father, Sir Alberic Mountjoy, who had incurred the vengeance of Henry VIII.

Renard, grateful to Cholmondeley for saving his life, secured his pardon.

Cicely also returned to the side of Lady Jane Grey, and watched the splendid fortitude and unswerving courage with which her unfortunate mistress prepared for the scaffold. The day before her death her wish that Cicely and Cuthbert should be united was granted, and they were married in her presence by Master John Bradford, Prebendary of St. Paul's.

At last Monday, the twelfth of February, 1544, dawned, and Lady Jane Grey was led out to the scaffold. On the way she passed the headless corpse of Lord Guildford, being borne to the grave. Cicely accompanied the beautiful girl to the last. It was her hands that helped her to remove her attire and that tied the handkerchief over those eyes which were never to look on the world again.

Blindfolded, Jane groped for the block, crying, "What shall I do? Where is it?"

She was guided to the place, and, laying her head on the block, cried, "Lord—into Thy hands I commend my spirit!"

The axe then fell, and one of the fairest and wisest heads that ever sat on human shoulders fell also.

* * * * *

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

The Improvisatore

Hans Christian Andersen was born at Odense, in Denmark, on April 2, 1805, the son of a poor bootmaker. His life was full of exciting incidents; his early years in particular constitute a record of hard struggle, poverty and lack of recognition. When nine he tried his hand at tragedy and comedy, and was sent, after his father's death in 1819, to Copenhagen, where he engaged in various occupations with little success, until his talents attracted the attention of a few influential personages, who provided him with the means for continuing his studies. He won considerable reputation with some early

Page 21

poems, and was quite well known to the public before he entered the university in 1828. He next published a satirical story, and after a journey in Italy, his famous novel, “The Improvisatore,” which gave him an opportunity for a brilliant series of word-pictures describing the life and character of the parts of Italy he had visited. Apart from his world-famous fairy tales, by which he set no great store, being ambitious of fame as a novelist, he wrote several successful plays, epic poems and novels. His fairy tales have been translated practically into every language. Hans Andersen died at the age of seventy, in Copenhagen, on August 4, 1875.

I.—A Boyhood in Rome

My earliest recollections take me back to my tender youth, when I lived with my widowed mother in a little garret in a Roman square. She supported us by sewing and by the rent of a larger room, sublet to a young painter. On the house opposite there was an image of the Virgin, before which, when the evening bells rang, I and the neighbours’ children used to kneel and sing in honour of the Mother of God and the Child Jesus. Once an English family stopped to listen; and the gentleman gave me a silver coin, “because of my fine voice,” as my mother told me.

My mother’s confessor, Fra Martino, always showed great kindness to me; and I spent many hours with him at the convent. It was through him that I became chorister in the Capuchin church, and was allowed to carry the great censer.

Before I was nine, I was chosen as one of the boys and girls who were to preach between Christmas and the New Year in the church of Ara Croeli, before the image of Jesus. I had no fear, and it seemed decided that I, of all children, gave most delight; but after me came a little girl of exquisitely delicate form, bright countenance, and so melodious a voice that even my mother, with all her pride of me, awarded her the palm, and declared that she was just like an angel. But I had often to repeat my speech at home, and then made up a new one describing the festival in the church, which was considered just as good.

One moonlit evening, on returning with my mother from a visit in Trastevere, we found a crowd in the Piazza di Trevi, listening to a man singing to a guitar—not songs like those which I had so often heard, but about things around him, of what we saw and heard, and we ourselves were in the song. My mother told me he was an improvisatore; and Federigo, our artist lodger, told me I should also improvise, for I was really a poet. And I tried it forthwith—singing about the foodshop over the way, with its attractively set out window and the haggling customers. I gained much applause; and from this time forth I turned everything into song.

Page 22

My first visit to the country ended in a sad event, which was to shape the whole course of my life. It was in June, and my mother and her friend Mariuccia took me to see the famous flower fete at Genzano. We stayed the night at an inn, and in the morning joined the dense holiday crowd that moved over the carpet of flowers on the pavement of the main street. Suddenly there was a piercing cry—a pair of unmanageable horses rushed through. I was thrown down, and all was blackness. When I awoke, Mother of God, I lay with my head on Mariuccia's lap, beside the lifeless form of my mother, crushed by the carriage wheel! The occupant of the carriage, a gentleman of the Borghese family, had escaped with a shaking, and sent a servant in rich livery with a purse containing twenty scudi for the motherless child.

Mariuccia took me back to Rome; it was decided that her parents, who kept flocks in the Campagna—honest people to whom my twenty scudi would be wealth—should take charge of me. Thus, in the dreary Campagna, with honest Benedetto and kindly Domenica, I spent the summer and the early autumn in the ancient tomb which they had transformed into a hut. The first week it rained incessantly; then, with the sun, came the insufferable heat, increasing in intensity from day to day, from week to week. Even the buffaloes lay like dead masses upon the burnt-up grass, unless, excited to madness by the poison-stings of myriads of flies, that covered them as if they were carrion, they rushed in mad career to the Tiber to roll themselves in the yellow water.

One day, towards sunset, I was just opening the door to leave the hut, when a man darted in so suddenly that I was thrown down. With lightning speed he shut the door, and in a distressed tone uttered the name of the Madonna, when a violent blow shattered the door, and the whole opening was filled with the head of a fierce buffalo, whose body was tightly squeezed into the doorway. The stranger seized a gun from the wall, took aim, and shot the beast. The danger over, he lifted me from the ground, and said: "Blessed be Madonna! You have saved my life." He inquired about me. I was made to show him my abominable sketches upon bits of paper and to sing to him, and caused him astonishment at my improvising about the Madonna and himself and the buffalo. He finally asked Domenica to bring me next morning to see him at the Borghese Palace. He was the powerful prince himself, who had unwittingly been the cause of my poor mother's death!

II.—In the School of Life

The prince, his daughter Francesca, and her fiance Fabiani, overwhelmed me with kindness. The visit had to be frequently repeated; and I became quite accustomed to the splendours of the palazzo. Finally, Eccellenza decided to have me educated in the Jesuits' school; and I had to bid farewell to good Domenica and to enter upon my school life. New occupations engrossed me; new acquaintances presented themselves; the dramatic portion of my life began to unfold itself. Here years compress themselves together.

Page 23

I became particularly attached to one of my school-fellows, Bernardo, a gay, almost dissolute son of a Roman senator. When he suddenly left school to join the Papal Guard the whole world seemed to me empty and deserted. One day I saw him pass my window on a prancing horse. I rushed out, but ran across the porter's wife of the Borghese Palace, who informed me that the young Eccellenza and her husband had just arrived. Would I not come to give them welcome? To the palace I went, was graciously received by Fabiani and Francesca, who brought me their little daughter Flaminia, the "little abbess," as she was called, having been destined from her birth for the life of a nun. The child had wonderfully bright eyes, and came towards me as though we were old acquaintances, laughing and chattering, and showing me her toys.

On my way back, early in the evening, as luck would have it, I almost ran into the arms of Bernardo. He was delighted to see me, told me of his merry life and adventures, and wanted to drag me into an artists' tavern to drink a bottle of wine. That was impossible for me, a Jesuits' pupil. I refused. As we walked on we met a crowd hustling an old Jew. A thick-set brute of a fellow wanted to force him to jump over a long stick, and everybody shouted, "Leap, Jew!" Bernardo sprang forth, snatched the stick out of the fellow's hand, brandished his sword, and cried in a strong, manly voice, "Leap yourself, or I shall cleave your head!" He made him jump, and jump again, and struck him lightly with the flat of his sword. The crowd veered round at once, laughed and applauded, the old Jew meanwhile making his escape. "Come," said I, when we were out of the crowd, "come! Let them say what they may, I will drink a bottle of wine with you. May we always be friends!"

I met Bernardo again some time after at the Vatican. His joy equalled mine, and he immediately plunged into confidences. One day, when straying into the Ghetto, he had encountered the old Jew of our adventure, bowing and scraping, and requesting the honour of receiving, him in his house. They entered; wine was brought to him by a dark Jewish maiden, of such beauty as to set his whole blood on fire. Since then he had vainly tried to see her. He visited the Jew's house on all sorts of pretexts, but his charmer remained invisible. He now made the amazing proposition that I should take up the study of Hebrew with the old Jew, and thus help him in this affair. I explained the utter impossibility of aiding him in a project of this nature. He was obviously offended; and when we parted he returned my warmth with chilly politeness.

We met but rarely after this meeting; Bernardo was always jovial and friendly, though not confidential, until, on the occasion of a dance at the Borghese Palace, when I asked him about the handsome Jewish maiden, he laughed. "I have found," he said, "another and tamer little golden bird. The other has flown out of the Ghetto—nay, even out of Rome!"

Page 24

My patron's family left Rome; and I had to throw myself into the study for the examination that was to bring me the title of an abbe. With the advent of the carnival I had assumed the black dress and the short silk coat of an abbate, and had become a new and happier person. For the first time I took part in the jollities of the carnival, and at the end of the first day again came across Bernardo, who insisted upon taking me to the opera to hear a new prima donna who had turned everybody's heart at Naples. Rumour had not belied her. Her appearance was greeted with rapturous applause. Bernardo seized my arm; he had recognised in her his Jewish maiden, just as I was about to exclaim, "It is she!"—the lovely child who had preached that Christmas at Ara Coeli. There were endless calls for "Annunciata" when the curtain fell; flowers and garlands were thrown at her feet, and among them a little poem which I had written under the inspiration of her exquisite voice. With a crowd of enthusiasts, we hurried to the stage-door, took the horses from her carriage, and conducted her in triumph to her apartments.

Bernardo, who, bolder than I, had called on Annunciata, brought me to her the next day. She was friendly, brilliant in her conversation, and appeared deeply impressed with my improvisation on "Immortality"—the immortality first of eternal Rome, and then of the fair singer's art—to which I was pressed when Bernardo let out the secret of my gift.

"You have given me the sincerest pleasure," she said, and looked confidingly into my eyes. I ventured to kiss her hand. After that I saw her every day during the gay carnival, and was more and more captivated by her charm.

Annunciata left Rome on Ash Wednesday, and with her the brightness seemed to have gone completely out of my life, my only pleasure being the recollection of those happy days of the carnival.

III.—Love and Adventure in Rome

I saw Annunciata again when Rome had begun to fill with Easter visitors, and had the happiness of dining with her the same day. She told me that, although born in Spain, she had been, as a child, in Rome; that it was she who preached that day at Ara Coeli, "an orphan, who would have perished of hunger had not a despised Jew given it shelter and food until it could flutter forth over the wild, restless sea." Next day I showed her over the Borghese gallery; and on the day before Easter we drove out to see the procession which initiated the Easter festival, and in the evening to Monte Mario to see the illuminations of St. Peter's— an unforgettable sight!

As I went into the little inn to fetch some refreshment I found myself in the narrow passage face to face with Bernardo, pale, and with glowing eyes. He wildly seized my hand, and said: "I am not an assassin, Antonio; but fight with me you shall, or I shall become your murderer!"

Page 25

I tried to calm him, but he forced a pistol into my hand. “She loves you,” he whispered; “and you, in your vanity, will parade it before all the Roman people—before me!” He threw himself upon me. I thrust him back. I heard a report; my hand trembled. Bernardo lay before me in his blood. The people of the house rushed in, and with them Annunciata. I wanted to fling myself, in despair, upon Bernardo’s body; but Annunciata lay on her knees beside him, trying to staunch the blood. “Save yourself!” she cried. But I, overcome by anguish, exclaimed: “I am innocent; the pistol went off by accident. Yes, Annunciata, we loved you. I would die for you, like he! Which of us was the dearer to you? Tell me whether you love me, and then I will escape.” She bowed her head down to the dead. I heard her weeping, and saw her press her lips to Bernardo’s brow. Then I heard voices shout “Fly, fly!” and, as by invisible hands, I was torn out of the house.

Like a madman I rushed through bushes and underwood until I reached the Tiber. Among the ruins of a tomb I came across three men sitting around a fire, to whom I explained that I wanted a boat to cross the river. They agreed to take me across; but I had better give them my money to keep for safety. I realised that I had fallen into the hands of robbers, gave them all I had, was tied on to a horse, and taken across the river, riding all night, until at dawn we reached a wild part of the mountains. They wanted to keep me for ransom, and dispatched one of their number to Rome to find out all he could about me. The man returned; and with a thankful heart I heard that Bernardo was only wounded and on the way to recovery.

My rough hosts having found out my gift, I was asked to sing to them; and once more my power of improvisation stood me in good stead. When I had finished, a wrinkled old woman, who seemed to be held in great reverence by the robbers, came towards me. “Thou hast sung thy ransom!” she exclaimed. “The sound of music is stronger than gold!” Yet I was detained six days, during which there were mysterious comings and goings. The old witch herself, who had made me write on a piece of paper the words “I travel to Naples” and my name, disappeared for a day, and came back with a letter, which she commanded me not to read then. Finally, in the midst of night, she led me out of the robbers’ den and took me across a rocky path to a dumb peasant with an ass, which I was made to mount. She kissed my forehead and departed. When daylight broke I opened the letter, which contained a passport in my name, an order for five hundred scudi on a Naples bank, and the words “Bernardo is out of danger, but do not return to Rome for some months.”

Page 26

When I joined the high-road, I took carriage for Naples. Among my travelling companions was a portly, handsome, Neapolitan lady, with whom I became very friendly, and who invited me to her house. She was the wife of a Professor Maretti, and her name was Santa. The professor himself was a little half-famished looking man, full of learning, by the show of which he was in the habit of boring everybody who came near him. Santa made up for this by her liveliness and her warm interest in my affairs. Amid music and laughter I spent many happy hours in her house, made friends, and was encouraged to make my debut as an improvisatore. I had written to Eccellenza a true account of the reason of my departure, and informed him of my future intentions; but his reply, which arrived after long delay, was a stunning blow to me. He was exceedingly annoyed, washed his hands of me, and wished me not on any account to connect his name with my public life.

IV.—On the Road to Fame

The bitterness of my misery was brought home to me with new force when I saw Bernardo at a gambling saloon in the company of a handsome woman of doubtful reputation. That Annunciata should have preferred this fickle man to me! My debut at San Carlo aroused great enthusiasm, and Santa, whom I saw next day in her snug heavily curtained room, seemed radiant with happiness at my success. She made me sit on a soft silken sofa, stroked my head, and spoke of my future. I kissed her hand, and looked into her dark eyes with a purity of soul and thought. She was greatly excited. I saw her bosom heave violently; she loosened a scarf to breathe more freely. “You are deserving of love,” said she. “Soul and beauty are deserving of any woman’s love!” She drew me towards her; her lips were like fire that flowed into my very soul!

Eternal Mother of God! The holy image, at that moment, fell down from the wall. It was no mere accident. “No, no!” I exclaimed, starting up. “Antonio,” cried she, “kill me! kill me! but do not leave me!” But I rushed out of the house, determined never to set eyes upon Santa again. The sea air would cool me. I took a boat to Torre del Annunciata; and happiness gradually returned to me as I realised what danger I had escaped by the grace of the Virgin.

I joined the crowd watching the fiery stream of lava slowly descending towards the sea, when I heard somebody calling my name. It was Fabiani, who insisted on taking me at once to see Francesca. The welcome was hearty. There were no recriminations, although I resented for a while the tone of benevolent patronage adopted by my benefactors. I learnt that Bernardo had entered the King of Naples’ service, and that Annunciata was shortly expected. An expedition was arranged to Paestum and Capri; and Fabiani insisted upon my joining the party. He also undertook to write to his father-in-law on my behalf....

Page 27

At Paestum we found the abundance and luxuriance of Sicilian landscape; its Grecian temples and its poverty. We were surrounded by crowds of half-naked beggars. One young girl there was, a little away from the others, scarcely more than eleven years old, but lovely as the goddess of beauty. Modesty, soul, and a deep expression of suffering were expressed in her countenance. She was blind! I gave her a scudo. Her cheeks burned. She kissed my hand; and the touch seemed to go through my blood. The guide told us afterwards that her name was Lara, and that she generally sat in the Temple of Neptune.

The ruined temple made a mighty impression upon us; I was requested to improvise in these romantic surroundings. Deeply moved by my thoughts of the blind girl, I sang of the glories of Nature and art, and of the poor maiden from whom all this magnificence was concealed. When we left the temple, I lagged behind, and, looking around, I saw Lara on her knees, her hands clasped together. She had heard my song! It smote me to the soul. I saw her pressing my scudo to her lips and smile; I grew quite warm at the sight of it, and pressed a hot kiss upon her forehead. With a thrilling cry she sprang up like a terrified deer, and was gone. I felt as if I had committed a sin, and sadly joined my party.

Amalfi, Capri—I drank the intoxicating beauty of it all. Then I was prevailed upon to return to Rome with Fabiani and Francesca. We spent a day at Naples, where I found two letters waiting for me. The first was a brief note to this effect: “A faithful heart, which intends honourably and kindly towards you, expects you this evening.” It gave an address, but no name—merely “Your old friend.” The second was from the same hand, and read: “Come, Antonio! The terror of the last unfortunate moment of our parting is now well over. Come quickly! Delay not a moment in coming!” The letters were obviously from Santa.

My mind was made up not to see her again. We left for Rome....

The Palazzo Borghese was now my home. Eccellenza received me with the greatest kindness, but all the family continued to use the old teaching tone and depreciating mode of treatment. Thus six years went by; but somehow my protectors did not realise that I was no longer a boy, and my dependence gave them the right to make them let me feel the bitterness of my position. Even my talent as poet and improvisatore was by no means taken seriously at the palace.

Happiness was brought into my life once more by Flaminia, “the little abbess,” who came home to have her last glimpse of the world before taking the veil. She had grown tall and pale of complexion, with an expression of wonderful gentleness in her features. She recalled our early friendship, when she used to sit on my knee and make me draw pictures for her and tell her stories. From her, at any rate, I suffered no humiliation, and from day to day our friendship grew closer. I told her about

Page 28

Bernardo and Annunciata, and about Lara, who became inexpressibly dear to her. I also endeavoured to make her reconsider her decision to take the veil and immure herself for life; but her whole education and inclination tended towards that goal. At last the day itself came—a day of great solemnity and state. Flaminia was dead and buried—and Elizabeth the nun, the bride of Heaven, arose from the bier!

V.—The Sorrowful Wayfarer

In my sadness of heart I thought of my childhood and old Domenica, whom I had not seen for many months. I went out to the Campagna. Domenica had died six months back! When I returned I was seized by a violent fever, from which I recovered but slowly. It was six months after Flaminia had taken the veil that the doctor allowed me to go out.

My first walk was to the grey convent where she now passed her monotonous days. Every evening I returned, and often I stood gazing at her prison and thinking of Flaminia as I used to know her. One evening Fabiani found me thus, and made me follow him home. He spoke to me with unusual solemnity in his voice, but with great kindness. I was ill. Travelling, change of scene, would do me good. I was to move about for a year, and then return to show what the world had made of me.

I went to Venice. Dreary, sad and quiet seemed to me the Queen of the Adriatic. In the gently swaying gondola I thought with bitterness of Annunciata. I felt a grudge even against innocent, pious Flaminia, who preferred the convent to my strong, brotherly love. Then my thoughts floated between Lara, the image of beauty, and Santa, the daughter of sin.

One day I took a boat to the Lido to breathe the fresh air of the sea. On the beach I came across Poggio, a young Venetian nobleman with whom I had made friends; and as a storm hung threatening in the sky I decided to accept his invitation for dinner. We watched the fury of the storm from the window, and then joined a crowd of women and children anxiously watching a fishing boat out at sea. Before our very eyes the boat was swallowed by the waves, and with aching hearts we witnessed the prayers, shrieks, and despair of the anxious watchers whose husbands and fathers perished thus within their sight.

Next evening there was a reception at my banker's. The storm became a topic of conversation; and Poggio related the death of the fishermen, trying to enlist sympathy for the poor survivors. But nobody seemed to understand his intention. Then I was asked to improvise. I was quickly determined. "I know of an emotion," I exclaimed, "which awakens supreme happiness in everybody, and I have the power of exciting it in every heart. But this art cannot be given, it must be purchased. He who gives most will

be most deeply initiated." Money and jewels were quickly forthcoming; and I began to sing of the proud sea and the bold mariners and fishermen. I described what I had seen; and my art succeeded where Poggio's words had failed. A tumult of applause arose. A young lady sank at my feet, seized my hand, and with her beautiful, tear-filled eyes gave me a look of intense gratitude, which agitated me in strange fashion. Then she withdrew as if in horror at what she had done.

Page 29

Poggio afterwards told me that she was the queen of beauty in Venice, the podesta's niece, adored by everybody, but known by few, since the podesta's house was most exclusive, and received but few guests. He accounted me the luckiest of mortals when he heard that I had received an invitation from the podesta, and would have a chance of improving my acquaintance with Maria, his beautiful niece. I was received as if I had been a beloved relative. Something in Maria's expression recalled to me the blind beggar-girl Lara; but Maria had eyes with a singularly dark glance of fire. I became a daily visitor at the podesta's house, and spent many happy hours in Maria's company. Her intellect and charm of character captivated me as much as her beauty.

VI.—A Marriage in Venice

One evening I strayed into a wretched little theatre, where one of Mercadante's operas was being performed. How can I describe my feelings when in one of the singers—a slight, ordinary figure, with a thin, sharp countenance and deeply sunken eyes, in a poor dress, and with a poorer voice, but still with surprising grace of manner—I recognised Annunciata? With aching heart I left the theatre, and ascertained Annunciata's address. She lived in a miserable garret. She turned deathly pale when she recognised me, and implored me to leave her. "I come as a friend, as a brother," I said. "You have been ill, Annunciata!" Then she told me of her illness, four years back, which robbed her of her youth, her voice, her money, her friends. She implored me, with a pitiful voice, to leave her. I could not speak. I pressed her hand to my lips, stammered, "I come—I come again!" and left her.

Next day I called again, and found Annunciata had left, no one knew whither.

It was a month later that Maria handed me a letter, which had been given to her for me by a dying person who had sent for her. The letter was from Annunciata, who was no more. It told me of her happiness at having seen me once more—told me that she had always loved me; that her pain at having to part from me had made her conceal her face on what she then believed to be Bernardo's dead body; told me that it was she who had sent me those two letters in Naples, who had believed my love was dead, since I left for Rome without sending her a reply. It told me of her illness, her years of poverty, and her undying love. And then she wished me happiness with, as she had been told, the most beautiful and the noblest maid in Venice for my bride! ...

In travel I sought forgetfulness and consolation. I went to Padua, Verona, Milan; but heaviness did not leave my heart. Then came an irrepressible longing to be back in Venice, to see Maria—a foreboding of some new misfortune. I hastened back to Venice. The podesta received me kindly; but when I inquired after Maria, he seemed to me to become grave, as he told me she had gone to Padua on a short visit. During supper I fell into a swoon, followed by a violent fever in which I had visions of Maria dead, laid out before an altar. Then it was Lara I saw on the bier, and I loudly called her

by name. Then everything became bright; a hand passed softly over my head. I awoke, and found Maria and her aunt by my bedside.

Page 30

“Lara, Maria, hear me!” I cried. “It is no dream. You have heard my voice at Paestum. You know it again! I feel it. I love you; I have always loved you!”

“I have loved you, too,” she said, kneeling by my side and seizing my hand. “I have loved you from the day when the sun burnt your kiss into my forehead—loved you with the intuition of the blind!”

I then learnt that Maria—my Lara—had been cured of her blindness by a great specialist in Naples, the podesta’s brother, who, touched by her beauty and purity, had her educated, and adopted her as his own child. On his death his sister took her to Venice, where she found a new home in the podesta’s palace.

* * * * *

APULEIUS

The Golden Ass

Apuleius was born about 125 A.D., at Madaura, in Africa. After studying at Athens, he practised as an advocate at Rome, and then wandered about Northern Africa, lecturing on philosophy and rhetoric. At Tripoli he was charged with having won by witchcraft the love of a rich widow who had left him her wealth. But he was acquitted after delivering an interesting defence, included among his extant works. He then settled in Carthage, where he died at an advanced age. Poor Apuleius! His good fame was darkened by the success of an amusing romance, “The Golden Ass,” which he wrote, by way of recreation, at Rome. He related the story of the adventures which befell a young Greek nobleman who, by an extreme curiosity in regard to witchcraft, got changed into a donkey. It was an age of wild superstition and foolish credulity; and his readers confused the author of “The Golden Ass” with the hero of it. Apuleius was credited with a series of impossible exploits, which he had not even invented. For his work is merely a Latin adaptation of a lost Greek romance by Lucius of Patras. But Apuleius deserves our gratitude for preserving a unique specimen of the lighter literature of the ancient Greeks, together with the beautiful folk-tale of Cupid and Psyche.

I.—Lucius Sets Out on His Wonderful Adventures

I set out from Corinth in a fever of excitement and expectation, riding my horse so hard that it fell lame; so I had to do the remainder of the journey on foot. My heart was filled with joy and terror as I entered the town of Hypata.

“Here I am, at last,” I cried, “in Thessaly! Thessaly, the land of magic and witchcraft, famous through the world for its marvels and enchantments!”

Carried away by my desire after strange and mystic knowledge, I gazed around with wonder and disquietude. Nothing in this marvellous city, I thought to myself, is really what it seems to be. The stones I stumbled over appeared to be living creatures petrified by magic. I fancied that the trees in the gardens and the birds that sang in their branches were men that had been transformed by Thessalian witches. The very statues seemed as if they were about to walk; every wall had ears; and I looked up into the blue, cloudless sky, expecting to hear oracles.

Page 31

Entering the market place, I passed close to a noble lady who was walking with a crowd of servants in her train.

“By Hercules!” she cried. “It’s Lucius!” I hung back, confused and blushing, and Byrrhena, for it was she, said to one of her companions:

“It’s Salvia’s boy! Isn’t he the image of his modest, beautiful mother? Young, tall and fair, with just her bright, grey-blue eyes, and her alert glance. A Plutarch every bit of him! Lucius, don’t you remember your kinswoman, Byrrhena? Why, I brought you up with my own hands!”

I remembered Byrrhena very well, and loved her. But I did not want to meet her just then. However, I went with her to her house, a beautiful building of fine marble, containing some exquisite statuary.

“You will stay here, my dear Lucius, won’t you?” she said.

I then told her that I had come to Hypata to see Milo and his wife Pamphila. My friend Demeas of Corinth had given me a letter of introduction.

“Don’t you know that Pamphila is a witch?” she cried. “Do not go near her, my child, or she will practise her wicked arts on you. It is just handsome young men like you that she enchants and destroys.”

Far from being terrified by Byrrhena’s warning, I was delighted with it. I longed to become an apprentice to a witch as powerful as Pamphila. With a hasty excuse I left the house and set out to find Milo. Neither he nor Pamphila was in when I called. But their maid who opened the door, was such a pretty wench that I did not regret their absence. Fotis, as she was called, was a graceful, sprightly little thing, with the loveliest hair I ever saw. I liked the way it fell in soft puffs on her neck, and rested on her neat linen tunic.

It was a case of love at first sight with both of us. But before I began to ask her about Pamphila, Milo returned. He welcomed me very warmly, and put the best room in his house at my disposal, and desired me to stay to dinner. But in spite of my ardent curiosity, I was, I must confess, rather afraid of meeting his wife. So I said that my kinswoman Byrrhena had already engaged me to dine with her.

On arriving at Byrrhena’s mansion I was surprised to find that a splendid banquet had been prepared, and that all the best people in Hypata were present. We reclined on couches of ivory, covered with golden drapery, and a throng of lovely girls served us with exquisite dishes; while pretty curly-headed boys brought the wine round in goblets of gold and amber.

When the lights were brought in, the talk became freer and gayer; everybody was bent on laughing and making his neighbours laugh.

“We are, you see, preparing for the great festival to-morrow,” Byrrhena said to me. “Hypata is the only city that keeps the feast of the god of laughter. You must come, and invent some pleasantry to propitiate the merriest of all deities.”

“By Hercules!” I replied. “If the laughing god will only lend me inspiration to-night, I will do my best to entertain the townspeople to-morrow.”

Page 32

II.—The Feast of the God of Laughter

It was the jolliest banquet I was ever at. Even in Corinth we did not do the thing so well. It was not until I got into the open air, and set out for Milo's house, that I knew how much wine I had taken. But though I was rather unsteady on my feet, I retained my presence of mind. I reached the house, and suddenly three great burly fellows sprang up, and battered furiously at the door. They were clearly robbers of the most desperate type, and I drew my sword, and, as they came at me one by one, I plunged it swiftly into their bodies. Fotis was aroused, and opened the door, and I entered, utterly worn out by the struggle, and went at once to bed and to sleep.

Early in the morning I was awakened by a great clamour. A throng of people burst into my bedroom, and two lictors arrested me, and dragged me to the forum. But as they took me through the streets and squares, everybody turned out to see me, and the crowd grew so great that the forum was not large enough to hold the people, and I was led to the theatre.

There the lictors pushed me down through the proscenium, as though I were a victim for sacrifice, and put me in the centre of the orchestra.

"Citizens," said the prefect of the watch, "as I was going on my rounds late last night, I saw this ferocious young foreigner, sword in hand, slashing and stabbing three inoffensive creatures. When I arrived they were lying dead upon the ground. Their murderer, overwhelmed by his terrible crime, fled into a house, and hid there, hoping, no doubt, to escape in the morning. Men of Hypata, you do not allow your own fellow-townsmen to commit murder with impunity. Shall, then, this savage, brutal alien avoid the consequences of his fearful crime?"

For some time I could not reply. The suddenness of the whole thing terrified me, and it was with a voice broken with sobs that I at last managed to make my defence.

"They were robbers," I cried, "robbers of the most desperate and vilest character! I caught them breaking into the house of my friend Milo, your esteemed fellowtownsman, oh, citizens of Hypata! There were three of them—three great, rough, burly rascals, each more than a match for a mere boy like myself. Yet I managed to kill them; and I think I deserve praise at your hands, and not censure, for my public-spirited action."

Here I stopped, for I saw that all the vast multitude of people was laughing at me. And what grieved me most was to see my kinswoman Byrrhena and my host Milo among my mockers. The senior magistrate ordered the wheel and other instruments of torture to be brought forth.

"I cannot believe a mere boy like this could have slain three great strong men single-handed," he said. "He must have had accomplices, and we must torture him until he

reveals the names of his partners in this most dastardly crime. But, first of all, let him look upon the bodies of the men he has foully murdered. Perhaps that will melt his hard, savage nature."

Page 33

The lictors then led me to the bier, and forced me to uncover the bodies. Ye gods! The corpses were merely three inflated wine-skins, and I observed that they were cut in the very spots in which I thought I had wounded the robbers. I had, indeed, invented a pleasantry for the festival of the god of laughter! The townspeople laughed with the inextinguishable laughter of the Olympian deities. They climbed up to the roof to get a good look at me; they swarmed up the pillars; they clung to the statues; they hung from the windows at the risk of their lives; all shouting at me in wild jollity.

“Sir Lucius,” the magistrate then said to me, “we are not ignorant of your dignity and your rank. The noble family to which you belong is famous throughout Greece. So do not take this pleasantry in honour of the joyful god of laughter as an insult. In return for your excellent services at this great festival, the city of Hypata has decreed that your statue shall be cast in bronze and erected in a place of honour.”

By this time I had recovered somewhat of my good humour. But knowing how mercilessly I should be teased at the banquet Byrrhena wished to give in celebration of my exploits, I went quickly home with Milo, and after supping with him, retired at a very early hour to my bed-chamber.

III.—Lucius Becomes an Ass

In the middle of the night I heard a knock at my door. I opened it, and in came pretty Fotis, looking a picture of misery.

“I can’t sleep without telling you everything,” she said. “I was the cause of all the trouble that befell you to-day. As my mistress was coming from the baths yesterday, she saw a handsome young gentleman having his hair cut by a barber. Seized with a wild passion for him, she ordered me to get some of his hair. But the barber saw me and drove me away. I knew I should get a cruel whipping if I returned empty-handed. Close by was a man shaving some wine-bags of goat-skin; the hair was soft and yellow like the young gentleman’s, so I took some of it to Pamphila. You know my mistress is a terrible witch, so you can guess what happened. She rose up in the night, and burnt the hair in her magic cauldron. As it burnt, the wine-bags from which it was taken felt the compulsion of the spell. They became like human beings. Rushing out into the street, they hurled themselves against the door of our house, as Pamphila expected the young gentleman would do. You came up—just a little intoxicated, eh?—and committed the horrible crime of bag-slaughter.”

“Now, don’t make fun of me, Fotis,” I said. “This is a serious matter, this witchcraft. What is Pamphila doing to-night? I have come here to learn magic, and I am very anxious to see her practising her strange arts.”

“Come, then, and look,” said Fotis.

We crept to the room where Pamphila was, and peeped through a chink in the door. The witch undressed herself, and then took some boxes of ointment out of a casket, and opened one box and smeared herself with the stuff it contained. In the twinkling of an eye, feathers sprouted out of her skin, and she changed into an owl, and flew out of the window.

Page 34

“She has gone after that handsome young gentleman,” said Fotis. “I have to wait here all night until she returns, and then give her a lotion of aniseed and laurel-leaves to restore her to her proper shape.”

“Why, my dear Fotis,” I exclaimed, in intense admiration, “you know as much about witchcraft as your mistress! Come, practise on me! Get me some of that ointment and change me into a bird. Oh, how I should like to fly!”

After some hesitation she entered the room, and took a box out of the casket. I stripped myself and smeared the ointment over my body. But never a feather appeared! Every hair on me changed into a bristle; my hands turned into hoofed forefeet; a tail grew out of my backbone; my face lengthened; and I found, to my horror, that I had become an ass.

“Oh, ye gods,” said Fotis, “I’ve taken the wrong box! But no great harm’s done, dear Lucius. I know the antidote. I’ll get you some roses to crunch, and you will be restored to your proper shape.”

Fotis, however, dared not go at once into the garden, lest Pamphila should suddenly return and find me. So she told me to go and wait in the stable until daybreak, and then she would gather some roses for me. But when I got into the stable I wished I had waited outside. My own horse and an ass belonging to Milo conceived a strange dislike to me. They fell upon me with great fury, and bit me and kicked me, and made such a clamour that the groom came to see whatever was the matter. He found me standing on my hind legs trying to reach the garland of roses which he had placed on the shrine of the goddess Epona in the middle of the stable.

“What a sacrilegious brute!” he cried, falling upon me savagely. “Attacking the shrine of the divinity who guards over horses! I’ll lame you, that I will!”

As he was belabouring me with a great cudgel, a band of fierce men armed with swords and carrying lighted torches appeared. At the sight of them the groom fled in terror.

“Help! Help! Robbers!” I heard Milo and Fotis cry.

But before the groom was able to fetch the watch, the robbers forced their way into the house, and broke open Milo’s strongbox. Then they loaded me and the horse and the ass with the stolen wealth, and drove us out into the mountains. Unused to the heavy burden laid on me, I went rather slowly. This enraged the robbers, and they beat me until I was well-nigh dead. But at last I saw a sight which filled me with the wildest joy. We passed a noble country house, surrounded by a garden of sweet-smelling roses. I rushed open-mouthed upon the flowers. But just as I strained my curling lips towards them, I stopped. If I changed myself into a man the robbers would kill me, either as a wizard, or out of fear that I would inform against them! So I left the roses untouched,

and in the evening we came to the cave in the mountains where the robbers dwelt, and there, to my delight, I was relieved of my grievous load.

Page 35

Soon afterwards another band of robbers arrived, carrying a young and lovely maid arrayed as a bride. Her beautiful features were pale, and wet with tears, and she tore her hair and her garments. "Take this girl," said the robbers to the old woman who waited upon them, "and comfort her. Tell her she's in no danger. Her people are rich, and will soon ransom her."

Charite, for such was the name of the beautiful bride, fell weeping into one of the old women's arms.

"They tore me away from Tlepolemus," she said, "when he was about to enter my bridal chamber. Our house was decked with laurel, and the bridal-song was being sung, when a band of swordsmen entered with drawn swords, and carried me off. Now I shall never see my bridegroom again."

"Yes, you will, dearie," said the old woman. "But don't let us talk about it now. After all, you are not in so evil a plight as Psyche was when she lost her husband, Cupid. Now, listen, while I tell you that marvellous tale."

And here is the tale of Cupid and Psyche as the old woman related it to Charite:

IV.—The Marvellous Story of Cupid and Psyche

"There was once a king of a certain city who had three daughters. All of them were very beautiful, but Psyche, the youngest, was lovelier even than Venus. The people worshipped her as she walked the streets, and strewed her path with flowers. Strangers from all parts of the world thronged to see her and to adore her. The temples of Venus were deserted, and no garlands were laid at her shrines. Thereupon, the goddess of love and beauty grew angry. She tossed her head with a cry of rage, and called to her son, Cupid, and showed him Psyche walking the streets of the city.

"'Avenge me!' she said. 'Fill this maiden with burning love for the ugliest, wretchedest creature that lives on earth.'

"The king was thereupon commanded by an oracle to array his daughter in bridal robes, and set her upon a high mountain, so that she might be wedded to a horrible monster. All the city was filled with grief and lamentation when Psyche was led out to her doom, and placed upon the lonely peak. Then a mighty wind arose, and carried the maiden to an enchanted palace, where she was waited on by unseen spirits who played sweet music for her delight, and fed her with delicious food. But in the darkness of night someone came to her couch and wooed her tenderly, and she fell in love with him and became his wife. And he said: 'Psyche, you may do what you will in the palace I have built for you. But one thing you must not do—you must not attempt to see my face.'

“Her husband was very sweet and kind, but he came only in the night time; and in the daytime Psyche felt very lonesome. So she begged her husband to let her sisters come and stay with her, and her husband had them brought on a mighty wind. When they saw how delightfully Psyche lived in the enchanted palace they grew jealous of her strange happiness.

Page 36

"'Yes, this is a very pleasant place,' they exclaimed, 'but you know what the oracle said, Psyche. You are married to a monster! That is the reason why he will not let you see his face.'

"In the night, when they had departed, Psyche lighted a lamp and looked at her bedfellow. Oh, joy! It was Cupid, the radiant young god of love, reposing in his beauty. In her excitement Psyche let a drop of burning oil fall from the lamp upon his right shoulder. The god leaped up and spread out his wings, and flew away, saying:

"'Instead of marrying you to a monster, in obedience to my mother's commands, I wedded you myself. And this is how you serve me! Farewell, Psyche! Farewell!'

"But Psyche set out to follow him, and after a long and toilsome journey she reached the court of Venus, where Cupid was now imprisoned. Venus seized her and beat her, and then set her on dangerous tasks, and tried to bring about her death. But Psyche was so lovely and gentle that every living creature wished to help her and save her. Then Venus, fearing that Cupid would escape and rescue his wife, said:

"'Psyche, take this casket to Proserpine, in the Kingdom of the Dead, and ask her to fill it with beauty.'

"Psyche was in despair. No mortal had ever returned from the Kingdom of the Dead. She climbed a high tower, and prepared to throw herself down, and die. But the very stones took pity upon her.

"'Go to Taenarus,' they said, 'and there you will find a way to the Underworld. Take two copper coins in your mouth, and two honey-cakes in your hands.'

"Psyche travelled to Taenarus, near Lacedaemon, and there she found a hole leading to the Underworld. A ghostly ferryman rowed her over the River of Death, and took one of her copper coins. Then a monstrous dog with three heads sprang out, but Psyche fed him with one of her honey-cakes, and entered the hall of Proserpine, the queen of the dead. Proserpine filled the casket, and by means of the last honey-cake and the last copper coin, Psyche returned to the green, bright earth.

"But, alas! she was over-curious, and opened the casket to see the divine beauty it contained. A deadly vapour came out and overpowered her, and she fell to the ground. But Cupid, who had now escaped from his prison, found her lying on the grass, and wiped the vapour from her face. Taking her in his arms, he spread out his wings, and carried her to Olympus; and there they live together in unending bliss, with their little child, whose name is Joy."

V.—The Further Strange Adventures of the Ass

While the old woman was entertaining the beautiful captive with this charming tale, a tall, fierce young man in ragged clothes stalked boldly in among the robbers.

“Long life to you, brave comrades!” he said. “Don’t judge me by these rags, my boys. They’re a disguise. Have you heard of Haemus, the famous Thracian brigand? If so, you’ve heard of me. My band has been cut up, but I’m bringing what men I still have to you. Shall we join forces?”

Page 37

The robbers had just lost their own captain, so they received Haemus with great joy, and made him their leader. Soon afterwards ten of his men came in, loaded with swollen wine-bags.

“Here’s enough wine,” he said, “to last us a fortnight if we use it temperately. Let us celebrate this glorious day by finishing it at one sitting!”

The robbers at once fell furiously to drinking, and their new captain forced Charite to come and sit beside him. After a little wooing, she began to cling to him, and return his kisses.

“Oh, what a frail, fickle, faithless race are women!” I said to myself. “Scarcely two hours ago she was crying her eyes out for her bridegroom; now here she is, fondling a wretched assassin.”

What an ass I was! It was some time before I noticed that the new captain did not drink himself, and that the men he brought with him were only pretending to drink, while forcing the wine on the other robbers, who soon became too drunk to drink, and rolled over in a deep sleep.

“Up, boys, and disarm and bind these ruffians!” said the new captain, who was none other than Tlepolemus, the bridegroom of the fair Charite. And leaving his servants to perform this task, he put Charite on my back, and led me to his native town. All the inhabitants poured out into the street to see us pass, and they loudly acclaimed Tlepolemus for his valour and ingenuity in rescuing his lovely bride, and capturing the robbers.

Charite did not forget me in the scenes of rejoicing. She patted my head and kissed my rough face, and bade the groom of the stud feed me well, and let me have the run of the fields.

“Now I shall at last be able to get a mouthful of roses,” I thought, “and recover my human shape.”

But, alas! the groom was an avaricious, disobedient slave, and he at once sold me to a troupe of those infamous beggarly priests of Cybele, who cart the Syrian goddess about the public squares to the sound of cymbals and rattles.

The next morning my new owners smeared their faces with rouge, and painted their eyes with black grease; then they dressed themselves in white tunics, and set their wretched goddess on my back, and marched out, leaping and brandishing great swords and axes. On coming to the mansion of a wealthy man, they raised a wild din, and whirled about, and cut themselves and scourged themselves until they were covered with blood. The master of the mansion was so impressed with this savage and

degrading spectacle that he gave the priests a good sum of money, and invited them into his house. They took the goddess with them, and I scampered out into the fields searching for some roses.

But I was quickly brought back by the cook. His master had given him a fat haunch from an enormous stag to roast for the priests' dinner, and a dog had run off with it. In order to avoid being whipped for his carelessness, the slave resolved to let the priests dine off a haunch of their own ass. He locked the door of the kitchen, so that I could not escape, and then took a long knife and came to kill me. But I had no mind to perish in this way; and I dashed upstairs into the room where the master was busy worshipping the goddess in the company of the priests, and knocked the table over, and the goddess and many of the worshippers.

Page 38

“Kill the wretched thing,” said the master. “It has gone mad.”

But the priests did not care to lose their salable property, and they locked me in their bedroom, and sold me to the first man they met the next morning. It was a poor gardener who needed an ass to cart his stuff to market. But as the gardener was taking me home a soldier came tramping along the road. He, too, wanted an ass to carry his heavy kit. So he struck the gardener down with his sword and seized me by right of conquest; then, loading me with his armour and shield and baggage, he took me to the town to which he was travelling. There he was ordered by his tribune to take some letters to Rome, so he disposed of me for a small sum to two confectioners.

By this time I had grown very feeble and thin. Though I was changed into an ass, L could not relish hay and grass and food of that sort, and I derived scarcely any nourishment from it. I still had human tastes, as well as human thoughts and feelings. Happily, I was very well off with my new masters. Every evening, they brought home the remains of the banquets they had served—bits of chicken, pork, fish and meat, and various cakes; and these they put in their room while they went for a bath before dinner. I used then to creep in and take all the best bits, and when my two masters returned they began to reproach each other with having filched the choicest pieces. In the meantime, I grew plump and glossy and broad-backed, and as my masters observed I ate no hay, they spied on me one evening.

They forgot their quarrel when they saw their ass picking out the best bits with the taste of an epicure: and, bursting open the door, they cried: “Let us try him with wine!” Naturally, I drank it very readily.

“We have got a treasure here,” they said. They soon found that I was intelligent, and understood human language. And after training me they took me to Corinth, and exhibited me there, and made a great deal of money. In a short time I became famous throughout Greece as the “Golden Ass,” and I was bought by the town for use in the public show. Nobody thought that any watch need be kept over an animal as thoroughly civilised as I was; and one evening I succeeded in escaping, and fled to a lonely spot on the seashore.

VI.—The Miracle of Isis and the Fate of Lucius

As I nestled down on the soft sand, the full-orbed moon rose above the eastern waves, and shone with a glorious radiance. My heart opened to the mysteries of the sacred night, and I sprang up, and bathed seven times in the cleansing water of the sea. Then, with tears upon my cheeks, I prayed to Isis, the mighty saviour goddess:

“O Queen of Heaven, who dost enlighten the world with thy lovely beams as thou goest on thy lonely way, hear me now and help me, in my peril and misery and misfortune!

Restore me, O mighty goddess, to my rightful shape, and let Lucius return to the bosom of his family."

Page 39

Sleep fell swiftly upon my eyes, and in my sleep the goddess visited me. She rose up, a vision of light, from the waters. On her head was a crown of radiant flowers, shaped like the moon, and serpents coiled about her temples, and her divine body was arrayed in a robe of shining darkness embroidered with innumerable stars.

“See, Lucius,” she said, with a voice that breathed a great sweetness over me, “Isis appears in answer to your prayer. Cease now to weep and mourn, for I am come in pity of your lot to show favour to you. To-morrow my priest will descend to the seashore to celebrate my festival, and in his left hand he will carry a crown of roses. Go forth without fear, and take the crown of roses, and then put off the shape of a beast, and put on the form of a man. Serve me well all the days of your life, and when you go down to the grave you shall see me as a light amid the darkness—as a queen in the palace of hell. By my favour you shall be lifted up into the fields of Paradise, and there you shall worship and adore me for all eternity.”

The saviour goddess then vanished, and I awoke, and the dawn was in the sky, and the waves of the sea were dancing in the golden light. A long procession was winding down from the city to the shore to the sound of flutes and pipes.

First came a great multitude of people carrying lamps and torches and tapers in honour of the constellations of heaven; then a choir of sweet-voiced boys and girls in snowy garments; and next a train of men and women luminous in robes of pure white linen; these were the initiates; and they were followed by the prelates of the sacred mysteries; and behind them all walked the high priest, bearing in his right hand the mystic rattle of Isis, and in his left hand the crown of roses. By divine intervention, the crowd parted and made a way for me; and when I came to the priest he held out the roses, and I ate them, and was changed into a man. The people raised their hands to heaven, wonder-stricken by the miracle, and the fame of it went out over all the world. The priest initiated me into the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, and I shaved my head, and entered the College of Pastors, and became a servant of the high gods.

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The Arabian Nights

Or, The Thousand and One Nights

There is as much doubt about the history of “The Thousand and One Nights” as that which veils the origin of the Homeric poems. It is said that a certain Caliph Shahryar, having been deceived by his wife, slew her, and afterwards married a wife only for one day, slaying her on the morning after. When this slaughter of women had continued some time he became wedded to one Shahrazad, daughter of his Vizir, who, by telling

the Commander of the Faithful exciting stories and leaving them unfinished every dawn, so provoked the Caliph's curiosity that he

Page 40

kept her alive, and at last grew so fond of her that he had no thought of putting her to death. As for the authorship of the stories, they are certainly not the work of one mind, and have probably grown with the ages into their present form. The editions published for Christian countries do not represent the true character of these legends, which are often exceedingly sensual. The European versions of this extraordinary entertainment began in 1704 with the work of one Antoine Galland, Professor of Arabic at the College of France, a Frenchman who, according to Sir Richard Burton, possessed "in a high degree that art of telling a tale which is far more captivating than culture or scholarship." Sir R. Burton (see Vol. XIX) summed up what may be definitely believed of the Nights in the following conclusion: The framework of the book is purely Persian perfunctorily Arabised, the archetype being the Hazar Afsanah. The oldest tales may date from the reign of Al-Mansur, in the eighth century; others belong to the tenth century; and the latest may be ascribed to the sixteenth. The work assumed its present form in the thirteenth century. The author is unknown, "for the best reason; there never was one."

I.—The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor

When the father of Sindbad was taken to Almighty Allah, much wealth came to the possession of his son; but soon did it dwindle in boon companionship, for the city of Baghdad is sweet to the youthful. Then did Sindbad bethink him how he might restore his fortune, saying to himself: "Three things are better than other three; the day of death is better than the day of birth, a live dog is better than a dead lion, and the grave is better than want"; and gathering merchandise together, he took ship and sailed away to foreign countries.

Now it came to pass that the captain of this ship sighted a strange island, whereon were grass and trees, very pleasant to the eyes. So they anchored, and many went ashore. When these had gathered fruits, they made a fire, and were about to warm themselves, when the captain cried out from the ship: "Ho there! passengers, run for your lives and hasten back to the ship and leave your gear and save yourselves from destruction. Allah preserve you! For this island whereon ye stand is no true island, but a great fish stationary a-middlemost of the sea, whereon the sand hath settled and trees have sprung up of old time, so that it is become like unto an island; but when ye lighted fires on it, it felt the heat and moved; and in a moment it will sink with you into the depths of the sea and ye will be drowned."

Page 41

When the fish moved, the captain did not wait for his passengers, but sailed away, and Sindbad, seizing a tub, floated helpless in the great waters. But by the mercy of Allah he was thrown upon a true island, where a beautiful mare lay upon the ground, who cried at his approach. Then a man started up at the mare's cry, and seeing Sindbad, bore him to an underground chamber, where he regaled the waif with plenteous food. To him did this man explain how he was a groom of King Mirjan, and that he brought the king's mares to pasture on the island, hiding underground while the stallions of the sea came up out of the waves unto the mares. Presently Sindbad saw this strange sight, and witnessed how the groom drove the stallions back to the waves when they would have dragged the mares with them. After that he was carried before King Mirjan, who entreated him kindly, and when he had amassed wealth, returned by ship to Bussorah, and so to Baghdad.

But becoming possessed with the thought of travelling about the ways of men, he set out on a second voyage. And it came to pass that he landed with others on a lovely island, and lay down to sleep, after he had eaten many delicious fruits. Awaking, he found the ship gone. Then, praying to Almighty Allah, like a man distracted, he roamed about the island, presently climbing a tree to see what he could see. And he saw a great dome afar, and journeyed to it.

There was no entrance to this white dome, and as he went round about it, the sun became suddenly darkened, so that he looked towards it in fear, and lo! a bird in the heavens whose wings blackened all light. Then did Sindbad know that the dome was an egg, and that the bird was the bird roc, which feeds its young upon elephants. Sore afraid, he hid himself, and the bird settled upon the egg, and brooded upon it. Then Sindbad unwound his turban, and, tying one end to the leg of the great bird and the other about his own middle, waited for the dawn.

When the dawn was come, the bird flew into the heavens, unaware of the weight at its foot, and Sindbad was borne across great seas and far countries. When at last the bird settled on land, Sindbad unfastened his turban, and was free.

But the place was filled with frightful serpents, and strewn with diamonds. Sindbad saw a dead sheep on the ground, with diamonds sticking to its carcase, and he knew that this was a device of merchants, for eagles come and carry away these carcases to places beyond the reach of the serpents, and merchants take the diamonds sticking to the flesh. So he hid himself under the carcase, and an eagle bore him with it to inhabited lands, and he was delivered.

Page 42

Again it came to him to travel, and on this his third voyage the ship was driven to the mountain of Zughb, inhabited by hairy apes. These apes seized all the goods and gear, breaking the ship, but spared the men. Then they perceived a great house and entered it, but nobody was there. At nightfall, however, a frightful giant entered, and began to feel the men one by one, till he found the fattest, and him the giant roasted over a fire and ate like a chicken. This happened many days, till Sindbad encouraged his friends, and they heated two iron spits in the fire, and while the giant slept put out his eyes. While they ran to the shore, where they had built a raft, the giant, bellowing with rage, returned with two ghuls, and pelted the raft with rocks, killing some, but the rest escaped. However, three only were alive when they reached land.

The shore on which these three landed was occupied by an immense serpent, like a dragon, who instantly ate one of the three, while Sindbad and the other climbed up a tree. Next day the serpent glided up the tree, and ate the second. Then Sindbad descended, and with planks bound himself all round so that he was a man surrounded by a fence. Thus did he abide safe from the serpent till a ship saved him.

Now on his fourth voyage Sindbad's ship was wrecked, and he fell among hairy men, cannibals, who fattened all that they caught like cattle, and consumed them. He being thin and wasted by all his misfortunes, escaped death, and saw all his comrades fattened and roasted, till they went mad, with cries of anguish. It chanced that the shepherd, who tended these men in the folds, took pity on Sindbad and showed him the road out of danger, which taking, he arrived, after divers adventures and difficulties, at the country of a great king. In this country all were horsemen, but the saddle was unknown, so Sindbad made first the king, and afterwards the vizir, both saddle and stirrups, which so delighted them that he was advanced to great fortune and honour.

Then was he married to a maiden most beautiful and chaste, so lovely to behold that she ravished the senses, and he lived like one in a dream. But it came to pass that she died, and when they buried her they took Sindbad and shut him in the Place of the Dead with her, giving him a little food and water till he should die. Such was the custom, that husband and wife should accompany the dead wife or husband in the Place of the Dead —a mighty cave strewn with dead bodies, dark as night, and littered with jewels.

While Sindbad bewailed his lot in this place the doors opened, a dead body of a man was brought in, and with it his live wife, to whom food was given. Then Sindbad killed this fair lady with the bone of a leg, took her food and jewels, and thus did he serve all the live people thrust into the cavern. One day he heard a strange sound far up the cavern, and perceived in the distance a wild beast. Then he knew that there must be some entrance at that far end, and journeying thither, found a hole in the mountain which led to the sea. On the shore Sindbad piled all his jewels, returning every day to the cavern to gather more, till a ship came and bore him away.

Page 43

His fifth voyage was interrupted by rocs, whose egg the sailors had smashed open to see the interior of what they took to be a dome. These birds flew over the ship with rocks in their claws, and let them fall on to the ship, so that it was wrecked.

Sindbad reached shore on a plank, and wandering on this island perceived an old man, very sad, seated by a river. The old man signalled to Sindbad that he should carry him on his back to a certain point, and this Sindbad very willingly bent himself to do. But once upon his back, the legs over the shoulders and wound round about his flanks, the old man refused to get off, and drove Sindbad hither and thither with most cruel blows. At last Sindbad took a gourd, hollowed it out, filled it with grape juice, stopped the mouth, and set it in the sun. Then did he drink of this wine and get merry and forget his misery, dancing with the old man on his neck. So the old man asked for the gourd, and drank of it, and fell sleepy, and dropped from Sindbad's neck, and Sindbad slew him.

After that, Sindbad amassed treasure by pelting apes with pebbles, who threw back at him cocoanuts, which he sold for money.

On his sixth voyage Sindbad was wrecked on the most frightful mountain which no ship could pass. The sight of all the useless wealth strewn upon this terrible place of wreck and death drove all the other passengers mad, so that they died. But Sindbad, finding a stream, built a raft, and drifted with it, till, almost dead, he arrived among Indians and Abyssinians. Here he was well treated, grew rich, and returned in prosperity to Baghdad.

But once again did he travel, and this time his vessel encountered in the middle seas three vast fish-like islands, which lashed out and destroyed the ship, eating most, but Sindbad escaped. When he reached land he found himself well cared for among kind people, and he grew rich in an old man's house, who married him to his only daughter. One day after the old man's death, and when he was as rich as any in that land, lo! all the men grew into the likeness of birds, and Sindbad begged one of them to take him on his back on the mysterious flight to which they were now bent. After persuasion the man-bird agreed, and Sindbad was carried up into the firmament till he could hear the angels glorifying God in the heavenly dome. Carried away by ecstasy, he shouted praise of Allah into the holy place, and instantly the bird fell to the ground, for they were evil and incapable of praising God. But Sindbad returned to his wife, and she told him how evil were those people, and that her father was not of them, and induced him to carry her to his own land. So he sold all his possessions, took ship, and came to Baghdad, where he lived in great splendour and honour, and this was the seventh and last voyage of Sindbad the Sailor.

II.—The Tale of the Three Apples

The Caliph Haroun al-Raschid, walking by night in the city, found a fisherman lamenting that he had caught nothing for his wife and children. "Cast again," said the caliph, "and I

will give thee a hundred gold pieces for whatsoever cometh up." So the man cast his net, and there came up a box, wherein was found a young damsel foully murdered. Now, to this murder confessed two men, a youth and an old man; and this was the story of the youth.

Page 44

His wife fell ill, and had a longing for apples, so that he made the journey to Bussorah, and bought three apples from the caliph's gardener. But his wife would not eat them. One day, as he sat in his shop, passed a slave, bearing one of the apples. The husband asked how he came by it, whereat replied the slave that his mistress gave it him, saying that her wittol of a husband had journeyed to Bussorah for it. Then in rage the young man returned and slew his wife. Presently his little son came home, saying that he was afraid of his mother; and when the father questioned him, replied the child that he had taken one of his mother's three apples to play with, and that a slave had stolen it. Then did the husband know his wife to be innocent, and he told her father all, and they both mourned for her, and both offered themselves to the executioner—the one that he was guilty, the other to save his son-in-law whose guilt was innocence.

From this story followed that of Noureddin and his son Bedreddin Hassan, whose marriage to the Lady of Beauty was brought about by a genie, in spite of great difficulties. And it was after hearing this tale that Haroun al-Raschid declared to his vizir: "It behoves that these stories be written in letters of liquid gold."

III.—Hassan, the Rope-Maker

Two men, so it chanced, disputing whether wealth could give happiness, came before the shop of a poor rope-maker. Said one of the men: "I will give this fellow two hundred pieces of gold, and see what he does with it." Hassan, amazed by this gift, put the gold in his turban, except ten pieces, and went forth to buy hemp for his trade and meat for his children.

As he journeyed, a famished vulture made a pounce at the meat, and Hassan's turban fell off, with which the vulture, balked of the meat, flew away, far out of sight.

When the two men returned they found Hassan very unhappy, and the same who had given before gave him another two hundred pieces, which Hassan hid carefully, all but ten pieces, in a pot of bran. While he was out buying hemp, his wife exchanged the pot of bran for some scouring sand with a sandman in the street. Hassan was maddened when he came home, and beat his wife, and tore her hair, and howled like an evil spirit. When his friends returned they were amazed by his tale, but the one who had as yet given nothing now gave Hassan a lump of lead picked up in the street, saying: "Good luck shall come of homely lead, where gold profits nothing."

Hassan thought but little of the lead, and when a fisherman sent among his neighbours that night for a piece of lead wherewith to mend his nets, very willingly did Hassan part with this gift, the fisherman promising him the first fish he should catch.

When Hassan's wife cut open this fish to cook it, she found within it a large piece of glass, crystal clear, which she threw to the children for a plaything. A Jewess who entered the shop saw this piece of glass, picked it up, and offered a few pieces of

money for it. Hassan's wife dared not do anything now without her husband's leave, and Hassan, being summoned, refused all the offers of the Jewess, perceiving that the piece of glass was surely a precious diamond. At last the Jewess offered a hundred thousand pieces of gold, and, as this was wealth beyond wealth, Hassan very willingly agreed to the barter.

Page 45

IV.—Prince Ahmed and the Fairy

Once upon a time there was a sultan who had three sons, and all these young men loved their cousin, the fatherless and motherless Nouronnihar, who lived at their father's court.

To decide which should marry the princess the sultan bade them go forth, each a separate way, and, after a time, determined to end their travels by assembling at a certain place. "He of you who brings back from his travels the greatest of rarities," said the sultan, "he shall marry the princess, my niece." To Almighty Allah was confided the rest.

The eldest of the princes, Houssain by name, consorted with merchants in his travels, but saw nothing strange or wonderful till he encountered a man crying a piece of carpet for forty pieces of gold. "Such is the magic of this carpet," protested the man, "that he who sits himself upon it is instantly transported to whatsoever place he desires to visit, be it over wide seas or tall mountains." The prince bought this carpet, amused himself with it for some time, and then flew joyfully to the place of assembly.

Hither came the second prince, Ali, who brought from Persia an ivory tube, down which, if any man looked, he beheld the sight that most he desired to see; and the third prince, the young Ahmed, who had bought for thirty-five pieces of gold a magic apple, the smell of which would restore a soul almost passed through the gate of death.

The three princes, desiring to see their beloved princess, looked down Ali's ivory tube, and, lo! the tragic sight that met their gaze—for the princess lay at the point of death.

Swiftly did they seat themselves upon Houssain's magic carpet, and in a moment of time found themselves beside the princess, whom Ahmed instantly restored to life and beauty and health by his magic apple.

As it seemed impossible to decide which of these rare things was the rarest, the sultan commanded that each prince should shoot an arrow, and he whose arrow flew farthest should become the husband of Nouronnihar.

Houssain drew the first bow; then Ali, whose arrow sped much farther, and then Ahmed, whose arrow was not to be found.

Houssain, in despair, gave up his right of succession to the throne, and, with a blighted heart, went out into the wilderness to become a holy man. Ali was married to the princess, and Ahmed went forth into the world to seek his lost arrow.

After long wandering, Ahmed found his arrow among desolate rocks, too far for any man to have shot with the bow; and, while he looked about him, amazed and dumfounded, he beheld an iron door in the rocks, which yielded to his touch and led into a very

sumptuous palace. There advanced towards him a lady of surpassing loveliness, who announced that she was a genie, that she knew well who he was, and had sent the carpet, the tube, and the apple, and had guided his arrow to her door. Furthermore, she confessed to the prince great love for him, and offered him all that she possessed, leading him to a vast and magnificent chamber, where a marriage-feast was prepared for them.

Page 46

Prince Ahmed was happy for some while, and then he thought of his father, grieving for him, and at last obtained leave from the beautiful genie to go on a visit to his home. At first his father was glad to see him, but afterwards jealousy of his son and the son's secret place of dwelling, and suspicion that a son so rich and powerful might have designs on his throne, led his father to lay hard and cruel burdens on Prince Ahmed.

However, all that he commanded Ahmed performed by help of the genie, even things the most impossible. He brought a tent which would cover the sultan's army, and yet, folded up, lay in the hollow of a man's hand. This and many other wonderful things did Ahmed perform, till the sultan asked for a man one foot and a half in height, with a beard thirty feet long, who could carry a bar of iron weighing five hundredweight.

Such a man the genie found, and the sultan, beholding him, turned away in disgust; whereat the dwarf flew at him in a rage, and with his iron bar smote him to death.

Thus, too, did the little man treat all the wicked courtiers and sorcerers who had incensed the sultan against his son. And Ahmed and the genie became sultan and sultana of all that world, while Ali and Nouronnihar reigned over a great province bestowed upon them by Prince Ahmed.

As for Houssain, he forsook not the life of a holy man living in the wilderness.

V.—The Hunchback

There lived long ago a poor tailor with a pretty wife to whom he was tenderly attached. One day there came to his door a hunchback, who played upon a musical instrument and sang to it so amusingly that the tailor straightway carried him to his wife. So delighted by the hunchback's singing was the tailor's wife that she cooked a dish of fish and the three sat down to be merry. But in the midst of the feast a bone stuck in the hunchback's throat, and before a man could stare he was dead. Afraid that they should be accused of murder, the tailor conspired with his wife what they should do. "I have it," said he, and getting a piece of money he sallied forth at dark with the hunchback's body and arrived before the house of a doctor.

Here knocked he on the door, and giving the maid a piece of money, bade her hasten the doctor to his need. So soon as the maid's back was turned, he placed the hunchback on the top stair and fled. Now the doctor, coming quickly, struck against the corpse so that it fell to the bottom of the stairs. "Woe is me, for I have killed a patient!" said he, and fearing to be accused of murder, carried the body in to his wife.

Now they had a neighbour who was absent from home, and going to his room they placed the corpse against the fireplace. This man, returning and crying out: "So it is not the rats who plunder my larder!" began to belabour the hunchback, till the body rolled

over and lay still. Then in great fear of his deed, this Mussulman carried the corpse into the street, and placed it upright against a shop.

Page 47

Came by a Christian merchant at dawn of day, and running against the hunchback tumbled him over; then thinking himself attacked he struck the body, and at that moment the watch came by and haled the merchant before the sultan.

Now the hunchback was a favourite of the sultan, and he ordered the Christian merchant to be executed.

To the scaffold, just when death was to be done, came the Mussulman, and confessed that he was the murderer. So the executioner released the Christian, and was about to hang the other, when the doctor came and confessed to being the murderer. So the doctor took the place of the Mussulman, when the tailor and his wife hastened to the scene, and confessed that they were guilty.

Now, when this story came to the ears of the sultan, he said: "Great is Allah, whose will must be done!" and he released all of them, and commanded this story of the hunchback to be written in a book.

VI.—Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp

There was in the old time a bad and idle boy who lived with his mother, a poor widow, and gave her much unrest. And there came to him one day a wicked magician, who called himself the boy's uncle, and made rich presents to the mother, and one day he led Aladdin out to make him a merchant. Now, the magician knew by his magic of a vast hoard of wealth, together with a wonderful lamp, which lay in the earth buried in Aladdin's name. And he sent the boy to fetch the lamp, giving him a magic ring, and waited on the earth for his return. But Aladdin, his pockets full of jewels, refused to give up the lamp till his false uncle helped him to the surface of the earth, and in rage the magician caused the stone to fall upon the cave, and left Aladdin to die.

But as he wept, wringing his hands, the genie of the magic ring appeared, and by his aid Aladdin was restored to his mother. There, with the genie of the lamp to wait upon him, he lived, till, seeing the sultan's daughter pass on her way to the bath, he conceived violent love for her, and sent his mother to the sultan with all his wonderful jewels, asking the princess in marriage. The sultan, astonished by the gift of jewels, set Aladdin to perform prodigies of wonder, but all these he accomplished by aid of the genie, so that at last the sultan was obliged to give him the princess in marriage. And Aladdin caused a great pavilion to rise near the sultan's palace, and this was one of the wonders of the world, and there he abode in honour and fame.

Then the wicked magician, knowing by magic the glory of Aladdin, came disguised, crying "New Lamps for Old!" and one of the maids in the pavilion gave him the wonderful lamp, and received a new one from the coppersmith. The magician transplanted the pavilion to Africa, and Aladdin, coming home, found the sultan enraged against him and his palace vanished. But by means of the genie of the ring he

discovered the whereabouts of his pavilion, and going thither, slew the magician, possessed himself anew of the lamp, and restored his pavilion to its former site.

Page 48

But the magician's wicked brother, plotting revenge, obtained access to the princess in disguise of a holy woman he had foully murdered, and he would have certainly slain Aladdin but for a warning of the genie, by which Aladdin was enabled to kill the magician. After that Aladdin lived in glory and peace, and ascended in due course to the throne, and reigned with honour and mercy.

VII.—Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves

Now, the father of Ali Baba left both his sons poor; but Kasim married a rich wife, and so he lived plenteously, while his poor brother, Ali Baba, worked in the wood. It came to pass that Ali Baba one day saw in the wood a company of forty robbers, the captain of whom cried, "Open, Sesame!" to a great rock, and lo! it opened, and the men disappeared. When they were gone out again, Ali Baba came from his hiding, and, addressing the rock in the same way, found that it obeyed him. Then went he in and took much of the treasure, which he drove home on his mule. Now, when his wife sent to the brother Kasim for scales, wherewith she might weigh all this treasure, the sister-in-law being suspicious that one so poor should have need of scales, smeared the bottom of the pan with wax and grease, and discovered on the return a gold piece. This she showed to Kasim, who made Ali Baba confess the tale. Then Kasim went to the cave, entered, loaded much treasure, and was about to depart, when he found he had forgotten the magic words whereby he entered. There was he found by the forty thieves, who slew and quartered him. Ali Baba found the quarters, took them home, got a blind tailor to sew them together, and gave his brother burial.

Now, the robbers discovered Ali Baba's house, and they hid themselves in oil-jars hung on the backs of mules, and the captain drove them. Thus came they to Ali Baba's house, and the captain craved lodging for himself and his beasts. Surely would Ali Baba have been captured, tortured, and put to death but for his maid, the faithful and astute Morgiana, who discovered men in the jars, and, boiling cans of oil, poured it upon them one by one, and so delivered her master. But the captain had escaped, and Ali Baba still went in great fear of his life. But when he returned, disguised so that he might have puzzled the wisest, Morgiana recognised the enemy of her master; and she was dancing before him and filling his eyes with pleasure; and when it came for her to take the tambourine and go round for largess, she strengthened her heart and, quick as the blinding lightning, plunged a dagger into his vitals. Thus did the faithful Morgiana save her master, and he married her to his nephew, the son of Kasim, and they lived long in great joy and blessing.

VIII.—The Fisherman and the Genie

There was once a poor fisherman who every day cast his net four times into the sea. On a day he went forth, and casting in his net, drew up with great labour a dead jackass; casting again, an earthen pitcher full of sand; casting a third time vexatiously, potsherds and shattered glass; and at the last a jar of yellow copper, leaden-capped,

and stamped with the seal-ring of Solomon, the son of David. His rage was silenced at sight of the sacred seal, and, removing the cap, smoke issued, which, taking vast shape, became a terrible genie frightful to see.

Page 49

Said the genie: "By what manner of death wilt thou die, for I have sworn, by Allah, to slay the man who freed me!" He moreover explained how Solomon had placed him in the jar for heresy, and how he had lain all those years at the bottom of the sea. For a hundred years, he said, he swore that he would make rich for ever and ever the man who freed him; for the next hundred, that for such an one he would open the hoards of the earth; then, that he would perfectly fulfil such an one's three wishes; finally, in his rage, that he would kill the man who freed him.

Now, the fisherman, having pleaded in vain, said that he did not believe the tale, seeing that so huge a genie could never have got into so small a jar. Whereat the genie made smoke of himself, and re-entered the vase. Instantly then did the fisherman stopper it, nor would he let the genie free till that wicked one had promised to spare his life and do him service. Grudgingly and wrathfully did the genie issue forth, but being now under oath to Allah, he spared the fisherman and did him service.

He took him to a lake in the black mountains, bade him throw in his net, and bear the catch to the sultan. Now, by the fisherman's catching of four fish all of a different hue, the sultan discovered that this lake in the mountains was once a populous and mighty city, whereof the prince and all the inhabitants had been bewitched in ancient time. When the city was restored and all those many people called back to life, the sultan enriched the fisherman, who lived afterwards in wealth.

IX.—The Enchanted Horse

In olden times there came to the Court of Persia a stranger from Ind, riding a horse made of wood, which, said he, could fly whithersoever its rider wished. When the sultan had seen the horse fly to a mountain and back, he asked the Hindu its price, and said the man: "Thy daughter's hand." Now the prince, standing by, was enraged at this insolence, but his father said: "Have no fear that I should do this thing. Howsoever, lest another king become possessed of the horse, I will bargain for it." But the impetuous prince, doubting the truth of the horse's power, jumped upon its back, turned the peg which he had observed the Hindu to turn, and instantly was borne far away.

The king, enraged that the Hindu could not bring back his son, had the man cast into prison, albeit the Hindu protested that soon the prince must discover the secret of stopping the horse by means of a second peg, and therefore would soon return.

Now the prince did not discover this secret till he was far away, and it was night. He came to earth near a palace, and going in, found there an exquisite lady sleeping, and knew by her dress that she was of a rank equal with his own. Then he pleaded to her for succour, and she constrained him to stay, and for many weeks he abode as a guest. After that time he said, "Come to my father's court, that we may be married!" And early one dawn he bore her to Persia on the back of the enchanted horse.

Page 50

So glad was the king at his son's return that he released the Hindu.

Now the Hindu, hearing what had happened, determined on revenge. He found where the horse was placed, and going to the palace where the foreign princess was housed, sent for her in the sultan's name, and she came to him. Then he seated her upon the horse, and mounting up in full view of the sultan and his royal son, flew far away with his lovely captive.

It was the Hindu's desire to marry this princess, but when they were come to earth, she withstood him, and cried for help and succour. To her came the sultan of that place, and slew the Hindu, and would have married her, but she was faithful to her lover and feigned madness.

Then the sultan offered rewards to any who should cure her of this frightful madness, and many physicians came and failed. Now, her lover, distracted at sight of seeing her in mid-air with the Hindu, had turned Holy Man, roaming the earth without hope like one who is doomed.

It happened that he came to the palace where the princess lay in her feigned madness, and hearing the tale of her, and of the enchanted horse, with new hope and a great joy in his heart, he went in, disguised as a physician, and in secret made himself known.

Then he stood before the sultan of that land, and said: "From the enchanted horse hath she contracted this madness, and by the enchanted horse shall she lose it." And he gave orders to dress her in glorious array, to crown her with jewels and gold, and to lead her forth to the palace square.

A vast concourse assembled there, and the prince set his beloved lady on the horse, and pretending incantations, leapt suddenly upon its back, turned the peg, and as the enchanted steed flew towards Persia, over his shoulder cried the glad prince: "When next, O sultan, thou wouldst marry a princess who implores thy protection, ask first for her consent."

* * * * *

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE

Song-Story of the Twelfth Century

If "Old Antif" of Hainault was, as the best authorities now incline to think, the author of "Aucassin and Nicolette," Belgium may claim to have produced the finest poet of the ages of chivalry. He was probably a contemporary of the English minstrel king, Richard the Lion-hearted. But nothing is known of him save what can be gathered from the exquisite story of love which he composed in his old age. Perhaps he, too, was, in his

younger days, a Crusader as well as a minstrel, and fought in the Holy Land against the Saracens. His “song-story” is certainly Arabian both in form and substance. Even his hero, Aucassin, the young Christian lord of Beaucaire, bears an Arabian name—-Alcazin. There is nothing in Mohammedan literature equal to “Aucassin and Nicolette.” It can be compared only with Shakespeare’s “As You Like It.” The old, sorrowful, tender-hearted minstrel knight, who wandered from castle to castle in Hainault and Picardy seven hundred years ago, is one of the master-singers of the world.

I.—Lovers Young and Fair

Page 51

Listen to a tale of love,
Which an old grey captive wove.
Great delight and solace he
Found in his captivity,
As he told what toils beset
Aucassin and Nicolette;
And the dolour undergone,
And the deeds of prowess done
By a lad of noble race,
For a lady fair of face.
Though a man be old and blind,
Sick in body and in mind,
If he hearken he shall be
Filled with joy and jollity,
So delectable and sweet
Is the tale I now repeat.

Now, a war broke out between Count Bougars of Valence and Count Garin of Beaucaire; and Count Bougars besieged Beaucaire with a hundred knights and ten thousand men. Then Count Garin, who was old and feeble, said to his fair young son, Aucassin:

“Now, son, go and defend our land and people.”

“I tell you,” said Aucassin, “I will never draw sword unless I have my sweet love Nicolette to wife.”

“And I tell you,” said his father, “that I would liefer lose life and land than see you wedded to her. What! A Saracen girl, bought by one of my captains! A slave! A heathen! A witch! God! I will burn her in a fire, and you with her.”

“Stay!” said Aucassin. “I will make an agreement. I will fight Count Bougars, if you will let me speak to Nicolette after the battle.”

“I agree,” said his father. And he said this because Count Bougars was well night master of Beaucaire.

Aucassin went out to battle in great joy. But his father went in great anger to the captain that had bought Nicolette from the Saracens, and said:

“If I lay hands on that heathen girl, I will burn her in a fire, and you also, unless you have a care.”

And the captain who had adopted Nicolette as his daughter was afraid both for himself and for his godchild. And he hid her in the tower that stood in the garden of his house.

In the tower that Nicolette
Prisoned is, may no man get.
Pleasant is her room to see,
Carved and painted wondrously.
But no pleasure can she find
In the paintings, to her mind.
Look! For she is standing there
By the window, with her hair
Yellow like autumnal wheat
When the sunshine falls on it.
Blue-grey eyes she has, and brows
Whiter than the winter snows;
And her face is like a flower,
As she gazes from the tower:
As she gazes far below
Where the garden roses blow,
And the thrush and blackbird sing
In the pleasant time of spring.
“Woe is me!” she cries, “that I
In a prison cell must lie;
Parted by a cruel spite
From my young and lovely knight.
By the eyes of God, I swear
Prisonment I will not bear!
Here for long I shall not stay:
Love will quickly find a way.”

In the meantime, Aucassin mounted a great war-horse, and rode out to battle. Still dreaming of Nicolette, he let the reins fall, and his horse carried him among his foes. They took him prisoner, and sent word to Count Bougars to come and see them hang the heir of Beaucaire.

Page 52

“Ha!” said Aucassin, waking out of his dream. “Ha, my God! My Saviour! If they hang me, I shall never see my sweet love Nicolette again!”

Striking out in a great passion, he made a havoc about him, like a boar that turns at bay on the hounds in a forest. Ten knights he struck down, and seven he wounded. Then, spying Count Bougars, that had come to see him hanged, he lashed at his helm, and stunned him, and took him prisoner to Beaucaire.

“Father,” he said, “here is Count Bougars. The war is ended. Now let me see Nicolette.”

“I will not,” said his father. “That is my last word in this matter. So help me, God.”

“Count Bougars,” said Aucassin, “you are my prisoner. I will have a pledge from you; give me your hand.” Count Bougars gave his hand. “Pledge me,” said Aucassin, “that if I set you free, you will do my father all the hurt and damage and shame you can; for he is a liar.”

“In God’s name,” said Count Bougars, “put me to ransom and take all my wealth; but do not mock me!”

“Are you my prisoner?” said Aucassin.

“Yes,” said Count Bougars.

“Then, so help me, God,” said Aucassin, “I will now send your head from your shoulders unless I have that pledge!”

Thereupon Count Bougars pledged him, and Aucassin set him free. Then Aucassin went to the captain that was godfather to Nicolette. “What have you done with my sweet lady?” he asked.

“You will never again see Nicolette, my fair lord,” said the captain. “What would you gain if you took the Saracen maid to bed? Your soul would go to hell. You would never win to heaven!”

“And what of that?” said Aucassin. “Who is it that win to heaven? Old priests, and cripples that grovel and pray at altars, and tattered beggars that die of cold and hunger. These only go to heaven, and I do not want their company. So I will go to hell. For there go all good scholars and the brave knights that died in wars, and sweet ladies that had many lovers, and harpers, and minstrels, and great kings. Give me but my Nicolette, and gladly I will keep them company.”

II.—Love’s Song in a Dungeon

Aucassin returned very sorrowfully to the castle, and there his father put him into a dungeon.

Aucassin is cast and bound
In a dungeon underground;
Never does the sunlight fall
Shining on his prison wall;
Only one faint ray of it
Glimmers down a narrow slit.
But does Aucassin forget
His sweet lady, Nicolette?
Listen! He is singing there,
And his song is all of her:
“Though for love of thee I die
In this dungeon where I lie,
Wonder of the world, I will
Worship thee and praise thee still!
By the beauty of thy face,
By the joy of thy embrace,
By the rapture of thy kiss,
And thy body’s sweetnesses,
Miracle of loveliness,

Page 53

Comfort me in my distress!
Surely, 'twas but yesterday,
That the pilgrim came this way—
Weak and poor and travel-worn—
Who in Limousin was born.
With the falling sickness, he
Stricken was full grievously.
He had prayed to many a saint
For the cure of his complaint;
But no healing did he get
Till he saw my Nicolette.
Even as he lay down to die,
Nicolette came walking by.
On her shining limbs he gazed,
As her kirtle she upraised.
And he rose from off the ground,
Healed and joyful, whole and sound.
Miracle of loveliness,
Comfort me in my distress!"

As Aucassin was singing in his dungeon, Nicolette was devising how to get out of her tower. It was now summer time, in the month of May, when the day is warm, long and clear, and the night still and serene. Nicolette lay on her bed, and the moonlight streamed through the window, and the nightingale sang in the garden below; and she thought of Aucassin, her lover, whom she loved, and of Count Garin, who hated her.

"I will stay here no longer," said Nicolette, "or the count will find me and kill me."

The old woman that was set to watch over her was asleep. Nicolette put on her fine silken kirtle, and took the bedclothes and knotted them together, and made a rope. This she fastened to the bar of her window, and so got down from the tower. Then she lifted up her kirtle with both hands, because the dew was lying deep on the grass, and went away down the garden.

Her locks were yellow and curled; her eyes blue-grey and laughing; her lips were redder than the cherry or rose in summertime; her teeth white and small; so slim was her waist that you could have clipped her in your two hands; and so firm were her breasts that they rose against her bodice as if they were two apples. The daisies that bent above her instep, and broke beneath her light tread, looked black against her feet; so white the maiden was.

She came to the postern gate, and unbarred it, and went out through the streets of Beaucaire, keeping always in the shadows, for the moon was shining. And so she got to the dungeon where her lover, Aucassin, lay. She thrust her head through the chink, and there she heard Aucassin grieving for her whom he loved so much.

“Ah, Aucassin!” she said. “Never will you have joy of me. Your father hates me to death, and I must cross the sea, and go to some strange land.”

“If you were to go away,” said Aucassin, “you would kill me. The first man that saw you would take you to his bed. And, then, do you think I would wait till I found a knife? No! I would dash my head to pieces against a wall or a rock.”

“Ah!” she said. “I love you more than you love me.”

“Nay, my sweet lady,” said he. “Woman cannot love man as much as man loves woman. Woman only loves with her eyes; man loves with his heart.”

Page 54

Aucassin and Nicolette were thus debating, when the soldiers of the count came marching down the street. Their swords were drawn, and they were seeking for Nicolette to slay her.

“God, it were a great pity to kill so fair a maid!” said the warden of the dungeon. “My young lord Aucassin would die of it, and that would be a great loss to Beaucaire. Would that I could warn Nicolette!”

And with that, he struck up a merry tune, but the words he sang to it were not merry.

Lady with the yellow hair,
Lovely, sweet and debonair,
  Now take heed.
Death comes on thee unaware.
Turn thee now; oh, turn and flee;
Death is coming suddenly.
      And the swords
Flash that seek to murder thee.

“May God reward you for your fair words!” said Nicolette.

Wrapping herself in her mantle, she hid in the shadows until the soldiers went by. Then she said farewell to Aucassin, and climbed up the castle-wall where it had been broken in the siege. But steep and deep was the moat, and Nicolette’s fair hands and feet were bleeding when she got out. But she did not feel any pain, because of the great fear that was on her lest she should fall into the hands of the count’s men.

Within two bow-shots from Beaucaire was a great forest; and here Nicolette slept in a thicket, until the herd-boys came in the morning, and pastured their cattle close to her resting-place. They sat down by a fountain, and spread out a cloak, and put their bread on it. Their shouting aroused Nicolette, and she came to them.

“God bless you, sweet boys!” said she.

“God bless you, lady!” said one that had a readier tongue than the others.

“Do you know Aucassin, the brave young son of Count Garin?” she said.

“Yes, lady,” they said. “We know him very well.”

“Then tell him, in the name of God,” said she, “that there is a beast in this forest that he must come and hunt. If he can take it, he will not sell a limb of it for a hundred marks of gold. Nay, not for any money.”

“I tell him that?” said the boy that had a readier tongue than the others. “Curse me if I do! There’s no beast in this forest—stag, boar, wolf or lion—with a limb worth more than two or three pence. You speak of some enchantment, and you are a fairy woman. We do not want your company. Go away.”

“Sweet boys,” said Nicolette, “you must do as I tell you. For the beast has a medicine that will cure Aucassin of all his pain. Ah! I have five pieces of money in my purse. Take them, and tell him. He must come and hunt within three days, and if he does not, he will never be cured.”

“Faith,” said the boy, after consulting with his fellows, “we shall tell him if he comes, but we will not search after him!”

III.—Aucassin Goes in Quest of Nicolette

Nicolette took leave of the herd-boys, and went into the forest down a green way that led to a place where seven paths met. Close at hand was a deep thicket, and there Nicolette built a lodge of green boughs, and covered it with oak-leaves and lily-flowers, and made it sweet and pleasant, both inside and out. And she stayed in this lodge to see what Aucassin would do.

Page 55

In the meantime, the cry went through all the country that Nicolette was lost. Some said that she had gone away; others that Count Garin had put her to death. If any man had joy in the news, that man was not Aucassin. His father let him out of prison, and summoned all the knights and ladies of the land to a great feast that he made to comfort his young son. But when the revelry was at its height, there was Aucassin leaning despondently from a gallery, sorrowful and utterly downcast. And an old knight saw him, and came to him.

“Aucassin,” he said, “there was a time when I, too, was sick with the sickness that you have. If you will trust me, I will give you some good counsel.”

“Gramercy,” answered Aucassin. “Good counsel is indeed a precious thing.”

“Mount your horse and ride into the forest,” said the old knight. “You will see the flowers and the sweet herbs, and hear the birds singing. And, perchance, you may also hear a word that will take away your sickness.”

“Gramercy,” said Aucassin. “That is what I will do.”

He stole out of the hall, and went to the stable, and bridled and saddled his horse, and rode swiftly out into the forest. By the fountain he found the herd-boys. They had spread a cloak out on the grass, and were eating their bread and making merry.

Jolly herd-boys, every one:
Martin, Emery, and John,
Aubrey, Oliver, and Matt
By the fountain-side they sat.
“Here,” said John, “comes Aucassin,
Son of our good Count Garin.
Faith, he is a handsome boy!
Let us wish him luck and joy.”
“And the girl with yellow hair
Wandering in the forest there,”
Aubrey said. “She gave us more
Gold than we have seen before.
Say, what shall we go and buy?”
“Cakes!” said greedy Emery.
“Flutes and bagpipes!” Johnny said.
“No,” cried Martin; “knives instead!
Knives and swords! Then we can go
Out to war and fight the foe.”

“Sweet boys,” said Aucassin, as he rode up to them, “sing again the song that you were singing just now, I pray you.”

“We will not,” said Aubrey, who had a readier tongue than the others.

“Do you not know me, then?” said Aucassin.

“Yes,” said Aubrey. “You are our young lord, Aucassin. But we are not your men, but the count’s.”

“Sweet boys, sing it again, I pray you,” said Aucassin.

“God’s heart!” cried Aubrey. “Why should I sing for you, if I do not want to? There is no man in this country—save Count Garin—that dare drive my cattle from his fields and corn-lands, if I put them there. He would lose his eyes for it, no matter how rich he were. So, now, why should I sing for you, if I do not want to?”

“In the name of God,” said Aucassin, “take these ten sous, and sing it!”

“Sir, I will take your money,” said Aubrey, “but I will not sing you anything. Still, if you like, I will tell you something.”

Page 56

“By God,” said Aucassin, “something is better than nothing!”

“Sir,” said Aubrey, then, “we were eating our bread by this fountain, between prime and tierce, and a maid came by—the loveliest thing in all the world. She lighted up the forest with her beauty; so we thought she was a fairy woman. But she gave us some money; and we promised that if you came by we would tell you to go hunting in the forest. In there is a beast of marvellous value. If you took it you would not sell one of its limbs for many marks of gold, for it has a medicine that will cure your sickness. Now I have told you all.”

“And you have told me enough, sweet boy,” said Aucassin. “Farewell! God give me good hunting!”

And, as he spurred his horse into the forest, Aucassin sang right joyously:

Track of boar and slot of deer,
Neither do I follow here.
Nicolette I hotly chase
Down the winding, woodland ways—
Thy white body, thy blue eyes,
Thy sweet smiles and low replies
God in heaven give me grace,
Once to meet thee face to face;
Once to meet as we have met,
Nicolette—oh, Nicolette!

IV.—Love in the Forest

Furiously did his horse bear him on through the thorns and briars that tore his clothes and scratched his body, so that you could have followed the track of his blood on the grass. But neither hurt nor pain did he feel, for he thought only of Nicolette. All day he sought for her in the forest, and when evening drew on, he began to weep because he had not found her. Night fell, but still he rode on; and he came at last to the place where the seven roads met, and there he saw the lodge of green boughs and lily-flowers which Nicolette had made.

“Ah, heaven,” said Aucassin, “here Nicolette has been, and she has made this lodge with her own fair hands! For the sweetness of it, and for love of her, I will sleep here to-night.”

As he sat in the lodge, Aucassin saw the evening star shining through a gap in the boughs, and he sang:

Star of eve! Oh, star of love,
Gleaming in the sky above!
Nicolette, the bright of brow,
Dwells with thee in heaven now.
God has set her in the skies
To delight my longing eyes;
And her clear and yellow hair
Shines upon the darkness there.
Oh! my lady, would that I
Swiftly up to thee could fly.
Meet thee, greet thee, kiss thee, fold thee
To my aching heart, and hold thee.
Here, without thee, nothing worth
Can I find upon the earth.

When Nicolette heard Aucassin singing, she came into the bower, and threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. Aucassin then set his sweet love upon his horse, and mounted behind her; and with all haste they rode out from the forest and came to the seashore.

There Aucassin saw a ship sailing upon the sea, and he beckoned to it; and the sailors took him and Nicolette on board, and they sailed to the land of Torelore. And the King of Torelore welcomed them courteously; and for two whole years they lived in great delight in his beautiful castle by the sea. But one night the castle was suddenly stormed by the Saracens; and Aucassin was bound hand and foot and thrown into a ship, and Nicolette into another.

Page 57

The ship that carried Aucassin was wrecked in a great storm, and it drifted over the sea to Beaucaire. The people that ran to break up the wreck found their young lord, and made great joy over his return. For his father was dead, and he was now Count Aucassin. The people led him to the castle, and did homage to him, and he held all his lands in peace. But little delight had Aucassin in his wealth and power and kingdom.

Though he lived in joy and ease,
And his kingdom was at peace,
Aucassin did so regret
His sweet lady, Nicolette,
That he would have liefer died
In the battle by her side.
“Ah, my Nicolette,” he said,
“Are you living, are you dead?
All my kingdom I would give
For the news that still you live.
For the joy of finding you
Would I search the whole world through,
Did I think you living yet,
Nicolette—my Nicolette!”

V.—Nicolette’s Love Song

In the meantime, the Saracens took Nicolette to their great city of Carthage; and because she was lovely and seemed of noble birth, they led her to their king. And when Nicolette saw the King of Carthage, she knew him again; and he, also, knew her. For she was his daughter who had been carried off in her young days by the Christians. Her father held a great feast in honour of Nicolette, and would have married her to a mighty king of Paynim. But Nicolette had no mind to marry anyone but Aucassin, and she devised how she might get news of her lover. One night she smeared her face with a brown ointment, and dressed herself in minstrel’s clothes, and took a viol, and stole out of her father’s palace to the seashore. There she found a ship that was bound for Provence, and she sailed in it to Beaucaire. She took her viol, and went playing through the town, and came to the castle. Aucassin was sitting on the castle steps with his proud barons and brave knights around him, gazing sorrowfully at the sweet flowers, and listening to the singing of the birds.

“Shall I sing you a new song, sire?” said Nicolette.

“Yes, fair friend,” said Aucassin; “if it be a merry one, for I am very sad.”

“If you like it,” said Nicolette, “you will find it merry enough.”

She drew the bow across her viol, and made sweet music, and then she sung:

Once a lover met a maid
Wandering in a forest glade,
Where she had a pretty house
Framed with flowers and leafy boughs.
Maid and lover merrily
Sailed away across the sea,
To a castle by the strand
Of a strange and pleasant land.
There they lived in great delight
Till the Saracens by night
Stormed the keep, and took the maid,
With the captives of their raid.
Back to Carthage they returned,
And the maiden sadly mourned.
But they did not make of her

Page 58

Paramour or prisoner.
For the King of Carthage said,
When he saw the fair young maid:
“Daughter!” and the maid replied:
“Father!” And they laughed and cried.
For she had been stolen when
She was young by Christian men.
And the captain of Beaucaire
Bought her as a slave-girl there.
Once her lover loved her well
Now, alas! he cannot tell
Who she is. Does he forget—
Aucassin—his Nicolette?

Aucassin leaped down the castle steps, and took his lady in his arms. Then she went to the house of her godfather, the captain of the town, and washed all the brownness from her face, and clad herself in robes of rich silk. And, early on the morrow, Count Aucassin wedded her, and made her Lady of Beaucaire; and they had great joy of one another. And here my song-story ends. I know no more.

* * * * *

BERTHOLD AUERBACH

On the Height

Berthold Auerbach, a German poet and author of Jewish descent, was born at Nordstetten, in Wuertemberg, on February 28, 1812. On the completion of his studies at the universities of Tuebingen, Munich and Heidelberg he immediately devoted himself to literature. His first publication dealt with “Judaism and Recent Literature,” and was to be followed by a series of novels taken from Jewish history. Of this intended series he actually published, with considerable success, “Spinoza” and “Poet and Merchant.” But real fame and popularity came to him when he began to occupy himself with the life of the general people which forms the subject of his best-known works. In these later books, of which “On the Height” is perhaps the most characteristic and certainly the most famous, he revealed an unrivalled insight into the soul of the Southern German country folk, and especially of the peasants of the Black Forest and the Bavarian Alps. His descriptions are remarkable for their fresh realism, graceful style and humour. In addition to these qualities, his last books are marked by great subtlety of psychological

analysis. “On the Height” was first published at Stuttgart in 1861, and has been translated into several languages. Auerbach died at Cannes on February 8, 1882, when all Germany was preparing to celebrate his 70th birthday.

I.—A Peasant Nurse in a Royal Palace

Walpurga was as in a dream. It had all happened so quickly! Only a fortnight ago, on the walk home from Sunday Mass at the village church, her Hansei had to make a hay bed for her on a stone-heap by the roadside. She had thought she could not get back to the cottage in time, but she recovered after a while and bravely walked home. Her mother was with her in the hour of suffering, as she had been with her through all the joys and sorrows of her simple life. Then came the supreme joy of the awakening,

Page 59

with a new life by her side, a baby-girl groping helplessly for the mother's breast. Then —was it only yesterday?—when she was waiting for the return of the christening party, a carriage drove up with the village doctor and an elegant stranger. There was much beating about the bush, and then it came out like a thunderbolt. The stranger was a great doctor from the capital, entrusted with the mission to find in the mountains an honest, comely peasant woman, and married she must be, to act as wet-nurse for the expected crown prince or princess.

Then Hansei came home with the merry party—there was much storming and angry refusal; but finally the practical sense of the peasant folk prevailed. It was, after all, only for a year, and it would mean comfort and wealth, instead of hunger and grinding poverty. And scarcely had their consent been wrung from them, when shouting and cheering announced the great event of the crown prince's birth. Then came that strange, long drive over hill and dale, through the dark night; and now, in the Royal Palace, she tried to collect herself, to grasp the meaning of all that splendour, the unintelligible ceremonious talk and bearing of those about her. She was to be taken at once to see the queen and her precious charge.

Walpurga was full of happiness when she left the queen's bedroom. Touched by the comely young peasant-woman's naive and familiar kindliness, the queen, who seemed to her beautiful as an angel, had kissed her, and, on noticing a tear, had said: "Don't cry, Walpuga! You are a mother, too, like myself!" The little prince took to his nurse without much trouble, and she soon became accustomed to her new life, although her thoughts often dwelt longingly on her native mountains, her own child and mother and husband. How they would miss her! She knew her Hansei was a good man at heart, but not particularly shrewd, and easily gulled or led astray.

Meanwhile, her high spirits, her artless bluntness, the quaint superstitions of the mountain child, gained her the goodwill and approval of the king and queen, of Dr. Gunther, the court physician, of the whole royal household, and, above all, of the lady-in-waiting, Countess Irma Wildenort.

II.—The Love Affairs of a King

Countess Irma's letters to Emmy, her only convent friend, contained little of idle gossip and of things that had happened. They had no continuity. They were introspective, and took the form of a diary taken up at odd moments and left again to be continued, sometimes the following day, sometimes after a week. They revealed intellectual development far in advance of her years, and clear perception of character.

"The queen lives in an exclusive world of sentiment and would like to raise everybody to her exalted mood—liana-like, in the morning-glow and evening-glow of sentiment, never

in white daylight. She is most gracious towards me, but we feel it instinctively—there is something in her and in me that does not harmonise....

Page 60

“Here all of them think me boundlessly naive, because I have the courage to think for myself....

“The king loves reserve, but also gay freeness. The queen is too serious—eternal organ sound; but you cannot dance to an organ, and we are young and love to dance.

“A peasant woman from the mountains is nurse to the crown prince. I was with her at the king’s request. I stood by the cot when the king arrived. He said to me gently: ’It is true, an angel stands by the child’s cradle.’ He laid his hand upon mine, which rested on the rail of the cot. The king went. And just imagine what occurred. The nurse, a fresh, merry person with blue eyes, buxom and massive, a perfect peasant beauty, to whom I showed friendliness, so as to cheer her up and save her from feeling homesick, the nurse tells me in bald words: ’You are an adulteress! You have exchanged loving glances with the king!’

“Emmy! How you were right in telling me that I idealise the people, and that they are as corrupt as the great world, and, moreover, without the curb of culture.

“No! she is a good, intelligent woman. She begged my pardon for her impertinence; I remain friendly towards her. Yes, I will.”

Irma’s devotion to her king had something of hero-worship. And the king, who loved his wife sincerely, but was, and wanted to be, of a heroic nature, and who was averse to all that savoured of self-torment and sentimentality, was attracted by Countess Irma’s intellectual freedom and *esprit*. He felt in her a kindred spirit. Her company was stimulating; it could not affect the even tenour of his conjugal love. But the queen, in her sentimental exultation, sought ever for new “documents” to demonstrate the depth of her affection. And now she wanted to give the supreme proof by renouncing her Lutheran faith to enter into a yet closer union with her Catholic husband. To the king this sacrifice seemed not only sentimentally weak, but politically unwise. He received the confidence coldly, and begged her to reconsider the matter. He sent Dr. Gunther, who, in spite of his democratic tendencies, was held in high esteem by the king, and had great influence over the queen, to exercise his persuasive powers—with no result.

Where wisdom and experience had failed, the voice of Nature, speaking out of Walpurga’s childish chatter, succeeded. Walpurga told the queen of her father—how one day on the lake, on hearing the choral singing of the peasants, he had said: “Now I know how the Almighty feels up there in Heaven! All the Churches, ours, and the Lutheran, and the Jewish, and the Turkish, they are all voices in the song. Each sings as he knows, and yet it sounds well together up there.” The queen was radiant next day, when she informed her spouse that she had the courage of her own inconsistency and that she had resolved to do his will. The sacrifice was received with coolness. Was it that her noble act was construed as further evidence of weakness?

Page 61

The king had left town for some distant watering-place, and had requested Irma to write to him at times. Knowing her love of flowers, he had given orders for a fresh bouquet to be placed every day in her room, and, perhaps to conceal the favour, in the rooms of two other ladies of the court. Irma considered both the thought and the expedient unworthy of her hero, and resolved not to write to him. She spent much of her time at the studio of a professor of the academy, who not only modelled a bust of her for a figure of Victory to be placed on the new arsenal, but gave her instruction in his art. In spite of this new occupation, she found herself in a state of feverish excitement, which became almost unbearable when the queen showed her a passage in a letter just received from the king. "Please make Countess Irma send me regular reports about our son. Remember me to the dear fourth leaf of our clover-leaf."

She was indignant at this unworthy attempt at forcing her to write. Was Walpurga right after all? Were lovers' glances to be exchanged over the child's cradle? She longed for solitude and peace. On the way to her room she had to stop to think where she was. A gallop might cool her feverish head. She ordered her horse to be saddled, but had scarcely changed into her riding-habit when a letter was handed to her, which was unsealed with trembling fingers. It was a simply worded invitation from her father, who wished to see her again after her long absence at court. Here was salvation, balm for her aching heart! She gave a few orders, then hurried to the queen's apartments to obtain leave of absence; and, accompanied by her maid, sped to her paternal home the same evening as fast as the horses would carry her.

The days passed quickly at the manor house, where Irma, for the first time, gained an insight into the noble mind and firm character of her father. In his many soothing talks Count Eberhard told her of his regrets at having been forced by circumstances—her mother's death before Irma had reached the age of three, and his inability to give her a proper education in his mountain retreat—to send her first to her aunt, then to the convent, and thus neglecting his duties as father. A word from him would have decided her to remain under his roof, but the old philosopher held that each intelligent being must work out its own destiny, and would not influence her decision. His slighting remarks about the monarchic system, about the impossibility of the king, with all his noble intentions, being able to see the world as it is, since everybody approaches him in pleasing costume, struck the final jarring note and destroyed the complete understanding between father and daughter. A half jocular joint letter from the king and his *entourage*, in which the signatories expressed in exaggerated terms their longing for her presence at court, decided her to return.

Page 62

The carriage having been sent to the valley in advance, Count Eberhard walked down with Irma, until they came to the apple-tree which he had planted on the day of his daughter's birth. He stopped, and picked up a fallen apple. "Let us part here," he said. "Take this fruit from your native soil. The apple has left the tree because it has ripened; because the tree cannot give any more to it. So man leaves home and family. But man is more than the fruit of a tree. Come, my child, I hold your dear head; don't weep—or weep! May you never weep for yourself, and only for others! Remain faithful to yourself! I would give you all my thoughts; remember but the one: Yield only to such pleasures as will be pleasure in recollection. Take this kiss. You kiss passionately. May you never give a kiss that does not leave your soul as pure and full as it is now. Farewell!"

III.—Walpurga Returns Home

Twelve months had passed since Walpurga's arrival at court. Her trunks were now packed; she had given a last kiss to the boy prince; and now she asked her Hansei, who had brought a carriage from the village to take her home, to wait in the corridor while she took leave from Countess Irma. She found Irma still in her bed, very pale, with her hair in loose strains on the pillow.

"I wanted to give you a souvenir," said Irma, "but I think money will be best for you. Look on the table, and take it all. I don't want any of it. Take it, and don't be afraid; it is real money, won honestly at the tables. I always win, always!... Take your kerchief and wrap it up." The room was so dusky that Walpurga looked around in superstitious fear. The money might be evil; she quickly made the sign of the Cross over it, and put it into her ample pocket. "And now, farewell," said Irma. "Be happy. You are happier than any of us. If ever I don't know where to go, I shall come to you. You'll have me, won't you? Now go—go! I must sleep. And don't forget me, Walpurga. Don't thank me, don't speak!"

"Oh, please let me speak, just one word! We both can't know which of us will die, and then it would be too late. I don't know what's the matter with you. You are not well, and you may get worse. You often have cold hands and hot cheeks. I wronged you that day, soon after I arrived. I'll never think bad of you again, no one shall say evil of you; but, please, get away from the castle! Go home, to——"

"Enough," exclaimed Irma, thrusting forth her hands as though Walpurga's words were stones thrown at her. "Farewell; and don't forget me." She held out her hand for Walpurga to kiss; it was hot and feverish. Walpurga went. The parrot in the ante-room screamed: "Good-bye, Irma." Walpurga was frightened, and ran away as though she were chased.

Page 63

Walpurga's homecoming was not pleasure unalloyed. She did not miss the luxuries to which she had become accustomed. She rather relished the hard, manual labour, to which she applied herself with full energy. But her baby was a stranger to her, cried when she wished to take her up, and became only gradually accustomed to her. Her faculties had been sharpened, too; she felt a certain shyness in her husband, noticed his weaknesses, and was deeply hurt when, on the second evening after her return, he went to the inn, "so that people should not say he was under her thumb." Then, Hansei, coaxed by the shrewd innkeeper, had set his heart upon acquiring the inn, now that they had "wealth," and upon thus becoming the most important man in the village. But with much tact and cleverness Walpurga made him give up the plan, thereby arousing the innkeeper's hostility, which became rampant when the reunited couple did not appear at a kind of fete which he gave, ostensibly in their honour, but really to benefit by the proceeds. By this slight the esteem and admiration of the whole village were turned to ill-will and spite.

Hansei and Walpurga were almost boycotted; but their isolation made them draw closer together, work harder, and enjoy to the fullest the harmony of their domestic life. Moreover, the freehold farmer, Grubersepp, who was a personage in the district, and had never before deigned to take much notice of Hansei, now called at the cottage and offered his advice on many questions. When on a Sunday the village doctor and the priest were seen to visit the cottage, opinion began to veer around once more in the good people's favour.

It was Walpurga's old uncle Peter, a poor pitch-burner, who was known in the district as the "pitch-mannikin," who brought the first news that the freehold farm, where Walpurga's mother had in her young days served as a maid, was for sale at a very low price for ready money. It was six hours from the lake, in the mountains—splendid soil, fine forest, everything perfect. Hansei decided to have a look at it, and Grubersepp went with him to value it. The uncle's description was found to be highly coloured; but after some bargaining the purchase was effected, and soon the news was bruited about the village that Hansei had paid "in clinking golden coin."

The whole village, with a brass band, was assembled on the shore when Hansei and Walpurga, with their family and worldly possessions, embarked to cross the lake on the first stage of their "flitting." All vexations were forgotten in the hearty send-off, and as the boat glided across the silent lake it was followed by music, cheering, jodling, and the booming of mortars.

They approached the opposite shore and Hansei pointed out the figure of Uncle Peter waiting for them with the cart and the furniture, when Walpurga suddenly ceased rowing, and gave a startled cry.

“Heavens! What’s that? I could swear, when I was singing I thought if only my good Countess Irma could see us here together, how happy she would be. And just now it seemed to me as though——”

Page 64

“Come on, let’s land,” said Hansei.

On the shore a figure in a fluttering garment was running up and down. It suddenly collapsed when the wind carried a full sound of music across the lake. Then it rose again, and vanished in the reeds.

“Have you seen nothing?” asked Walpurga.

“Rather! If it were not broad daylight, and if it were not superstition, I should think it was the mermaid, herself.”

The boat at last touched the shore. Walpurga was the first to jump out. She hurried to the reed-bank, away from her people, and there, behind the willows, the apparition fell on her neck and broke down.

IV.—The Countess Irma’s Atonement

Dr. Gunther received the first telegraphic news of his friend, Count Eberhard, having lost the power of speech through a stroke of paralysis. He was to break the news to Irma. For some time she had felt, through the physician’s reserve and sympathetic kindness, that he could read her secret. And now she realised that sudden knowledge of her disgrace alone could have struck down her father, whose vigorous constitution had always kept illness at arm’s length.

They arrived at the manor house before midnight, and were shown into the sufferer’s room. Count Eberhard’s eyelids moved quickly when he recognised Dr. Gunther’s voice, and he tried to extend his hand towards his friend, but it fell heavily on the coverlet. Dr. Gunther seized it and held it in a firm grasp. Irma knelt down before the bed, and her father’s trembling hand felt over her face, and was wetted by her tears. Then he quickly withdrew it, as though he had touched a poisonous animal; he turned away his face and pressed his forehead against the wall. Now he turned round again, and with a gentle movement indicated that he wished her to leave the room.

She was with him again next day. He tried painfully to say something to her, to make her understand by signs—she could not understand. He bit upon his lips and tried to sit up. His face was changed—it assumed a strange colour, a strange expression. Irma saw with a shudder what was happening. She knelt down and laid her cheek upon his hand. He withdrew the hand. With supreme effort he wrote a word, a short word, with his finger upon her forhead. She saw, she heard, she read it—in the air, on her forehead, on her brain, in her soul—she gave a scream, and fell senseless to the ground. Dr. Gunther entered quickly, stepped over Irma, closed his friend’s eyes, and all was silence.

For many hours Irma was in her room, shut in with her despair, her remorse. No one could gain admission. She thought furiously, she raved, and then fell into a troubled sleep. When she awake her resolution was made. She asked for light and writing material, and wrote: "My queen,— With death I atone for my guilt. Forgive and forget! IRMA." On the envelope she wrote: "To be handed to the queen herself by Dr. Gunther." Then she took another sheet, and wrote:

Page 65

“My friend,—For the last time I speak to you. We have gone astray—terribly. The atonement is mine. You belong to her and to the people. Your atonement is in life; mine in death. Be calm, be one with the law that ties you to her and to the people. You have denied both and I have aided you. Be true again to yourself! This is my dying word, and I die willingly, if you but listen. Listen to this voice, and do not forget it! But forget her who speaks to you. I will not be remembered.”

She sealed the letters, left them in her writing-case, and asked for her horse to be saddled. She rode out, followed by a groom, whom, some distance from home, she sent back on some pretext. When he was out of sight, she galloped off at full speed, dismounted, struck her horse with the whip to make it run away, and lost herself in the wood in the direction of the lake.

V.—A Court Scandal

Irma’s torn boots were found on a rock by the lake, her hat floating on the waters. Although her body could not be recovered, there was no doubt that the countess had committed suicide. Her father’s death must have bereft her of reason.

When the news was first brought to the king he trembled violently, and had to seize the back of a chair for support. Then he requested to be left alone, and with dim eyes he read Irma’s farewell message. On the impulse of the moment, he wanted to send the queen the last words of his friend; he wanted to write under them, to pour out his whole heart, his whole repentance. He decided not to act hastily. Even the heaviest task must be fulfilled without loss of dignity. A chase had been arranged for the morning. The hunting-party were waiting in the courtyard. With an effort he pulled himself together, descended with firm step, and entered his carriage, returning smilingly the salutations of his guests.

The queen was scarcely less shaken by the terrible news, which was gently broken to her by Dr. Gunther. Her heart was filled with profound pity for the unfortunate child, and she gave vent to her grief in sobs and touching lamentations. Dr. Gunther tried to comfort her. “She is not gone without farewell. She has left this letter for your majesty—surely a letter that will bring balm in this terrible hour. Even to the last she proved her loving nature.”

The queen seized the letter, read it, and turned deathly pale, then burning red. When she found words, she exclaimed: “And she has kissed my child, and he has kissed his child! They talk of the sublime, and their words do not cut their tongues! Everything is soiled! And he dared say to me: A prince has no private actions. His doings and his neglects set the example! Fie! Everything is soiled, everything filthy! Everything!”

She became unconscious. Dr. Gunther sprinkled her forehead with eau-de-cologne, and had her taken to bed. He sat by the bedside for some time, until she opened her

eyes, thanked him, and expressed her desire to sleep. He spoke some soothing words, and retired, leaving instructions with the lady of the bed-chamber in the ante-room.

Page 66

Some days passed before the king sought his wife's forgiveness. The interview was brief and decisive. The king spoke nobly, manly and sincerely; the queen was bitter, sharp and irreconcilable. Her duty as a queen demanded that the rift should not appear in public; her injured pride as a woman refused to admit more. He demanded to know whether her friend and adviser, Dr. Gunther, knew of her decision. She replied he was too noble to let thoughts of anger or revenge enter his great heart.

"This great being can be made small!"

"You will not rob me of my only friend?"

"Your only friend? I do not know this title. To my knowledge there is no such office at court. Be what you will! Be alone and seek for support in yourself."

He stripped the wedding-ring from his hand, placed it on the table, and moved towards the door. He hesitated a moment—will she call him back? She looked after him—will he turn around? The moment passed. The door closed.

In the evening a court was held, and the queen appeared, pale, but smiling, on her husband's arm. They spoke confidentially, and nobody noticed the missing ring.

Next day the journals announced that the king's physician had tendered his resignation.

And court gossip had it that Walpurga had bought a farm with the gold she had earned as intermediary between the king and the unfortunate Countess Wildenort.

VI.—Forgiving and Forgiven

Irma had passed four years at Hansei's mountain farm. Her secret had been well kept. Even Hansei, who had promised his wife never to ask any questions about their permanent guest, was in complete ignorance about her identity. Irma, who, after having tried her hand at various domestic occupations, had taken up wood-carving with considerable success, enabling her to discharge at least the material part of her debt of gratitude, was generally held to be a half-witted relation of Walpurga's.

Her despair and remorse had gradually given way to resigned sadness. Self-communion had to make up for lack of intellectual intercourse, and sharpened her perception. In her diary she entered the profound thoughts suggested to her active intelligence by her observation of events in themselves insignificant, and analysed with cool aloofness the working of her mind. She never entertained the thought of finding a refuge in the convent—her atonement was to be wrought, not by compulsion, but by free will. And so the weeks passed, and the months, and the years.

They had all helped in the building of a wooden cowherd's hut on the height of the mountain, a few hours' climb from the farm. Now Irma felt the need for more complete

solitude, away even from her simple friends. Up there, on the height, she would find peace and complete her atonement. And so it was decided to let her have her way, and to let her stay in the hut, with Peter and his daughter.

Page 67

The first two days and nights a cloud lingered around them, forming a veil of dense fog; but on the third day Irma was awakened by the sun and stepped out to see the awakening of nature. The grandeur, the immensity of it all, the pure-scented air, the voices of the birds, filled her heart with gladness. A sunray struck her forehead—the forehead was pure, she felt it.

Irma now gave up her wood-carving; she had to be urged to eat, and only took her food to please the kind old "pitch-mannikin." Immovably she would lie for hours in her favorite meadow, and think and breathe the pure air. Her life was slowly ebbing from her. A sudden vision of the king with his companions of the chase galloping past her in pursuit of a stag gave her the final shock. She cowered on the ground. She bit into the moss, scraped the earth with her hands—she feared to scream aloud. She staggered back to the hut, shaken by fever, and threw herself upon her bed. Then she asked Peter for some paper. She had heard that Dr. Gunther was living with his family at the summer resort at the foot of the mountain. She wrote with shaking hand: "Eberhard's daughter calls Dr. Gunther," and sent Peter to speed down with the message.

In the little town all was excitement and commotion owing to the sojourn of the royal court. Dr. Gunther, now in favour again, was with the king when the message arrived. He read the note and was left speechless with amazement. Then he collected his wits, and hurried with Peter to the dying penitent's bedside. Irma was sleeping, and he sat by her side until she awoke. She saw Gunther—pleasure illumined her face, and she held out both hands towards him. He took them, and she pressed her feverish lips upon his hands.

Walpurga, to whom the news of Irma's impending end had been brought, took a quick resolution. She hurried to the little town to seek her queen. The matter was not easy, for suspicion rested heavily upon her; but her determination removed all obstacles, and the queen, profoundly moved by Walpurga's jerky explanation and passionate appeal, and stirred to the very depths of her soul by Irma's heroism, demanded to be led at once to her. She was followed in a short while by the king, to whom the whole incident had been reported.

Gunther sat for hours by Irma's bedside, listening to her heavy breathing. The door flew open and the queen appeared.

"At last, you have come!" breathed Irma, raising herself and kneeling in her bed. Then, with a heart-breaking voice, she exclaimed: "Forgive, forgive!"

"Forgive me, Irma, my sister!" sobbed the queen, and took her in her arms and kissed her. A smile spread over Irma's face; then with a cry of pain she fell back dead.

When the king arrived he found his wife kneeling before the bed. He quietly knelt down by her side. The queen arose, placed her hand upon his head. "Kurt," she said,

“forgive me, as I have forgiven you.” Then she spread a white kerchief over the dead, and they left the hut. They walked hand in hand through the wood, until they reached the road, where carriages were waiting.

Page 68

During the night the “pitch-mannikin” dug a grave on the spot where Irma had loved to lie in the sun. She was buried there early next morning. Hansei and Peter and Dr. Gunther carried the corpse, and Walpurga with her child formed the procession.

* * * * *

JANE AUSTEN

Sense and Sensibility

Jane Austen, daughter of the rector of Steventon, in North Hampshire, England, was born there on December 16, 1775, and received her education from her father, a former Fellow of St. John’s College, Oxford. Her life was spent in the country or in country towns, chiefly at the village of Chawton, near Winchester. She died, unmarried, at Winchester on July 18, 1817, and was buried in the cathedral. The novels of Jane Austen may be divided into two groups. The first three—“Sense and Sensibility,” “Pride and Prejudice,” and “Northanger Abbey”—were all written, in first draft, at any rate, between 1792 and 1798. These are the novels composed during the author’s residence at Steventon, which she left in 1801. There succeeded an interval of practically fourteen years (1798-1812), during which time the novelist let her mind lie absolutely fallow. As a natural consequence of the comparatively secluded life which Jane Austen led, the society with which she deals in her novels is a rather restricted one. It is the world of the country gentleman and of the upper professional class. From a very early age Jane Austen had a taste for writing tales, and the first draft of “Sense and Sensibility “—then called “Elinor and Marianne”—was composed as early as 1792. The book was recast under its present title between 1797 and 1798, and again revised prior to its publication in 1811. In addition to the six novels on which her fame is based—all of which were issued anonymously—Jane Austen has to her credit some agreeable “Letters,” a fragment of a story called “The Watsons,” and a sort of novelette which bears the name of “Lady Susan.”

I.—The Dashwoods of Norland Park

Mr. Henry Dashwood, of Norland Park, Sussex, died leaving his widow and his three daughters, Elinor, Marianne and Margaret, to the generosity of Mr. John Dashwood, his son by his first wife and the heir to his estate. Mr. John, who, apart from the family inheritance, had received one fortune from his mother and another with his wife, was at first disposed to increase the portions of his sisters by giving them a thousand pounds apiece; but under the persuasion of his wife he finally resolved that it would be absolutely unnecessary, if not highly indecorous, to do more for his father’s widow and children than such kind of neighbourly acts as looking out for a comfortable small house for them, helping them to remove their things, and sending them presents of fish and game whenever they were in season.

Page 69

Taking account of this resolve, as expressed in Mr. John Dashwood's frequent talk of the increasing expenses of housekeeping, and of the perpetual demands made upon his purse, and exasperated, too, by the manifest disapprobation with which Mrs. John Dashwood looked upon the growing attachment between her own brother, Edward Ferrars, and Elinor, Mrs. Henry Dashwood and her daughters left their old home with some abruptness and went to live in Devonshire, where their old friend, Sir John Middleton, of Barton Park, had provided them with a cottage close to his own place.

Elinor, the eldest of the daughters, possessed a strength of understanding and coolness of judgment which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence. She had an excellent heart. Her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them. It was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught. Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever, but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting; she was everything but prudent. The resemblance between her and her mother was strikingly great, and her excess of sensibility, which Elinor saw with concern, was by Mrs. Dashwood valued and cherished.

Margaret, the other sister, was good-humoured; but she had already imbibed a good deal of Marianne's romance, without having much of her sense, and, at thirteen, she did not bid fair to equal her sisters at a more advanced period of life.

But whatever the virtues or failings of the Dashwood ladies, their society was very welcome at Barton Park. Sir John Middleton was a good-looking man about forty, thoroughly good-humoured in manner and countenance, friendly and kind-hearted in disposition, who delighted in collecting about him more young people than his house would hold.

Lady Middleton was a handsome woman of six-and-twenty, well-bred, and graceful in address, but deficient in frankness, warmth, or anything to say for herself. She piqued herself upon the elegance of her table appointments and of all her domestic arrangements; and this kind of vanity it was that constituted her greatest enjoyment in any of their parties. Sir John was a sportsman; Lady Middleton a mother. He hunted and shot, and she humoured her children; and these were their only resources. Continual engagements at home and abroad, however, supplied all the deficiencies of nature and education—supported the good spirits of Sir John, and gave exercise to the good-breeding of his wife.

Page 70

Mrs. Jennings, Lady Middleton's mother, who formed one of the party on the first occasion of the Dashwoods dining at Barton Park, was a good-humoured, fat, elderly woman, who talked a good deal, and seemed very happy, and rather vulgar. She was full of jokes and laughter, and before dinner was over had said many witty things on the subject of lovers and husbands, hoped they had not left their hearts behind them in Sussex, and pretended to see them blush whether they did or not. In fact, this lady was a born match-maker; and she at once proceeded, by hints here and raillery there, to promote a match between Marianne, aged seventeen, and Colonel Brandon, a grave but sensible bachelor on the wrong side of thirty-five. Marianne, however, scorned and laughed at the idea, being reasonable enough to allow that a man of five-and-thirty might well have outlived all acuteness of feeling and every exquisite power of enjoyment; and having met with an accident which led to her being carried home by a handsome and vivacious young gentleman called Willoughby, who had a seat called Combe Magna in Somersetshire, she rapidly developed a liking for his society, and as quickly discovered that in regard to music, to dancing, and to books, their tastes were strikingly alike.

"Well, Marianne," said Elinor, after his first visit, "for one morning I think you have done pretty well. You have already ascertained Mr. Willoughby's opinion in almost every matter of importance. You know what to think of Cowper and Scott; you are aware of his estimating their beauties as he ought; and you have received every assurance of his admiring Pope no more than is proper. But how is your acquaintance to be long supported under such extraordinary dispatch of every subject for discourse? You will soon have exhausted each favourite topic. Another meeting will suffice to explain his sentiments on picturesque beauty and second marriages, and then you can have nothing further to ask."

To this Marianne replied, "Is this fair? Is this just? Are my ideas so scanty? But I see what you mean. I have been too much at my ease—too happy, too frank. I have erred against every commonplace notion of decorum. I have been open and sincere where I ought to have been reserved, spiritless, dull and deceitful. Had I talked only of the weather and the roads, and had I spoken only once in ten minutes, this reproach would have been spared."

From which it will be gathered that Marianne began now to perceive that that desperation which had seized her at sixteen-and-a-half of ever seeing a man who could satisfy her ideas of perfection had been somewhat rash and quite unjustifiable.

II.—Marianne Dashwood in Love

Page 71

Willoughby's society soon became Marianne's most exquisite enjoyment. The mutual attachment was obvious—amusingly obvious. They read, they talked, they sang, they danced, they drove together, and they even agreed in depreciating Colonel Brandon as "the kind of man whom everybody spoke well of and nobody cared about; whom all were delighted to see, and nobody remembered to talk to." Then, after cutting off a lock of Marianne's hair, after offering her a horse, and after showing her over the house which would eventually be his on the death of Mrs. Smith, the elderly relative on whom he was partially dependent, the young lover suddenly took leave of the family, having said not a word to Mrs. Dashwood of an engagement, and having offered no other explanation of his hasty departure than the flimsy pretext of being sent by his relative on business to London.

Willoughby left for London a few days after Colonel Brandon had also been unexpectedly summoned to the same place, and he expressed no hope of any rapid return into Devonshire. On such an occasion Marianne would have thought herself very inexcusable had she not given way to all her feelings; and for some days she courted misery and indulged in tears, in solitude, and in sleeplessness. But she was soon set a better example by Elinor, who did her utmost to remain cheerful under the depression of heart caused by a visit paid to the family about this same time by Edward Ferrars. He was obviously uneasy, low-spirited and reserved, said he had already been a fortnight in Devonshire stopping with some friends at Plymouth, and, after a week's stay with the Dashwoods, left them, in spite of their wishes and his own, and without any restraint on his time. But Elinor and Marianne were not long allowed leisure to be miserable. Sir John's and Mrs. Jennings' active zeal in the cause of society soon procured them some other new acquaintance to see and observe. One of these couples was Lady Middleton's brother-in-law and younger sister, Mr. and Mrs. Palmer. It was impossible for anyone to be more thoroughly good-natured or more determined to be happy than Mrs. Palmer. The studied indifference, insolence, and discontent of her husband gave her no pain, and when he scolded or abused her, she was highly diverted. "Mr. Palmer is so droll," she used to say in a whisper to Elinor; "he is always out of humour." One day, at dinner, his wife said to him, with her usual laugh, "My love, you contradict everybody. Do you know that you are quite rude?" To which he replied, "I did not know I contradicted anybody in calling your mother ill-bred." But the good-natured old lady was in no wise affronted, "Ay; you may abuse me as much as you please," she said. "You have taken Charlotte off my hands, and cannot give her back again. So there I have the whip-hand of you."

Page 72

The other couple of new friends whom Sir John's reluctance to keep even a third cousin to himself provided for them were the Misses Steele. In a morning's excursion to Exeter Sir John and Mrs. Jennings had met with two young ladies whom Mrs. Jennings had the satisfaction of discovering to be her relations; and this was enough for Sir John to invite them directly to the Park as soon as their engagements at Exeter were over. The result was that Elinor and Marianne were almost forced into an intercourse with two young women, who, however civil they might be, were obviously underbred. Miss Steele was a plain girl about thirty, whose whole conversation was of beaux; while Miss Lucy Steele, a pretty girl of twenty-three, was, despite her native cleverness, probably common and illiterate.

Marianne, however, who had never much toleration for anything like impertinence, vulgarity, inferiority of parts, or even difference of taste from herself, soon checked every endeavour at intimacy on their side by the coldness of her behaviour towards them; but Elinor, from politeness, submitted to the attentions of both, but especially to those of Lucy, who missed no opportunity of engaging her in conversation, or of striving to improve their acquaintance by an easy and frank communication of her sentiments, until one day, as they were walking together from the Park to the cottage, she asked Elinor if she were personally acquainted with Mrs. John Dashwood's mother, Mrs. Ferrars, and, in explanation of her question, proceeded to confound her by confessing that she knew Mr. Edward Ferrars, who had been at one time under the care of her uncle, Mr. Pratt, at Longstaple, near Plymouth, and that she had been engaged to him for the last four years.

Distressed by this news, which she was quite aware that Lucy had confided to her merely from jealousy and suspicion, indignant at Edward's duplicity, though convinced of his genuine attachment to herself, Elinor resolved not to give pain to her mother and sister by telling them of the engagement. Indeed, her attention was soon withdrawn from her own to her sister's love affairs by an invitation which Mrs. Jennings gave the two girls to spend a few weeks with her in town at her house near Portman Square, an invitation which was accepted by Marianne in the hope of seeing Willoughby, and by Elinor with the intention of looking after Marianne. Mrs. Jennings' party was three days on the road, and arrived in Berkeley Street at three o'clock in the afternoon, in time to allow Marianne to write a brief note to Willoughby. But he failed to appear that evening; and when a loud knock at the door resulted in Colonel Brandon being admitted instead, she found the shock of disappointment too great to be borne with calmness, and left the room.

As it happened, a full week elapsed before she discovered, by finding his card on the table, that her lover had arrived in town. Even then she could not see him. He failed to call the next morning, and though invited to dine on the following day with the Middletons in Conduit Street, he neglected to put in an appearance. Which strange conduct moved Marianne to send another note to him; and Elinor to write to her mother,

entreating her to demand from Marianne an account of her real situation with respect to him.

Page 73

A meeting between Marianne Dashwood and John Willoughby at last took place at a fashionable party, where the latter greeted the two sisters with great coldness and reluctance; and a third letter from Marianne, now frantic with grief, elicited a reply from him in which he announced his engagement to another lady, “reproached himself for not having been more guarded in his professions of esteem for Marianne, and returned, with great regret, the lock of her hair which she had so obligingly bestowed on him.”

A day or two later Colonel Brandon called on Elinor to give her certain information about Willoughby. He told her that his sudden departure from Devonshire to London, which had surprised his friends so much, had been due to an affecting letter he had received from his ward, Miss Williams, the natural daughter of a beloved sister-in-law. Willoughby had met this lady—a pretty girl of sixteen—at Bath, and, after a guilty intimacy, had abandoned her. Colonel Brandon had gone to her rescue and to fight a bloodless duel with her betrayer.

III.—Matrimonial Intrigues

One day Elinor and Marianne were at Gray’s, in Sackville Street, carrying on a negotiation for the exchange of a few old-fashioned jewels belonging to their mother, when they came upon their half-brother, Mr. John Dashwood. He paid a visit to Mrs. Jennings the next day, and came with a pretence of an apology for his wife not coming, too. To his sisters his manners, though calm, were perfectly kind; to Mrs. Jennings most attentively civil; and on Colonel Brandon coming in soon after himself, he eyed him with a curiosity that seemed to say that he only wanted to know him to be rich to be equally civil to *him*. After staying with them half an hour, he asked Elinor to walk with him to Conduit Street, and to introduce him to Sir John and Lady Middleton; and as soon as they were out of the house he began to make inquiries about Colonel Brandon. Which inquiries having elicited the satisfactory information that the gentleman had a good property at Delaford Park, in Dorsetshire, Mr. Dashwood—indifferent to his sister’s disclaimers —proceeded to congratulate her on the prospect of a very respectable establishment in life, to insist that the objections to a prior attachment on her side were not insurmountable, and to inform her that the object of that attachment—Mr. Edward Ferrars—was likely to be married to Miss Morton, a peer’s daughter, with thirty thousand pounds of her own.

Mrs. John Dashwood had so much confidence in her husband’s judgment that she waited the very next day on both Mrs. Jennings and her daughter. She found the former by no means unworthy her notice, and the latter one of the most charming women in the world. The attraction was mutual, for Lady Middleton was equally pleased with Mrs. Dashwood.

Page 74

There was a kind of cold-hearted selfishness on both sides, which mutually attracted them; and they sympathised with each other in an insipid propriety of demeanour and a general want of understanding. Indeed, the Dashwoods were so prodigiously delighted with the Middletons that, though not much in the habit of giving anything, they determined to give them a dinner; and soon after their acquaintance began, invited them to dine at Harley Street, where they had taken a very good house for three months. Mrs. Jennings and the Misses Dashwood were invited likewise, and so were Colonel Brandon, as a friend of the young ladies, and the Misses Steele, as belonging to the Middleton party in Conduit Street. They were to meet Mrs. Ferrars.

Mrs. Ferrars turned out to be a little, thin woman, upright even to formality in her figure, and serious even to sourness in her aspect. Her complexion was sallow, and her features small, without beauty, and naturally without expression; but a lucky contraction of the brow had rescued her countenance from the disgrace of insipidity by giving it the strong characters of pride and ill-nature. She was not a woman of many words; for, unlike people in general, she proportioned them to the number of her ideas; of the few syllables which did escape her, not one fell to the share of Miss Dashwood, whom she eyed with the spirited determination of disliking her at all events; whereas towards the Misses Steele—particularly towards Lucy—both mother and daughter were ostentatiously gracious. On this occasion Marianne created something of a scene by openly resenting this treatment of her sister; while Mr. Dashwood, seeking to interest Colonel Brandon in Elinor, showed him a pretty pair of screens which she had painted for his wife, and informed him that “a few months ago Marianne *was* remarkably handsome, quite as handsome as Elinor.”

The next morning Lucy called on Elinor to exult in Mrs. Ferrars’ flattering treatment of her; her joy, however, was somewhat diminished by the unexpected appearance of Edward Ferrars in Berkeley Street, for though both Elinor and Lucy were able to keep up their respective poses towards him, Marianne confused all three by an open demonstration of her sisterly affection for him. But an invitation from Mrs. John Dashwood to the Misses Steele to spend some days in Harley Street soon restored Lucy’s equanimity, and almost made Elinor believe that her rival was a real favourite.

At any rate this was the view taken by foolish Nancy Steele.

“Lord!” thought she to herself, “they are all so fond of Lucy, to be sure they will make no difficulty about it.” And so away she went and told Mrs. Dashwood all about Lucy’s engagement to Edward Ferrars; the result of which was that the married lady fell into hysterics, while the Misses Steele were hastily bundled out of the house.

Page 75

Elinor, on hearing this news from Mrs. Jennings, soon saw the necessity of preparing Marianne for its discussion. She lost no time, therefore, in making her acquainted with the real truth, and in endeavouring to bring her to hear it talked of by others, without betraying that she felt any uneasiness for her sister or any resentment towards Edward. At first Marianne wept in grief and amazement; then she began to ascribe Elinor's long reticence about the engagement to lack of real depth of feeling; and it was not till the latter had done a deal of protesting that the younger girl was able to give her sister due credit for self-sacrifice and generosity. So when Mr. John Dashwood came round to his sisters to tell them how Edward had refused to break off his engagement, and how Mrs. Ferrars, on hearing of this, had resolved to cut him off with a shilling, and to do all in her power to prevent his advancing in any profession, and had settled on his brother Robert an estate of a thousand pounds which she had intended to bestow on him, Marianne let her indignation burst forth only when her brother had quitted the room. A few days later, Elinor met Nancy Steele in Kensington Gardens, who gave her a certain information, which subsequently turned out to have been derived from listening at the keyhole. This was to the effect that Edward, out of consideration for Lucy, who would be marrying a man with no prospects and with no means save two thousand pounds, had offered to give her up; but that Lucy had protested her affection for him, was determined not to give him up, and was building hopes on his taking orders and getting a living. Fortunately, the much desired living came far sooner than Lucy could have expected, for Colonel Brandon, with characteristic kindness, offered the presentation of the rectory of Delaford to Edward through Elinor.

IV—A Happy Ending to Love's Troubles

Anxious though the Misses Dashwood were to get back to Barton, they could not refuse an invitation from the Palmers to spend a few days with them. But, thanks to the romantic folly of Marianne—who, because she fancied she could see Combe Magna, Willoughby's place, from Cleveland, must needs take two evening walks in the grounds just where the grass was the longest and the wettest—the house-party enjoyed not the pleasantest of times. Marianne had to take to bed, and became so feverish and delirious that Colonel Brandon volunteered to fetch Mrs. Dashwood himself.

The next evening Elinor, who was acting as her sister's most devoted nurse, and was hourly expecting her mother's arrival, was astounded by a visit from Willoughby, who, having met Sir John Middleton in the lobby of Drury Lane Theatre the previous night, and thus heard of Marianne's serious illness, had set forth post-haste to make inquiries, and was now delighted to find her out of danger. Attempting an exculpation of himself, he confessed that at first meeting Marianne

Page 76

he had tried to engage her regard without a thought of returning it; that afterwards he grew sincerely fond of her, but put off from day to day paying her his formal addresses and that just at the moment when he was going to make a regular proposal to her, Mrs. Smith's discovery of his liaison with Miss Williams, and his refusal to right matters by marrying the young lady, dismissed him from his relative's house and favour, prevented him from declaring his love to Marianne, and, in the embarrassed state of his finances, seemed to render marriage with a wealthy woman his only chance of salvation. He repudiated the charge of having deserted Miss Williams, declaring that he did not know the straits to which she had been reduced. He also alluded to the violence of her passion, and the weakness of her understanding, as some excuses for the apparent heartlessness of his own conduct.

He then went on to explain his treatment of Marianne's letters; how he had already—-previous to the arrival of the Dashwoods in town—become engaged to Miss Sophia Grey; how, with his head and heart full of Marianne, he was forced to play the happy lover to Sophia; and how Sophia, in her jealousy, had opened Marianne's third letter and dictated the reply.

"What do you think of my wife's style of letter-writing? Delicate, tender, fully feminine, was it not?" said he.

"You are very wrong, Mr. Willoughby," said Elinor. "You ought not to speak in this way either of Mrs. Willoughby or my sister. You have made your own choice. It was not forced on you. Your wife has a claim to your politeness—to your respect, at least." She must be attached to you, or she would not have married you."

"Do not talk to me of my wife," said he, with a heavy sigh. "She does not deserve your compassion. She knew I had no regard for her when we married. And now, do you pity me, Miss Dashwood? Have I explained away any part of my guilt?"

"Yes. You have certainly removed something—a little," said Elinor. "You have proved yourself, on the whole, less faulty than I had believed you."

When Mrs. Dashwood arrived at Cleveland, Elinor at once gave her the joyful news of Marianne's material improvement in health and, after an affectionate but nearly silent interview had taken place between mother and sick child, the former proceeded to express to Elinor her admiration for Colonel Brandon's disposition and manners, and her expectation that he and Marianne would make a match of it. The Colonel, it seemed, had told Mrs. Dashwood on the way of his affection for her daughter.

Marianne, however, at first seemed to have other plans. When the family got back to Barton Cottage, she announced that she had determined to enter on a course of serious

study, and to devote six hours a day to improving herself by reading. But with such a confederacy against her as that formed by her mother and Elinor—with a knowledge so intimate of Colonel Brandon's goodness—what could she do?

Page 77

As for Elinor, her self-control was at last rewarded, thanks to a strange *volte-face* on the part of Lucy Steele who, finding that *Robert* Ferrars had the money, married him and jilted his brother. The way was thus cleared to Elinor's union with Edward, whose mother was induced to give the young couple her consent, and a marriage portion of L10,000.

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Pride and Prejudice

This, Jane Austen's best-known novel, was written between 1796 and 1797, and was called "First Impressions." Revised in 1811, it was published two years later by the same Mr. Egerton, of the Military Library, Whitehall, who had brought out "Sense and Sensibility." Like its predecessor, and like "Northanger Abbey," it was written at Steventon Rectory, and it is generally regarded not only as its author's most popular but as her most representative achievement. Wickham, the all-conquering young lady-killer of the story, is a favourite character of the novelist He figures as Willoughby in "Sense and Sensibility," as Crawford in "Mansfield Park," as Churchill in "Emma," and—to a certain extent—as Wentworth in "Persuasion." Another characteristic feature of "Pride and Prejudice" is Wickham's unprepared attachment to Lydia Bennet, resembling as it does Robert Ferrars' startling engagement to Lucy Steele in "Sense and Sensibility," Frank Churchill's secret understanding with Jane Fairfax in "Emma," and Captain Benwick's sudden and unexpected union with Louisa Musgrove in "Persuasion."

I.—A Society Ball at Longbourn

All Longbourn was agape with excitement when it became known that Netherfield Park, the great place of the neighbourhood, was let to a rich and handsome young bachelor called Bingley, and that Mr. Bingley and his party were to attend the forthcoming ball at the Assembly Rooms.

Nowhere did the news create more interest and rouse greater hopes than in the household of the Bennets, the chief inhabitants of Longbourn; for Mr. Bennet—who was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character—was the father of five unmarried daughters; while Mrs. Bennet—a still handsome woman, of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper—-made the business of her life getting her daughters married, and its solace visiting and news.

The evening fixed for the ball came round at last; and when the Netherfield party entered the Assembly Rooms it was found to consist of five persons altogether—Mr. Bingley, his two sisters, the husband of the elder, and another young man.

Page 78

Mr. Bingley was good-looking and gentleman-like; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners. His sisters were fine women, with an air of decided fashion. His brother-in-law, Mr. Hurst, merely looked the gentleman; but his friend, Mr. Darcy, soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report, which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year. He was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was found to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased.

Mr. Bingley had soon made himself acquainted with all the principal people in the room. He was lively and unreserved, danced every dance, was angry that the ball closed so early, and talked of giving one himself at Netherfield. What a contrast between him and his friend! Mr. Darcy danced only once with Mrs. Hurst, and once with Miss Bingley, and declined being introduced to any other lady.

It so happened that Elizabeth, the second eldest of the Bennet girls, had been obliged, by the scarcity of gentlemen, to sit down for two dances; and during part of that time Mr. Darcy had been standing near enough for her to overhear a conversation between him and Mr. Bingley, who came from the dance for a few minutes.

“Come, Darcy,” said he, “I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance.”

“I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner” At such an assembly as this it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with.”

“I would not be so fastidious as you are,” cried Bingley, “for a kingdom! Upon my honour, I never met with so many pleasant girls in my life as I have this evening, and there are several of them, you see, uncommonly pretty.”

“*You* are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room,” said Mr. Darcy, looking at the eldest Miss Bennet.

“Oh, she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you who is very pretty, and I dare say very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you.”

“Which do you mean?” And turning round, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till, catching her eye, he withdrew his own, and coldly said: “She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence

to young ladies who are slighted by other men; You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me."

Mr. Bingley followed his advice. Mr. Darcy walked off; and Elizabeth remained, with no very cordial feelings towards him. She told the story, however, with great spirit among her friends, for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous.

Page 79

II—The Bennet Girls and their Lovers

Despite its rather unpromising commencement the course of a few days placed the acquaintance of the Bennets with the Bingleys on a footing approaching friendship; and soon matters began to stand somewhat as follow. It was obvious that Charles Bingley and Jane Bennet were mutually attracted, and this despite the latter's outward composure, which, like her amiability of manner and charity of view, was apt to mislead the superficial observer. On the other hand, while the Bingley ladies expressed themselves as willing to know the two elder Miss Bennets and pronounced Jane "a sweet girl," they found the other females of the family impossible. Mrs. Bennet was intolerably stupid and tedious; Mary, who, being the only plain member of her family, piqued herself on the extent of her reading and the solidity of her reflections, was a platitudinous moralist; while Lydia and Kitty were loud, silly, giggling girls, who spent all their time in running after men. As for Mr. Darcy, the indifference he at first felt to Elizabeth Bennet was gradually converted into a sort of guarded interest. Originally he had scarcely allowed her to be pretty, but now he admired the beautiful expression of her dark eyes. To this discovery succeeded some others equally mortifying. Though he had detected more than one failure of perfect symmetry in her form, he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing; and in spite of his asserting that her manners were not those of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness. He began to wish to know more of her, and, as a step towards conversing with her himself, attended to her conversation with others, while, since both he and she were of a satirical turn, they soon began to exchange little rallying, challenging speeches, so that Caroline Bingley, who was openly angling for Darcy herself, said to him one night: "How long has Miss Elizabeth Bennet been such a favourite? And pray when am I to wish you joy?" To which remarks he merely replied: "That is exactly the question which I expected you to ask. A lady's imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony, in a moment. I knew you would be wishing me joy."

Meantime, the friendship subsisting between the two families was advanced by a visit of some days paid by the two Bennet sisters to the Bingleys, at whose house Jane, thanks to her mother's scheming, was laid up with a bad cold. On this occasion Jane was coddled and made much of by her dear friends Caroline and Mrs. Hurst; but Elizabeth was now reckoned too attractive by one sister, and condemned as too sharp-tongued by both.

"Eliza Bennet," said Miss Bingley, when the door was closed on her, "is one of those young ladies who seek to recommend themselves to the other sex by undervaluing their own; and with many men, I dare say, it succeeds. But in my opinion it is a very mean art."

Page 80

“Undoubtedly,” replied Darcy, to whom this remark was chiefly addressed, “there is meanness in *all* the arts which ladies sometimes condescend to employ for captivation. Whatever bears affinity to cunning is despicable.”

Miss Bingley was not so entirely satisfied with this reply as to continue the subject.

Nevertheless, Darcy’s growing attachment to Eliza was little dreamt of by that young lady. Indeed, her prejudice against him was strengthened by her pleasant intercourse with a handsome and agreeable young man called Wickham, an officer of the militia regiment quartered at Meryton, the nearest town to Longbourn. He told her how he was the son of a trusted steward of Darcy’s father, and had been left by the old gentleman to his heir’s liberality and care, and how Darcy had absolutely disregarded his father’s wishes, and had treated his protege in cruel and unfeeling fashion.

On the top of this disclosure, and just at it seemed certain that Bingley was on the point of proposing to Jane, the whole Netherfield party suddenly abandoned Hertfordshire and returned to town, partly, as Elizabeth could not help thinking, in consequence of the behaviour of her family at a ball given at Netherfield Park, where it appeared to her that, had they made an agreement to expose themselves as much as they could during the evening, they could not have played their parts with more spirit or finer success.

III.—Elizabeth Rejects the Rector

About this time the Rev. Mr. Collins, heir-presumptive to Longbourn, came on a visit to the Bennets. He was a tall, heavy-looking young man of five-and-twenty. His air was grave and stately, and his manners were very formal. He was a strange mixture of pomposity, servility, and self-importance, a creature most abjectly, yet most amusingly, devoid of anything like tact, taste, or humour.

Being ready to make the Bennet girls every possible amends for the unwilling injury he must eventually do them, he thought first of all of offering himself to Jane; but hearing that her affections were pre-engaged, he had only to change from Jane to Elizabeth. It was soon done—done while Mrs. Bennet was stirring the fire. His proposal he made to the younger lady in a long, set speech, in which he explained, first of all, his general reasons for marrying, and then his reasons for directing his matrimonial views to Longbourn, finally assuring her that on the subject of the small portion she would bring him no ungenerous reproach should ever pass his lips when they were married.

It was absolutely necessary to interrupt him then, so Elizabeth told him he was too hasty, thanked him for his proposals, and declined them.

“I am not now to learn,” replied Mr. Collins, with a formal wave of the hand, “that it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept, when he first applies for their favour; and that sometimes the refusal is repeated

a second, or even a third, time. I am, therefore, by no means discouraged by what you have said, and shall hope to lead you to the altar ere long."

Page 81

“Upon my word, sir,” cried Elizabeth, “your hope is rather an extraordinary one after my declaration! I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal. You could not make *me* happy; and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make *you* so. Nay; were your friend, Lady Catherine, to know me, I am persuaded she would find me in every respect ill qualified for the situation.”

“Were it certain that Lady Catherine would think so——” said Mr. Collins, very gravely. “But I cannot imagine that her ladyship would at all disapprove of you. And you may be certain that when I have the honour of seeing her again, I shall speak in the highest terms of your modesty, economy, and other amiable qualifications.”

Twice more was Mr. Collins refused, and even then he would not take “No” for an answer.

“You must give me leave to flatter myself, my dear cousin,” said he, “that your refusals of my addresses are merely words, of course. My reasons for believing it are chiefly these. It does not appear to me that my hand is unworthy your acceptance, or that the establishment I can offer would be any other than highly desirable. My situation in life, my connections with the family of De Bourgh, and my relationship to your own, are circumstances highly in my favour; and you should take it into further consideration that, in spite of your manifold attractions, it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage may ever be made to you. Your portion is unhappily so small that it will, in all likelihood, undo the effects of your loveliness and amiable qualifications. As I must, therefore, conclude that you are not serious in your rejection of me, I shall choose to attribute it to your wish of increasing my love by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females.”

“I do assure you, sir,” said Elizabeth, “that I have no pretensions whatever to that kind of elegance which consists in tormenting a respectable man. I would rather be paid the compliment of being believed sincere. I thank you again and again for the honour you have done me in your proposals, but to accept them is absolutely impossible. My feelings in every respect forbid it. Can I speak plainer? Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart.”

“You are uniformly charming,” said he, with an air of awkward gallantry; “and I am persuaded that, when sanctioned by the express authority of both your excellent parents, my proposals will be acceptable.”

IV.—Darcy Loves and Loses

Page 82

Rejected by Elizabeth, to the great satisfaction of her father and to the great indignation of her mother, the rector of Hunsford lost no time in betaking himself to Elizabeth's dearest friend, Charlotte Lucas, who, being a girl with unromantic, not to say prosaic, views of marriage, readily accepted and married him, thereby moving to further disgust and anger poor Mrs. Bennet, who was already wondering and repining at Mr. Bingley's returning no more into Hertfordshire. Jane suffered in silence, and despite Elizabeth's efforts to point out the duplicity of Caroline Bingley, was inclined to believe the protestations that the latter made in her letters from London of Bingley's growing attachment to Darcy's sister Georgiana.

Mr. Bennet treated the matter in his customary ironical way.

"So, Lizzy," said he, one day, "your sister is crossed in love, I find. I congratulate her. Next to being married, a girl likes to be crossed in love a little now and then. It is something to think of, and gives her a sort of distinction among her companions. When is your turn to come? You will hardly bear to be long outdone by Jane. Now is your time. Here are officers enough at Meryton to disappoint all the young ladies in the country. Let Wickham be your man. He is a pleasant fellow, and would jilt you creditably."

"Thank you, sir, but a less agreeable man would satisfy me. We must not all expect Jane's good fortune."

"True," said Mr. Bennet; "but it is a comfort to think that, whatever of that kind may befall you, you have a mother who will always make the most of it."

As it turned out, Wickham, though he had not arrived at an intimacy which enabled him to *jilt* Elizabeth, yet most certainly transferred his attentions very shortly from her to a Miss King, who, by the death of her grandfather, had come into L10,000. Elizabeth, however, was quite heartwhole; and she and her former admirer parted on friendly terms when she left Longbourn to pay her promised visit to Mr. and Mrs. Collins at Hunsford.

There she found Charlotte, managing her home and her husband with considerable discretion: and, as the rectory adjoined Rosings Park, the seat of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the patroness of the living, she was introduced to that lady, in whom she could discover nothing but an insolent aristocratic woman, who dictated to everyone about her, meddled in everybody's business, aimed at marrying her sickly daughter to Darcy, and was, needless to say, slavishly adored by Mr. Collins.

In the third week of her visit Mr. Darcy and his cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam, came down to see their aunt, and thus—to Elizabeth's indifference—an acquaintance was renewed which Darcy soon seemed to show a real desire to take up again. He sought her society at Rosings Park, he called familiarly at the rectory, he waylaid her in her

favourite walk; and all the time, in all his intercourse with her, he revealed such a mixture of interest and constraint as demonstrated only too clearly that some internal struggle was going on within him.

Page 83

Mrs. Collins began to hope for her friend; but Elizabeth, who had received from Colonel Fitzwilliam ample confirmation of her suspicion that it was Darcy who had persuaded Bingley to give up Jane, was now only more incensed against the man who had broken her sister's peace of mind.

On the very evening of the day on which she had extracted this piece of information from his cousin, Darcy, knowing her to be alone, called at the rectory, and, after a silence of several minutes, came towards her in an agitated manner.

"In vain have I struggled," he said. "It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you."

Elizabeth's astonishment was beyond expression. She stared, coloured, doubted, and was silent. This he considered sufficient encouragement; and the avowal of all that he felt, and had long felt, for her immediately followed. He spoke well; but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed. His sense of her inferiority, of marriage with her being a degradation, of the family obstacles which judgment had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit. In truth, it was already lost, for though Elizabeth could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection, her intentions did not vary for an instant. Accusing him of having ruined, perhaps for ever, the happiness of her sister Jane, and of having blighted the career of his former friend Wickham, she reproached him with the uncivil style of his declaration, and gave him her answer in the words:

"You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it."

Soon after, Darcy took his leave; but the next day he accosted Elizabeth in the park, and handed her a letter, which he begged her to read. She read it, and had the mortification to discover not only that Darcy made some scathing but perfectly justifiable comments on the objectionable members of her family, but that he was able to clear himself of both the charges she had brought against him. He maintained that in separating Bingley from Jane he had not the slightest notion that he was doing the latter any injury, since he never credited her with any strong attachment to his friend; and he assured Elizabeth that, though Wickham had always been an idle and dissipated person, he had more than fulfilled his father's intentions to him, and that Wickham had repaid him for his generosity by trying to elope with his young sister Georgiana, a girl of fifteen.

When Elizabeth returned to Longbourn, she found it a relief to tell Jane of Darcy's proposal, and of his revelation of Wickham's real character; but she thought it best to suppress every particular of the letter in which Jane herself was concerned.

V.—An Elopement

Page 84

Some two months later Elizabeth went on a tour in Derbyshire with her maternal uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. The latter had lived for some years at a town called Lambton, and wished to revisit her old friends there; and as Pemberley—Mr. Darcy's seat—was only five miles off, and was a show-place, the Gardiners determined to see it, though their niece was reluctant to accompany them until she had learned that its owner was not at home. As they were being shown over the place, Elizabeth could not help reflecting that she might have been mistress of it, and she listened with surprise as the old housekeeper told them that she should never meet with a better master, that she had never had a cross word from him in her life, that as a child he was always the sweetest-tempered, most generous-hearted boy in the world, and that there was not one of his tenants or servants but would testify to his excellent qualities as a landlord and a master.

As they were walking across the lawn the owner of Pemberley himself suddenly came forward from the road, and as if to justify the praises of his housekeeper, and to show that he had taken to heart Elizabeth's former complaints of his behaviour, proceeded to treat the Gardiner party with the greatest civility, and even cordiality. He introduced his sister to them, asked them to dinner, invited Mr. Gardiner to fish at Pemberley as often as he chose, and, in answer to a spiteful remark of Miss Bingley's to the effect that he had thought Elizabeth pretty at one time, made the crushing reply:

"Yes, but that was only when I first knew her; for it is many months since I have considered her as one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance."

But just when Elizabeth's growing esteem and gratitude might have deepened into affection for Darcy, circumstances were communicated to her in a letter from Jane which seemed to render it in the highest degree improbable that so proud and fastidious a man as he would ever make any further advances. Lydia, who had got herself invited by some friends to Brighton in order to be near the militia regiment which had been transferred there from Meryton, had eloped with Wickham, and the pair, instead of going to Scotland to be married, appeared—though their whereabouts could not yet be discovered—to be living together in London unmarried.

Darcy seemed to be staggered when he heard the news, and instantly acquiesced in the immediate return of the Gardiner party to Longbourn. They found on their arrival that Mr. Bennet was searching for his daughter in London, where Mr. Gardiner agreed to go to consult with him.

Page 85

“Oh, my dear brother,” said Mrs. Bennet, on hearing this, “that is exactly what I could most wish for! And now do, when you get to town, find them out wherever they may be; and if they are not married already, *make* them marry. And as for wedding clothes, do not let them wait for that; but tell Lydia she shall have as much money as she chooses to buy them after they are married. And, above all things, keep Mr. Bennet from fighting. Tell him what a dreadful state I am in—that I am frightened out of my wits, and have such tremblings, such flutterings all over me; such spasms in my side, and pains in my head, and such beatings at my heart that I can get no rest by day nor by night. And tell my dear Lydia not to give any directions about her clothes till she has seen me, for she does not know which are the best warehouses. Oh, brother, how kind you are! I know you will contrive it all.”

Mr. Collins improved the occasion by writing a letter of condolence, in which he assured the distressed father that the death of Lydia would have been a blessing in comparison with her elopement. But, unfortunately, much of this instruction was wasted, the distress of the Bennets proving less irremediable than their cousin had anticipated or their neighbours feared—for, thanks, as it seemed, to the investigations and to the generosity of Mr. Gardiner, the eloping couple were discovered, and it was made worth Wickham’s while to marry Lydia. Longbourn society bore the good news with decent philosophy, though, to be sure, it would have been more for the advantage of conversation had Miss Lydia Bennet come upon the town.

VI.—Three Bennet Weddings

After arrangements had been made for Wickham’s entering the regulars and joining a regiment at Newcastle, his marriage with Lydia took place, and the young couple were received at Longbourn. Their assurance was quite reassuring.

“Well, mamma,” said Lydia, “and what do you think of my husband? Is not he a charming man? I am sure my sisters must all envy me. I only hope they may have half my good luck. They must all go to Brighton. That is the place to get husbands. What a pity it is, mamma, we did not all go!”

“Very true. And if I had my will we should. But, my dear Lydia, I don’t at all like your going such a way off. Must it be so?”

“Oh, Lord, yes! There is nothing in that. I shall like it of all things. You and papa and my sisters must come down and see us. We shall be at Newcastle all the winter; and I dare say there will be some balls, and I will take care to get good partners for them all.”

“I should like it beyond anything!” said her mother.

“And then, when you go away, you may leave one or two of my sisters behind you; and I dare say I shall get husbands for them before the winter is over.”

“I thank you for my share of the favour,” said Elizabeth; “but I do not particularly like your way of getting husbands!”

Page 86

Indeed, from some remark which Lydia let slip about Darcy being at the wedding, Elizabeth soon began to think that it was only due to outside efforts that Mrs. Wickham had succeeded in getting *her own* husband.

An application for information which she made to her Aunt Gardiner confirmed this suspicion. Darcy, it seems, had hurried up to London immediately on hearing of the elopement; and he it was who, thanks to his knowledge of Wickham's previous history, found out where Lydia and he were lodging, and by dint of paying his debts to the tune of a thousand pounds, buying his commission, and settling another thousand pounds on Lydia, persuaded him to make her an honest woman. That is to say, thought Elizabeth, Darcy had met, frequently met, reasoned with, persuaded, and finally bribed the man whom he always most wished to avoid, and whose very name it was punishment to him to pronounce. Meantime, Bingley, accompanied by Darcy, made his reappearance at Netherfield Park and at the Bennets'; and Elizabeth had the mortification of seeing her mother welcome the former with the greatest effusiveness, and treat the latter coldly and almost resentfully. "Any friend of Mr. Bingley's will always be welcome here, to be sure; but else I must say that I hate the very sight of him," said Mrs. Bennet, as she watched the two men approaching the house to pay their first visit.

Despite, however, rather than by reason of, this surfeit of amiability on the part of the mother, the lovers quickly came to an understanding, and this, strangely enough, in the absence of Darcy, who had gone up to town. It was in Darcy's absence, also, that Lady Catherine de Bourgh came over to Longbourn, and helped to bring about what she most ardently wished to prevent by making an unsuccessful demand on Elizabeth that she should promise not to accept Darcy for a husband, and by then reporting to him that Elizabeth had refused to give such a promise. The natural result followed. Elizabeth mustered up courage one day to thank Darcy for all he had done for Lydia; and this subject soon led *him* to affirm that in that matter he had thought only of Elizabeth, and to renew—and to renew successfully—his former proposals of marriage. When Mrs. Bennet first heard the great news she sat quite still, and unable to utter a syllable; and at first even Jane and her father were almost incredulous of the engagement, because they had seen practically nothing of the courtship. But in the end they were all convinced, and Mr. Bennet's decisive comment was: "I admire all my three sons-in-law highly. Wickham, perhaps, is my favourite; but I think I shall like *your* husband quite as well as Jane's. If any young men come for Mary or Kitty, send them in, for I am quite at leisure."

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Northanger Abbey

Page 87

“Northanger Abbey” was written in 1798, revised for the press in 1803, and sold in the same year for L10 to a Bath bookseller, who held it in such light esteem that, after allowing it to remain for many years on his shelves, he was content to sell it back to the novelist’s brother, Henry Austen, for the exact sum which he had paid for it at the beginning, not knowing that the writer was already the author of four popular novels. This story—which is, of course, a skit on the “terror” novel of Mrs. Radcliffe’s school—-was not published till after its author’s death, when, in 1818, it was bound up with her last book, “Persuasion.”

I.—A Heroine in the Making

No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy could have supposed her born to be a heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard, and he had never been handsome. He had a considerable independence, besides two good livings, and he was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters. Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born; and, instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on—lived to have six children more—to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself. Catherine, for many years of her life, was as plain as any member of her family. She had a thin, awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark, lank hair, and strong features. So much for her person; and not less propitious for heroism seemed her mind. She was fond of all boys’ sports, and greatly preferred cricket not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy—nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, or watering a rosebush. Indeed, she had no taste for a garden; and if she gathered flowers at all, it was chiefly for the pleasure of mischief—at least, so it was conjectured from her habit of always preferring those which she was strictly forbidden to take.

Such were her propensities; her abilities were quite as extraordinary. She never could learn or understand anything before she was taught, and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid. Her mother wished her to learn music; and Catherine was sure she should like it, for she was very fond of tinkling the keys of the old forlorn spinet; so at eight years old she began. She learnt a year, and could not bear it; and Mrs. Morland, who did not insist on her daughters being accomplished in spite of incapacity or distaste, allowed her to leave off. The day which dismissed the music-master was one of the happiest of Catherine’s life. Her taste for drawing was not superior; though, whenever she could obtain the outside of a letter from her mother, or seize upon any other odd piece of paper, she did what she could in that way by drawing houses and trees, hens and chickens, all very much like one another. Writing and accounts she was taught by her father; French by her mother. Her

proficiency in either was not remarkable, and she shirked her lessons in both whenever she could.

Page 88

What a strange, unaccountable character! For with all these symptoms of profligacy at ten years old, she had neither a bad heart nor a bad temper, was seldom stubborn, scarcely ever quarrelsome, and very kind to the little ones, with few interruptions of tyranny. She was noisy and wild, hated confinement and cleanliness, and loved nothing so well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house.

Such was Catherine Morland at ten. At fifteen, appearances were mending: she began to curl her hair and long for balls, her complexion improved, her features were softened by plumpness and colour, her eyes gained more animation, and her figure more consequence. Her love of dirt gave way to an inclination for finery; she grew clean and she grew smart; and she had now the pleasure of sometimes hearing her father and mother remark on her personal improvement. From fifteen, indeed, to seventeen, she was in training for a heroine; she read all such works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives.

So far her improvement was sufficient; and in many other points she came on exceedingly well, for though she could not write sonnets, she brought herself to read them; and though there seemed no chance of her throwing a whole party into raptures by a prelude on the pianoforte of her own composition, she could listen to other people's performances with very little fatigue.

Her greatest deficiency was in the pencil. She had no notion of drawing, not enough even to attempt a sketch of her lover's profile, that she might be detected in the design. There she fell miserably short of the true heroic height. At present she did not know her own poverty, for she had no lover to portray. There was not one lord in the neighbourhood; no, not even a baronet! There was not one family among their acquaintance who had reared and supported a boy accidentally found at their door; no, not one young man whose origin was unknown. Her father had no ward, and the squire of the parish no children. But when a young lady is to be a heroine, the perverseness of forty surrounding families cannot prevent her. Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way.

Mr. Allen, who owned the chief of the property about Fullerton, the village in Wiltshire where the Morland family lived, was ordered to Bath for the benefit of a gouty constitution; and his lady, a good-humoured woman, fond of Miss Morland, and probably aware that if adventures will not befall a young lady in her own village she must seek them abroad, invited her to go with them. Mr. and Mrs. Morland were all compliance, and Catherine all happiness.

II.—In the Gay City of Bath

When the hour for departure drew nigh, the maternal anxiety of Mrs. Morland will be naturally supposed to have been most severe. But she knew so little of lords and

baronets that she entertained no notion of their general mischievousness, and was wholly unsuspicious of danger to her daughter from their machinations. Her cautions were confined to advising her to wrap up well when she came from the rooms at night, and to try to keep some account of the money she spent.

Page 89

Sally, or rather Sarah, must, from situation, be at this time the intimate friend and confidante of her sister. It is remarkable, however, that she neither insisted on Catherine's writing by every post, nor exacted her promise of transmitting the character of every new acquaintance nor a detail of every interesting conversation that Bath might produce. Everything, indeed, relative to this important journey was done on the part of the Morlands with a strange degree of moderation and composure. Catherine's father, instead of giving her an unlimited order on his banker, or even putting a hundred pounds bankbill into her hands, gave her only ten guineas, and promised her more when she wanted it. The journey was performed with suitable quietness and uneventful safety. They arrived at Bath, and were soon settled in comfortable lodgings in Pulteney Street.

Mrs. Allen had not beauty, genius, accomplishment, or manner. The air of a gentlewoman, a great deal of quiet, inactive good temper, and a trifling turn of mind, were all that could account for her being the choice of a sensible, intelligent man like Mr. Allen. In one respect she was admirably fitted to introduce a young lady into public, being as fond of going everywhere and seeing everything herself as any young lady could be. Dress was her passion; and our heroine's entree into life could not take place till after three or four days had been spent in providing her chaperon with a dress of the newest fashion. Catherine, too, made some purchases herself; and when all those matters were arranged, the important evening came which was to usher her into the upper rooms. But nothing happened that evening. Mrs. Allen knew nobody there, and so Catherine was unable to dance.

A day or two later, when they made their appearance in the lower rooms, fortune was more favourable to our heroine. The master of the ceremonies introduced to her a very gentleman-like young man as a partner. His name was Tilney. He was a clergyman, seemed to be about four or five and twenty, was rather tall, had a pleasing countenance, a very intelligent and lively eye, and, if not quite handsome, was very near it. His address was good, he talked with fluency and spirit, and there was an archness and pleasantry in his manner which interested, though it was hardly understood by, her. Catherine felt herself in high luck; and they parted, on the lady's side at least, with a strong inclination for continuing the acquaintance.

But when Catherine hastened to the pump-room the next day, there was no Mr. Tilney to be seen. Instead, Mrs. Allen had the good fortune to meet an acquaintance at last in the person of a Mrs. Thorpe, a former schoolfellow whom she had seen only once since their respective marriages. Their joy on this meeting was very great, as well it might be, since they had been contented to know nothing of each other for the last fifteen years. Mrs. Thorpe had one great advantage as

Page 90

a talker over Mrs. Allen, in a family of children; and when she had expatiated on the talents of her sons and the beauty of her daughters, Mrs. Allen had no similar information to give, no similar triumphs to press on the unwilling and unbelieving ear of her friend. She was forced to sit and to appear to listen to all these maternal effusions, and to be introduced, along with Catherine, to the three Miss Thorpes, who proved to be sisters of a young man who was at the same college as Catherine's brother James. James, indeed, had actually spent the last week of the Christmas vacation with the family near London.

The progress of the friendship thus entered into by Catherine and Isabella, the eldest of the Miss Thorpes, was quick as its beginning was warm; and they passed so rapidly through every gradation of increasing tenderness that there was shortly no fresh proof of it to be given to their friends and themselves. They called each other by their Christian name, were always arm in arm when they walked, pinned up each other's train for the dance, and were not to be divided in the set; and if a rainy morning deprived them of other enjoyments, they were still resolute in meeting in defiance of wet and dirt, and shut themselves up to read novels together. One day, after they had been talking of "Udolpho," of other "horrid" books and of their favourite complexion in a man, they met Catherine's brother James and Isabella's brother John in a gig. On introduction, the latter proved to be a smart young man of middle height, who, with a plain face and ungraceful form, seemed fearful of being too handsome unless he wore the dress of a groom, and too much like a gentleman unless he were easy where he ought to be civil, and impudent where he might be allowed to be easy. James, of course, was attached to Isabella. "She has so much good sense," he said, "and is so thoroughly unaffected and amiable."

At the dance at the upper rooms which took place on the evening of the same day, Mr. Tilney made his reappearance, and introduced his sister to Catherine. Miss Tilney had a good figure, a pretty face, and a very agreeable countenance. Her air, though it had not all the decided pretension, the resolute stylishness, of Miss Thorpe's, had more real elegance; and her manners showed better sense and better breeding. She seemed capable of being young and attractive at a ball, without wanting to fix the attention of every man near her.

III.—Catherine Morland Among Her Friends

Unfixed as Catherine's general notions were of a what a man ought to be, she could not entirely repress a doubt of Mr. John Thorpe's being altogether completely agreeable. A tattler and a swaggerer, having elicited, as he thought, from Catherine that she was the destined heiress of Mr. Allen, he twice endeavoured to detach her, by a glaring lie, from keeping engagements with the Tilneys; and when he did succeed in persuading her to go with him in his gig,

Page 91

she found that the whole of his talk ended with himself and his own concerns. He told her of horses which he had bought for a trifle and sold for incredible sums; of racing matches in which his judgment had infallibly foretold the winner; of shooting-parties in which he had killed more birds (though without having one good shot) than all his companions together; and described to her some famous days spent with the foxhounds, in which his foresight and skill in directing the dogs had repaired the mistakes of the most experienced huntsman, and in which the boldness of his riding, though it had never endangered his own life for a single moment, had been constantly leading others into difficulties which, he calmly concluded, had broken the necks of more than one person.

All this rather wearied Catherine; and not even his relating to her that Mr. Tilney's father, General Tilney—whom he was talking to one night at the theatre—had declared her the finest girl in Bath could reconcile her to the idea that Mr. John Thorpe had the faculty of giving universal pleasure. It was a visit which she paid to Miss Tilney to apologise for not keeping an engagement which Mr. John had caused her to break that first introduced her to the general. A handsome, stately, well-bred man, with a temper that made him a martinet to his own children, he received her with a politeness, and even a deference, that delighted and surprised her. But whereas Catherine's simplicity of character made her growing attachment to Mr. Tilney obvious to that gentleman and to his sister, it was not so clear that he reciprocated her feelings. Generally he amused himself by talking down to her or making fun of her in a good-natured way. One day they were speaking of Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and more particularly of the "Mysteries of Udolpho."

"I have read all of Mrs. Radcliffe's works," said he, "and most of them with great pleasure."

"I am very glad to hear it, indeed," replied Catherine, "and now I shall never be ashamed of liking 'Udolpho' myself. But I really thought that young men despised novels amazingly."

"It is *amazingly*; it may well suggest *amazement* if they do, for they read nearly as many as women," was Mr. Tilney's answer. "I myself have read hundreds and hundreds. Do not imagine that you can cope with me in a knowledge of Julias and Louisas. Consider how many years I have had the start of you. I had entered on my studies at Oxford while you were probably a good little girl working your sampler at home!"

"Not very good, I am afraid. But now, really, do you not think 'Udolpho' the nicest book in the world?"

“The nicest; by which I suppose you mean the neatest. That must depend on the binding,” said he.

“I am sure,” cried Catherine hastily, “I did not mean to say anything wrong; but it is a nice book, and why should I not call it so?”

Page 92

“Very true,” said Henry, “and this is a very nice day; and we are taking a very nice walk; and you are two very nice young ladies. Oh, it is a very nice word indeed—it does for everything! Originally perhaps, it was applied only to express neatness, propriety, delicacy, or refinement; people were nice in their dress, in their sentiments, or in their choice. But now every commendation on every subject is comprised in that one word.”

Meanwhile, Catherine was required to interest herself in her friend’s love affairs. Isabella surprised her one day with the news that she was engaged to her brother James; and, obviously under the impression that her lover was the heir of a wealthy man, seemed to wonder whether his parents would acquiesce in the engagement. But despite her affection for James, she danced with Mr. Tilney’s elder brother, Captain Tilney, at a ball which was given while her betrothed was absent on the necessary visit to his parents; and when letters were received from him, announcing their consent to the match and the agreement of Mr. Morland to resign a living of four hundred pounds to his son and to bequeath to him by will an estate of the same value, Isabella looked grave first at the smallness of the income, and then at the fact that it would be nearly three years before James would be old enough to take it.

Meantime, she continued to flirt rather openly with Captain Tilney, much to James’ uneasiness and to his sister’s distress. But Catherine was to some extent reassured as to the captain’s conduct by his brother Henry, and she was so overjoyed by receiving an invitation from General Tilney to pay a visit to Northanger Abbey, his beautiful country seat, that a parting interview with Isabella and James, at which he was in excellent spirits and she most engagingly placid, left her blissfully convinced that the behaviour of the lovers was a model of judicious affection.

IV.—Romance at Northanger Abbey

The Tilney party set out for the Abbey in great state, the ladies in the general’s chaise and four, with postilions and numerous outriders, and the general and Henry in the latter’s curricle. But at the first stage the general proposed that Catherine should take his place in the curricle that she might “see as much of the country as possible;” and, for the rest of the journey she was tete-a-tete with Henry, who amused himself by rallying her upon the sliding panels, ghastly tapestry, funereal beds, vaulted chambers, and kindred uncanny apparatus which, judging from her favourite kind of fiction, she must be expecting to find at the Abbey.

As a matter of fact, Northanger, though it comprised some parts of the old Abbey, turned out to be a building thoroughly modernized and improved. Notwithstanding, Catherine could not restrain her imagination from running riot just a little. A large cedar chest, curiously inlaid and provided with silver handles, first attracted her attention. But this was soon found to contain merely a white cotton counterpane. A high old-fashioned ebony cabinet, which she noticed in her bedroom just before stepping into bed, struck her as offering more promise of romantic interest. Even this, after a most thrilling

search, in the midst of which her candle went out, yielded nothing better than an inventory of linen.

Page 93

Still, Catherine's passion for romance was not easily to be disappointed. Hearing from Eleanor Tilney that her mother's fatal illness had been sudden and short, and had taken place in her absence from home, Catherine's blood ran cold with the horrid suggestions that naturally sprang from these words. Could it be possible? Could Henry's father ——? And yet how many were the examples to justify even the blackest suspicions? And when she saw him in the evening, while she worked with her friend, slowly pacing the drawing-room for an hour together in silent thoughtfulness, with downcast eye and contracted brow, she felt secure from all possibility of wronging him. It was indeed the air and attitude of a Montoni! What could more plainly speak the gloomy workings of a mind not wholly dead to every sense of humanity, in its fearful review of past scenes of guilt?

Full, then, of the idea that the general had ill-treated his wife, ready even to believe that she might still be living and a prisoner, our heroine set out one day to explore a certain set of rooms into which the general, in showing her over the house, had not taken her. But she was caught in the act by Henry Tilney, who revealed, with customary openness, what had been in her mind, and received only a very gentle rebuke.

Most grievously was she humbled. Her folly, which now seemed even criminal, was all exposed to him; and he must surely despise her for ever. But he did nothing of the kind. His astonishing generosity and nobleness of conduct were such that the only difference he made in his behaviour to her was to pay her somewhat more attention than usual.

But the anxieties of common life began soon to succeed to the alarms of romance. Catherine's desire of hearing from Isabella grew every day greater. For nine successive mornings she wondered over the repetition of disappointment; and then, on the tenth, she got a letter—not from Isabella, but from James, announcing the breaking off of the engagement by mutual consent. At first she was much upset by the news, and burst into tears. But in the end she saw it in a more philosophic light, so that before long Henry was able to rally her on her former bosom friendship with Miss Thorpe without offending her. And when a day or two later a letter arrived from Isabella containing the amazing sentences, "I am quite uneasy about your dear brother, not having heard from him since he went to Oxford, and am fearful of some misunderstanding. Your kind offices will set all right: he is the only man I ever did or could love, and I trust you will convince him of it——" Catherine resolved: "No; whatever would happen, James should never hear Isabella's name mentioned by her again."

Soon afterwards, a bolt fell from the blue. General Tilney, who had paid Catherine the most embarrassing attentions, suddenly and unexpectedly returned from town, where he had gone for a day or two on business, and packed Catherine off home immediately, with hardly an apology, and at scarcely a moment's notice. He had met young Thorpe in town, it seemed; and John had this time under-estimated the wealth and

consequence of the Morlands as much as he had over-stated them before when he talked to the general in the theatre at Bath.

Page 94

The rudeness of the general, however, proved not so very great a disaster to Catherine. The interest and liking which Henry had first felt for her had gradually grown into a warmer feeling, and, roused to a sense of this by his father's tyrannical behaviour, he presented himself to Catherine at Fullerton, proposed to her, and was accepted. It was not long before the general gave his consent. Getting at last to a right understanding of Mr. Morland's circumstances—which, he found, would allow Catherine to have three thousand pounds—and delighted by the recent marriage of his daughter Eleanor to a viscount, he agreed to the union; and so Henry and Catherine were married within a twelvemonth from the first day of their meeting.

* * * * *

Mansfield Park

And then, between 1812 and 1814. "Mansfield Park" was written at Chawton Cottage, and published in July of the latter year by the Mr. Egerton who had given to the world its two predecessors. When the novel reached a second edition, its publication was taken over by John Murray, who was also responsible for bringing out its successor, "Emma." As bearing on the introduction of naval officers into the story, in this novel and in "Persuasion," it must be remembered that Jane Austen's two youngest brothers, Francis and Charles, both served in the Navy during the French wars, and both rose to the rank of admiral; Jane herself lived at Southampton from 1805 to 1809, and was, therefore, in a position to visit Portsmouth, and to see the sailor's life ashore.

I.—Sir Thomas Bertram's Family Connections

Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequences of a handsome house and large income. She had two sisters to be benefited by her elevation; and such of their acquaintances as thought Miss Ward and Miss Frances quite as handsome as Miss Maria did not scruple to predict their marrying with almost equal advantage. But there certainly are not so many men of large fortune in the world as there are pretty women to deserve them. Miss Ward, at the end of half a dozen years, found herself obliged to be attached to the Rev. Mr. Norris, a friend of her brother-in-law's, with scarcely any private fortune; and Miss Frances fared yet worse.

Miss Ward's match, indeed, when it came to the point, was not contemptible, Sir Thomas being happily able to give his friend, in the living of Mansfield, an income of very little less than a thousand a year. But Miss Frances married, in the common phrase, to disoblige her family, and by fixing on a lieutenant of marines, named Price, without education, fortune, or connections, did it very thoroughly. To escape remonstrance, she never wrote to her family on the subject till actually married.

Page 95

Lady Bertram, who was a woman of very tranquil feelings, and a temper remarkably easy and indolent, would have contented herself with merely giving up her sister, and thinking no more of the matter; but Mrs. Norris had a spirit of activity which could not be satisfied till she had written a long and angry letter to Fanny. Mrs. Price, in her turn, was injured and angry; and an answer, which comprehended both sisters in its bitterness, and bestowed such very disrespectful reflections on the pride of Sir Thomas, as Mrs. Norris could not possibly keep to herself, put an end to all intercourse between them for a considerable period.

By the end of eleven years, however, Mrs. Price could no longer afford to cherish pride or resentment, or to lose one connection that might possibly assist her. A very small income, a large and still increasing family, a husband disabled for active service, but not the less equal to company and good liquor, made her eager to regain the friends she had so carelessly sacrificed; and she addressed Lady Bertram a letter which spoke so much contrition and despondence as could not but dispose them all to a reconciliation. The letter re-established peace and kindness. Sir Thomas sent friendly advice and professions, Lady Bertram dispatched money and baby-linen for the expected child, and Mrs. Norris wrote the letters.

Within a twelvemonth a more important advantage to Mrs. Price resulted from her letter. Mrs. Norris, who was often observing to the others that she seemed to be wanting to do more for her poor sister, proposed that the latter should be entirely relieved from the charge and expense of her eldest daughter, Fanny, a girl of ten; and Sir Thomas, after debating the question, assented. The division of gratifying sensations in the consideration of so benevolent a scheme ought not, in strict justice, to have been equal; for, while Sir Thomas was fully resolved to be the real and consistent patron of the selected child, Mrs. Norris had not the least intention of being at any expense whatever in her maintenance. As far as walking, talking and contriving reached, she was thoroughly benevolent, and nobody knows better how to dictate liberality to others; but her love of money was equal to her love of directing, and she knew quite as well how to save her own as to spend that of her friends.

Fanny Price proved to be small for her age, with no glow of complexion or any other striking beauty; exceedingly timid and shy, and shrinking from notice; but her air, though awkward, was not vulgar, her voice was sweet, and when she spoke her countenance was pretty. Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram received her very kindly; and Sir Thomas, seeing how much she needed encouragement, tried to be all that was conciliating. But he had to work against a most untoward gravity of deportment; and Lady Bertram, without taking half so much trouble, by the mere aid of a good-humoured smile, became immediately the less awful character of the two.

Page 96

The young people were all at home, and sustained their share in the introduction very well, with much good humour and little embarrassment. They were a remarkably fine family; the sons, Tom and Edmund, boys of seventeen and sixteen, very well looking; the daughters, Maria, aged thirteen, and Julia, twelve, decidedly handsome.

But it took a long time to reconcile Fanny to the novelty of Mansfield Park, and to the separation from everybody she had been used to. Nobody meant to be unkind, but nobody put himself out of the way to secure her comfort. She was disheartened by Lady Bertram's silence, awed by Sir Thomas's grave looks, and quite overcome by Mrs. Norris's admonitions. Her elder cousins mortified her by reflections on her size, and abashed her by noticing her shyness; Miss Lee, the governess, wondered at her ignorance; and the maidservants sneered at her clothes. It was not till Edmund found her crying one morning on the attic stairs, and comforted her, that things began to mend for her. He was ever afterwards her true friend, and next to her dear brother William, first in her affections; and from that day she grew more comfortable.

II.—Cupid at Mansfield Park

The first event of any importance in the family's affairs was the death of Mr. Norris, which happened when Fanny was about fifteen, and necessarily introduced alterations and novelties. Mrs. Norris, on quitting the parsonage, removed first to the Park, and then arranged to take a small dwelling in the village belonging to Sir Thomas and called the White House. The living had been destined for Edmund, and in ordinary circumstances would have been duly given to some friend to hold till he were old enough to take orders. But Tom's extravagances had been so great as to render a different disposal of the next presentation necessary, and so the reversion was sold to a Dr. Grant, a hearty man of forty-five, fond of good eating, married to a wife about fifteen years his junior, and unprovided with children.

The Grants had scarcely been settled in Mansfield a year, when, for the better settlement of his property in the West Indies, Sir Thomas had found it expedient to go to Antigua, and he took his elder son with him, in the hope of detaching him from some bad connections at home. Neither person was missed.

Lady Bertram did not at all like to have her husband leave her; but she was not disturbed by any alarm for his safety or solicitude for his comfort, being one of those persons who think nothing can be dangerous or difficult or fatiguing to anybody but themselves. Before very long she found that Edmund could quite sufficiently supply his father's place. On this occasion the Miss Bertrams, who were now fully established among the belles of the neighbourhood, were much to be pitied, not for their sorrow, but for their want of it. Their father was no object of love to them; he had never seemed the friend of their pleasures, and his absence was unhappily most welcome.

Page 97

Fanny's relief, and her consciousness of it, were quite equal to her cousins'; but a more tender nature suggested that her feelings were ungrateful, and she really grieved because she could not grieve.

Meantime, taking advantage of her sister's indolence, Mrs. Norris acted as chaperon to Maria and Julia in their public engagements, and very thoroughly relished the means this afforded her of mixing in society without having horses to hire.

Fanny had no share in the festivities of the season; but she enjoyed being avowedly useful as her aunt's companion, and talked to Lady Bertram, listened to her and read to her with never a thought of envying her cousins their gaieties. About this time Maria, who was now in her twenty-first year, got engaged to a rich but heavy country gentleman called Rushworth, merely because he had an income larger than her father's and could give her a house in town; while Tom returned safely from the West Indies, bringing an excellent account of his father's health, but telling the family that Sir Thomas would be detained in Antigua for several months longer.

Such was the state of affairs in the month of July; and Fanny had just reached her eighteenth year when the society of the village received an addition in the brother and sister of Mrs. Grant, a Mr. and Miss Crawford, the children of her mother by a second marriage. They were young people of fortune, the son having a good estate in Norfolk, the daughter twenty thousand pounds. They had been brought up by their father's brother and his wife, Admiral and Mrs. Crawford; and it was Mrs. Crawford's death, and the consequent installation of the admiral's mistress in the house, that had forced them to find another home. Mary Crawford was remarkably pretty; Henry, though not handsome, had air and countenance; the manners of both were lively and pleasant; and Mrs. Grant gave them credit for everything else.

The young people were pleased with each other from the first. Miss Crawford was most allowably a sweet, pretty girl, while the Miss Bertrams were the finest young women in the country. Mr. Crawford was the most agreeable young man Julia and Maria had ever known. Before he had been at Mansfield a week the former lady was quite ready to be fallen in love with; while as for the latter she did not want to see or to understand. "There could be no harm in her liking an agreeable man—everybody knew her situation—Mr. Crawford must take care of himself."

A young woman, pretty, lively, witty, playing on a harp as elegant as herself, was enough to catch any man's heart. Without studying the business, however, or knowing what he was about, Edmund was beginning, at the end of a week of such intercourse, to be a good deal in love with Mary Crawford; and, to the credit of the lady, it may be added that, without his being a man of the world or an elder brother, without any of the arts of flattery or the gaieties of small-talk, he began to be agreeable to her. He taught her to ride on a horse which he had given to Fanny; he was always going round to see her at the parsonage; and, although he disapproved of the flippancy with which she talked of

her relations, of religion, and of his future profession of clergyman, he was never weary of discussing her and of confessing his admiration of her to Fanny.

Page 98

Harry Crawford was not so constant as his sister. On an expedition to Sotherton Court (Mr. Rushworth's place) he flirted with Julia on the way down, and with Maria when Sotherton was reached, leaving poor Mr. Rushworth no resource but to declare to Fanny his surprise at anyone calling so undersized a man as his rival handsome.

Some rehearsals of a play called "Lovers' Vows," in which Harry left Maria happy and expectant and Julia furious by assigning the parts of the lovers to the elder sister and to himself, made Mr. Rushworth even jealous. But this theatrical scheme, to which even Edmund had been forced to lend a reluctant co-operation—merely with a view of preventing outside actors being introduced—happily came to nothing, thanks to the unexpected arrival of Sir Thomas.

III.—Fanny in Society

Maria was now expecting the man she loved to declare himself; but instead of making such a declaration of attachment, Harry Crawford left the neighbourhood almost immediately on the plea of having to meet his uncle at Bath. Maria, wounded and indignant, resolved that, though he had destroyed her happiness, he should not know that he had done so. So when her father, having, in an evening spent at Sotherton, discovered what a very inferior young man Mr. Rushworth was, and having noticed Maria's complete indifference to him, offered to give up the connection if she felt herself unhappy in the prospect of it, she merely thanked him, and said she had not the smallest desire of breaking through her engagement, and was not sensible of any change of opinion or inclination since her forming it. In a few weeks' time she was married to Mr. Rushworth; and after a day or two spent at Sotherton, the wedded pair went off to Brighton, where they were joined by Julia Bertram.

Meantime, Fanny, as the only young lady left at the Park, became of importance. Sir Thomas decided that she was pretty; Miss Crawford cultivated her society; and Mrs. Grant asked her to dinner. This last-mentioned attention disturbed Lady Bertram.

"So strange!" she said. "For Mrs. Grant never used to ask her."

"But it is very natural," observed Edmund, "that Mrs. Grant should wish to procure so agreeable a visitor for her sister."

"Nothing can be more natural," said Sir Thomas, after a short deliberation; "nor, were there no sister in the case, could anything, in my opinion, be more natural. Mrs. Grant's showing civility to Miss Price, to Lady Bertram's niece, could never want explanation. The only surprise I can feel is that this should be the first time of its being paid. Fanny was right in giving only a conditional answer. She appears to feel as she ought. But, as I conclude that she wishes to go, since all young people like to be together, I can see no reason why she should be denied this indulgence."

Page 99

“Upon my word, Fanny,” said Mrs. Norris, “you are in high luck to meet with such attention and indulgence. You ought to be very much obliged to Mrs. Grant for thinking of you, and to your aunt for letting you go, and you ought to look upon it as something extraordinary; for I hope you are aware that there is no real occasion for your going into company in this sort of way, or ever dining out at all; and it is what you must not depend upon ever being repeated. Nor must you be fancying that the invitation is meant as a compliment to you; the compliment is intended to your uncle and aunt and me. Mrs. Grant thinks it a civility due to *us* to take a little notice of you, or else it would never have come into her head, and you may be certain that if your cousin Julia had been at home you would not have been asked.”

Mrs. Norris fetched breath, and went on.

“I think it right to give you a hint, Fanny, now that you are going into company without any of us; and I do beseech and entreat you not to be putting yourself forward, and talking and giving your opinion as if you were one of your cousins—as if you were dear Mrs. Rushworth or Julia. That will never do, believe me. Remember, wherever you are, you must be the lowest and last; and though Miss Crawford is in a manner at home at the Parsonage, you are not to be taking place of her. And as to coming away at night, you are to stay just as long as Edmund chooses.”

“Yes, ma’am. I should not think of anything else.”

“And if it should rain—which I think likely, for I never saw it more threatening for a wet evening in my life—you must manage as well as you can, and not be expecting the carriage to be sent for you.”

“Walk!” said Sir Thomas, in a tone of unanswerable dignity, and, coming further into the room: “My niece walk to an engagement at this time of the year! Fanny, will twenty minutes after four suit you?”

A few weeks later Fanny was made happy by a visit from her brother William, now, through Sir Thomas’s influence, a midshipman; and soon the former intercourse between the families at the Park and at the Parsonage was revived, Sir Thomas perceiving, in a careless way, that Mr. Crawford, who was back again at Mansfield, was somewhat distinguishing his niece.

Harry, indeed, was beginning to be rather piqued by Fanny’s indifference.

“I do not quite know what to make of Miss Fanny,” he said to his sister. “Is she solemn? Is she queer? Is she prudish? I can hardly get her to speak. I never was so long in company with a girl in my life, trying to entertain her, and succeeded so ill! Never met with a girl who looked so grave on me.”

“Foolish fellow!” said Mary. “And so this is her attraction after all! This it is—her not caring for you—which gives her such a soft skin and makes her so much taller, and produces all these charms and graces! I do desire that you will not be making her really unhappy. A little love, perhaps, may animate and do her good; but I will not have you plunge her deep, for she is as good a little creature as ever lived, and has a great deal of feeling.”

Page 100

“It can be but for a fortnight,” said Harry, “and if a fortnight can kill her she must have a constitution which nothing could save! No, I will not do her any harm. I only want her to look kindly on me, to give me smiles as well as blushes, to keep a chair for me by herself wherever we are, and be all animation when I take it and talk to her; to think as I think, to be interested in all my possessions and pleasures, try to keep me longer at Mansfield, and feel when I go away that she shall never be happy again. I want nothing more.”

“Moderation itself!” replied Mary. “I can have no scruples now. Well, you will have opportunities enough of endeavouring to recommend yourself, for we are a great deal together.”

Harry was unable to make any impression on Fanny; and though he fell deeply in love with her, got her brother William made lieutenant, and, after a ball given in her honour by Sir Thomas, proposed to her, he was unable to win her favour. She was in love with Edmund; and Edmund was torn between love for Mary, despair of winning her, and disapproval of her principles.

IV.—Wedding Bells at Mansfield

Mr. William Price, second lieutenant of H.M.S. Thrush, having obtained a ten days’ leave of absence, again went down to see his sister; and Sir Thomas, as a kind of medicinal project on his niece’s understanding, just to enable her to contrast with her father’s shabby dwelling an abode of wealth and plenty like Mansfield Park, arranged that she should accompany her brother back to Portsmouth, and spend a little time with her own family. Within four days from their arrival William had to sail; and Fanny could not conceal it from herself that the home he had left her in was, in almost every respect, the very reverse of what she could have wished. It was the abode of noise, disorder and impropriety. Nobody was in his right place; nothing was done as it ought to be. She could not respect her parents as she had hoped. Her father was more negligent of his family, worse in his habits, coarser in his manners, than she had been prepared for. He did not want abilities; but he had no curiosity, and no information beyond his profession. He read only the newspaper and the Navy List. He talked only of the dockyard, the harbour, Spithead, and the Motherbank. He swore and he drank; he was dirty and gross.

She had never been able to recall anything approaching to tenderness in his former treatment of herself. There had remained only a general impression of roughness, and now he scarcely ever noticed her but to make her the object of a coarse joke.

Her disappointment in her mother was greater. There she had hoped much, and found almost nothing. She discovered, indeed, that her mother was a partial, ill-judging parent, a dawdle, a slattern, who neither taught nor restrained her children, whose house was the scene of mismanagement and discomfort from beginning to end, and

who had no talent, no conversation, no affection towards herself; no curiosity to know her better, no desire of her friendship, and no inclination for her company that could lessen her sense of such knowledge.

Page 101

At the end of the fourth week of her visit Harry Crawford came to see Fanny, made himself very agreeable to her and her family, and then went back to town to see his sister, and to meet such friends as Edmund Bertram and the Rushworths. Fanny heard from Mary of Maria's fine house in Wimpole Street, of the splendours of the first party, and of the attentions paid to Julia by that would-be amateur actor, the Honourable John Yates; while from Edmund she gathered that his hopes of securing Mary were weaker than those he had cherished when he had left Mansfield, and that he was more satisfied with all that he saw and heard of Harry Crawford.

"I cannot give her up, Fanny," Edmund wrote of Mary. "She is the only woman in the world whom I could ever think of as a wife." Mary, on her part, hearing of a serious illness which had prostrated Tom Bertram, could not forbear saying to the same correspondent: "Poor young man! If he is to die, there will be two poor young men less in the world. I put it to your conscience whether 'Sir' Edmund would not do more good with all the Bertram property than any other possible 'sir.'" She also told Fanny that Mrs. Rushworth, in the absence of her husband on a visit to his mother at Bath, had been spending the Easter with some friends at Twickenham, and that her brother Harry had also been passing a few days at Richmond.

The interval of a few days afforded a commentary on this last piece of news. It turned out that Mrs. Rushworth, having succumbed once more to the protestations of Harry Crawford, had left her house in Wimpole Street to live with him, and that her sister Julia had eloped to Scotland to be married to Mr. Yates. On the occurrence of this distressing news, Fanny was summoned back to Mansfield Park, and was escorted down there by Edmund, who described to her his final interview with Mary. It seemed that Mary's distress at her brother's folly was so much more keenly expressed than any sorrow for his sin that Edmund's conscience left him no alternative but to make an end of their acquaintance.

Indeed, before many weeks had passed, he ceased to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny as Fanny herself could desire; and before many months had gone, the cousins were united. Nor was this the only happy event that occurred at Mansfield. Harry Crawford and Mrs. Rushworth having quarrelled and parted, and Sir Thomas having refused to allow his elder daughter to come home, Mrs. Norris cast off the dust of Mansfield from her feet, and went to live with her niece in an establishment arranged for them in another county. While as for Tom, he gradually regained his health, without regaining the thoughtlessness and selfishness of his previous habits, and was, in fact, improved forever by his illness.

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Emma

Page 102

“Emma,” one of the author’s later novels, had been finished, when, in the autumn of 1815, Jane Austen came to London to nurse her brother Henry, who was a clergyman, at his house in Hans Place, in Chelsea. He was being attended by one of the Prince Regent’s physicians, who seems to have learned in this way the secret of the authorship of “Mansfield Park” and its predecessors. The result was that the Prince, who is said to have been a great admirer of these then anonymous novels, was graciously pleased to notify Miss Austen, through his chaplain, Mr. Clarke, that if she had any new novel in hand, she was at liberty to dedicate it to his Royal Highness. “Emma” was accordingly dedicated to the Prince. It was reviewed, along with its author’s other novels, in the “Quarterly,” and the anonymous reviewer, who took no notice of “Mansfield Park,” turns out to have been none other than Sir Walter Scott. In his Diary for March 14, 1826, Sir Walter further praised Miss Austen’s exquisite touch and her gift for true description and sentiment.

I.—The Social Amenities of Highbury

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, was the younger of the two daughters of a most affectionate and indulgent father, and had, in consequence of her sister’s marriage, been mistress of his house from a very early period. Her mother had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses, and her place had been supplied by Miss Taylor, who for sixteen years had been in Mr. Woodhouse’s family, less as governess than friend, very fond of both daughters, but particularly of Emma. For years the two ladies had been living together, mutely attached, Emma doing just what she liked, highly esteeming Miss Taylor’s judgment, but chiefly directed by her own.

The real evils, indeed, of Emma’s situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself. The danger, however, was at present unperceived, and did not by any means rank as a misfortune with her.

Sorrow came—a gentle sorrow. Miss Taylor married. It was Miss Taylor’s loss which first brought grief. It was on the wedding-day of this beloved friend, with the wedding over and the bride-people gone, that Emma first sat in mournful thought of any continuance. The event had every promise of happiness for her friend. Mr. Weston was a man of unexceptionable character, easy fortune, suitable age, and pleasant manners; and there was some satisfaction in considering with what self-denying, generous friendship she had always wished and promoted the match. But it was a black morning’s work for her. The want of Miss Taylor would be felt every hour of every day. She had been a friend and companion such as few possessed: intelligent, well-informed, useful, gentle; knowing all the ways of the family, interested in all its concerns, and peculiarly interested in herself, in every pleasure, every scheme of hers—one to whom she could speak every thought, and who had such an affection for her as could never find fault.

Page 103

How was Emma to bear the change? She was now in great danger of suffering from intellectual solitude. She dearly loved her father, but he was no companion for her. He could not meet her in conversation, rational or playful. The evil of the actual disparity in their ages (as Mr. Woodhouse had not married early) was much increased by his constitution and habits; for, having been a valetudinarian all his life, without activity of mind or body, he was a much older man in ways than in years; and though everywhere beloved for the friendliness of his heart and his amiable temper, his talents could not have recommended him at any time.

Emma's sister, though comparatively but little removed by matrimony, being settled in London, only sixteen miles off, was much beyond her daily reach; and it was quite three months before Christmas, that would bring the next visit from Isabella, her husband, and children.

Highbury, the large and populous village to which her house, Hartfield, really belonged, afforded her no equals. The Woodhouses were first in consequence there. All looked up to them; but there was not one of her acquaintances among them who could be accepted in lieu of Miss Taylor for even half a day. It was a melancholy change; and Emma could not but sigh over it, and wish for impossible things, till her father awoke from his usual after-dinner sleep, and made it necessary to be cheerful. His spirits required support. He was a nervous man, easily depressed; fond of everybody he was used to, and hating to part with them; hating change of every kind. Matrimony, as the origin of change, was always disagreeable to him; and he was not yet reconciled to his own daughter marrying, nor could ever speak of her but with compassion, though it had been entirely a match of affection, when he was now obliged to part with Miss Taylor, too.

He was pitying "poor Miss Taylor," and magnifying the half-mile's distance that separated Hartfield from Mr. Weston's place, Randalls, when a visitor walked in. This was Mr. George Knightley, the elder brother of Isabella's husband, and the owner of Donwell Abbey, the large estate of the district. He was a sensible man, about seven or eight and thirty, a very old and intimate friend of the family, and a frequent and always welcome visitor. He had returned to a late dinner after some days' absence in London, and had walked up to Hartfield to say that all was well with their relatives in Brunswick Square. They talked of the wedding. Emma congratulated herself on having made the match. Mr. Knightley demurred to this, remarking: "A straightforward, open-hearted man, like Weston, and a rational, unaffected woman, like Miss Taylor, may be safely left to manage their own concerns." And when Emma, in reply to entreaties from her father to make no more matches, answered, "Only one more, papa; only for Mr. Elton—you like Mr. Elton, papa; I must look about for a wife for him"—her old friend gave her the salutary advice: "Invite him to dinner, Emma, and help him to the best of the fish and the chicken; but leave him to choose his own wife. Depend upon it, a man of six or seven and twenty can take care of himself."

Page 104

II.—Emma as a Matchmaker

Emma lost no time in developing her schemes for the happiness of Mr. Elton. Through Mrs. Goddard, the mistress of the local boarding-school for girls, she struck up an acquaintance, which she contrived rapidly to develop into intimacy, with a Miss Harriet Smith—a plump, fair-haired, blue-eyed little beauty of seventeen, whose prettiness, docility, good-temper and simplicity might be allowed to balance her lack of intelligence and information.

Harriet was the natural daughter of somebody. Somebody had placed her several years back at Mrs. Goddard's school, and somebody had lately raised her from the condition of scholar to that of parlour-boarder. This was all that was generally known of her history. She had no visible friends but what had been acquired at Highbury, and was now just returned from a long visit in the country to some young ladies—the Misses Martin—who had been at school there with her.

The first step which Emma took in the education of Harriet was to cool her interest in the Martins. She pointed out that Mr. Robert Martin, who held a large farm from Mr. Knightley in Donwell parish, was too young to marry at twenty-four, that he had, besides, an awkward look, an abrupt manner, and an uncouth voice; and that, moreover, he was quite plain-looking and wholly ungenteel; whereas Mr. Elton, who was good-humoured, cheerful, obliging and gentle, was a pattern of good manners and good looks, and seemed to be taking quite an interest in Harriet. So indeed it appeared. Mr. Elton seemed delighted with being in the society of Emma and Harriet. He praised Harriet as a beautiful girl, congratulated Emma on the improvement she had wrought in her, contributed a charade to Harriet's riddle-book, and took a most animated interest in a portrait which Emma began to paint of her.

But Mr. Knightley was not so complacent. "I think Harriet," he said to Mrs. Weston, "the very worst sort of a companion that Emma could possibly have. She knows nothing herself, and looks upon Emma as knowing everything. Her ignorance is hourly flattery. How can Emma imagine she has anything to learn herself while Harriet is presenting such a delightful inferiority? And as for Harriet, Hartfield will only put her out of conceit with all the other places she belongs to. She will grow just refined enough to be uncomfortable with those among whom birth and circumstances have placed her."

This was in the early stages of the intimacy. Later in the day, when he learned that Emma had taken so decided a hand in the affairs of Harriet as to persuade her to decline a formal offer of marriage from Mr. Martin, he told her plainly:

"I have always thought it a very foolish intimacy, though I have kept my thoughts to myself; but now I perceive that it will be a very unfortunate one for Harriet. You will puff her up with such ideas of her own beauty, and what she has claim to, that, in a little while, nobody within her reach will be good enough for her. Robert Martin has no great

loss if he can but think so; and I hope it will not be long before he does. Your views for Harriet are best known to yourself; but, as you make no secret of your love of match-making, I shall just hint to you as a friend that, if Elton is the man, I think it will be all labour in vain."

Page 105

Emma laughed and disclaimed. “Depend upon it,” he continued, “Elton will not do. Elton is a very good sort of a man, and a very respectable vicar of Highbury, but not at all likely to make an imprudent match. He is as well acquainted with his own claims as you can be with Harriet’s; and I am convinced that he does not mean to throw himself away.”

But despite this warning from Mr. George Knightley, despite a hint dropped by Mr. John Knightley, when he and his wife and children came to stop with the Woodhouses for Christmas—a hint to the effect that his sister-in-law would do well to consider whether Mr. Elton was not in love with *her*—Emma continued quite as ardent in her new friendship and in her hopes.

As to herself, she told Harriet that she was not going to be married at present, and had very little intention of ever marrying at all; though when Harriet reminded her of Miss Bates, who was the daughter of a former vicar of Highbury and lived in a very small way with her mother, a very old lady almost past everything but tea and quadrille, she confessed that if she thought she would ever be like Miss Bates, “so silly, so satisfied, so smiling, so prosing, so undistinguishing, so unfastidious, and so garrulous,” she would marry to-morrow.

But Mr. Elton was unaware of Emma having thought of making such a self-denying ordinance; and so one night when the Woodhouses and the Knightleys were returning home from a party at Randalls he took advantage of his being alone in a carriage with her to propose to her, seeming never to doubt his being accepted. When he learned, however, for whom his hand had been destined, he became very indignant and contemptuous.

“Never, madam!” cried he. “Never, I assure you! *I* think seriously of Miss Smith! Miss Smith is a very good sort of girl; and I should be happy to see her respectably settled. I wish her extremely well; and, no doubt, there are men who might not object to—-Everybody has their level; but as for myself, I am not, I think, quite so much at a loss. I need not so totally despair of an equal alliance as to be addressing myself to Miss Smith! No, madam; my visits to Hatfield have been for yourself only.”

Needless to say, Emma refused him, and they parted on terms of mutually deep mortification. Fortunately, the task of enlightening Harriet as to the state of Mr. Elton’s feelings proved less troublesome than Emma had expected it to be. Harriet’s tears fell abundantly, but otherwise she bore the intelligence very meekly and well.

III.—Emma’s Schemes in a Tangle

As if to make up for the absence of Mr. Elton, who went to spend a few weeks in Bath, in an endeavour to cure his wounded affections. Highbury society was shortly enlarged

by the arrival of two such welcome additions as Miss Jane Fairfax and Mr. Frank Churchill.

Page 106

Miss Fairfax, who was the orphan daughter of Lieutenant Fairfax, and Miss Janes Bates had for many years been living with her father's brother-officer, Colonel Campbell, and his wife and daughter. A beautiful girl of nineteen, with only a few hundred pounds of her own, and no monetary expectations from her adoptive father, she had received such an education as qualified her to become a governess; and though as long as Colonel and Mrs. Campbell lived their home might always be hers, she had all along resolved to start earning her own living at one-and-twenty. Her friend, Miss Campbell, had recently married a rich and agreeable young man called Dixon; and though the Dixons had urgently invited her to join Colonel and Mrs. Campbell in a visit to them in Ireland, Jane preferred to spend three months' holiday with her aunt and grandmother at Highbury, with some vague intention of starting her scholastic career at the end of this period. Emma did not like Jane Fairfax, partly because Jane's aunt was always boring people by talking of her; partly, perhaps, because—as Mr. Knightley once told her—she saw in her the really accomplished young woman which she wanted to be thought herself. At any rate, she still found her as reserved as ever. Jane had been a little acquainted with Mr. Frank Churchill at Weymouth, but she either could not, or would not, tell Emma anything about him.

That gentleman, however, soon presented himself in person. He was the son of Mr. Weston by his first wife. At the age of three he had been adopted by his maternal uncle, Mr. Churchill; and so avowedly had he been brought up as their heir by Mr. and Mrs. Churchill—who had no children of their own—that on his coming of age he had assumed the name of Churchill. For some months he had been promising to pay a visit to his father and stepmother to compliment them on their marriage; but on the pretext of his not being able to leave Enscombe, his uncle's place, it had been repeatedly postponed.

Emma was inclined to make allowances for him as a young man dependent on the caprices of relations. But Mr. Knightley condemned his conduct roundly. "He cannot want money, he cannot want leisure," he said. "We know, on the contrary, that he has so much of both that he is glad to get rid of them at the idlest haunts in the kingdom." Notwithstanding, when he did arrive, Frank Churchill carried all before him by reason of his good looks, sprightliness, and amiability. Emma and he soon became great friends. He favoured an idea of hers, that Jane's refusal to go to the Dixons' in Ireland was due either to Mr. Dixon's attachment to her, or to her attachment to Mr. Dixon. When a Broadwood pianoforte arrived for Jane—which was generally taken to be a gift from Colonel Campbell—he agreed with her in thinking that this was another occurrence for which Mr. Dixon's love was responsible; and he was busily engaged in planning out the details of a projected ball at the Crown Inn when a letter from Mr. Churchill urging his instant departure compelled him to make a hurried return to Enscombe.

Page 107

Meanwhile, while Emma was entertaining no doubt of her being in love with Frank, and only wondering how deep her feeling was, while she was content to think that Frank was very much in love with her, and was concluding every imaginary declaration on his side with a refusal of his proposals, Mr. Elton returned to Highbury with his bride. Miss Augusta Hawkins—to give Mrs. Elton her maiden name—was the younger of the two daughters of a Bristol tradesman, and was credited with having ten thousand pounds of her own. A self-important, presuming, familiar, ignorant, and ill-bred woman, with a little beauty and a little accomplishment, who was always expatiating on the charms of Mr. Suckling's—her brother-in-law's—place, Maple Grove, she soon excited disgust in Emma, who offended her by the scanty encouragement with which she received her proposals of intimacy, and was herself offended by the great fancy which Mrs. Elton took to Jane Fairfax. Long before Emma had forfeited her confidence, she was not satisfied with expressing a natural and reasonable admiration of Jane, but, without solicitation, or plea, or privilege, she must be wanting to assist and befriend her. The ill-feeling thus aroused found significant expression on the occasion of the long-talked-of ball at the Crown, which Mr. Weston was able to give one evening in May, thanks to the settlement of the Churchills at Richmond, and the consequent reappearance of Frank Churchill at Highbury. Indeed, Emma met with two annoyances on that famous evening. Mr. Weston had entreated her to come early, before any other person came, for the purpose of taking her opinion as to the propriety and comfort of the rooms; and when she got there, she found that quite half the company had come, by particular desire, to help Mr. Weston's judgment. She felt that to be the favourite and intimate of a man who had so many intimates was not the first distinction in the scale of vanity.

The other vexing circumstance was due to the conduct of Mr. Elton, who, asked by Mrs. Weston to dance with Harriet Smith, declined on the ground that he was an old married man, and that his dancing days were over. Fortunately, Mr. Knightley, who has recently disappointed Mrs. Weston, and pleased Emma by disclaiming any idea of being attached to Jane Fairfax, was able in some measure to redeem the situation by leading Harriet to the set himself. Emma had no opportunity of speaking to him till after supper; and then he said to her: "They aimed at wounding more than Harriet. Emma, why is it that they are your enemies?" He looked with smiling penetration, and, on receiving no answer, added: "*She* ought not to be angry with you, I suspect, whatever he may be. To that surmise you say nothing, of course; but confess, Emma, that you did want him to marry Harriet." "I did," replied Emma, "and they cannot forgive me."

A day or two afterwards, Harriet figured as the heroine of another little scene. She was rescued by Frank Churchill from an encounter with some gipsies; and after telling Emma, in a very serious tone, a few days later, that she should never marry, confessed that she had come to this resolution because the person she might prefer to marry was one so greatly her superior in situation.

Page 108

IV.—Love Finds its Own Way

His own attentions, his father's hints, his stepmother's guarded silence, all seemed to declare that Emma was Frank Churchill's object. But while so many were devoting him to Emma, and Emma herself was making him over to Harriet, Mr. Knightley began to suspect him of some inclination to trifle with Jane Fairfax. When Mr. Knightley mentioned these suspicions to Emma, she declared them sheer imagination, and said that she could *answer* for there being no attachment on the side of the gentleman; while he himself, as if to ridicule the whole idea, flirted outrageously with Emma on an excursion to Box Hill at which Jane was present, and even asked the former lady to choose a wife for him. The next day Emma, calling on Miss Bates, learned that Jane, who, was at present too unwell to see her, had just accepted a post as governess, obtained for her by Mrs. Elton, and that Frank Churchill had been summoned to return immediately to Richmond in consequence of Mrs. Churchill's state of health. On the following day an express arrived at Randalls to announce the death of Mrs. Churchill.

Emma, seeing in this latter event a circumstance favourable to the union of Frank and Harriet (for Mr. Churchill, independent of his wife, was feared by nobody), now only wished for some proof of the former's attachment to her friend. She could, however, for the moment do nothing for Harriet, whereas she could show some attention to Jane, whose prospects were closing, while Harriet's were opening. But here she proved to be mistaken; all her endeavours were to no purpose. The invalid refused everything that was offered, no matter what its character; and Emma had to console herself with the thought that her intentions were good, and would have satisfied even so strict an investigator of motives as Mr. Knightley.

One morning, about ten days after Mrs. Churchill's death, Emma was called downstairs to Mr. Weston, who asked her to come to Randalls as Mrs. Weston wanted to see her alone. Relieved to find that the matter was not one of illness, either there or at Brunswick Square, Emma resolved to wait patiently till she could see her old friend. But what was her surprise, on Mr. Weston leaving them together, when his wife revealed the fact that Frank and Jane had been secretly engaged since October of the previous year! It was almost greater than Mrs. Weston's relief when she learned, to her joy, that Emma now cared nothing at all for Frank, and so had been in no wise injured by this clandestine understanding, the divulgence of which was due, it seemed, to the fact that, immediately on hearing of Jane's agreement to take up the post of governess, Frank had gone to his uncle, told him of the engagement, and with little difficulty obtained his consent to it.

It was with a heavy heart that Emma went home to give Harriet the news that must blast her hopes of happiness once more. But, again, a surprise was in store for her. Harriet had already been told by Mr. Weston, and seemed to bear her misfortune quite stoically, the reason being that the person of "superior situation" whom she despaired of securing was not Mr. Frank Churchill, but Mr. George Knightley.

Page 109

Emma was not prepared for this development. It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself! Which desirable consummation was brought about at their next interview; for, after trying to console her for the abominable conduct of Frank Churchill, under the mistaken impression that that young gentleman had succeeded in engaging her affections, Mr. Knightley proposed marriage to her, and was accepted. As for Harriet, she was invited, at Emma's suggestion, to spend a fortnight with Mr. and Mrs. John Knightley in Brunswick Square, and there, meeting Mr. Robert Martin, through Mr. George Knightley's contrivance, was easily persuaded to become his wife.

About this same time, too, Mrs. Weston's husband and friends were all made happy by knowing her to be the mother of a little girl; while Emma and Mrs. Weston were enabled to take a more lenient view of Frank Churchill's conduct, thanks to a long letter which he wrote to the latter lady in which he apologised for his equivocal conduct to Emma, and expressed his regret that those attentions should have caused such poignant distress to the lady whom he was shortly to make his wife. The much discussed pianoforte had been his gift.

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Persuasion

Jane Austen began her last book soon after she had finished "Emma," and completed it in August, 1816. "Persuasion" is connected with "Northanger Abbey" not only by the fact that the two books were originally bound up in one volume and published together two years later, and are still so issued, but in the circumstance that in both stories the scene is laid partly in Bath, a health resort with which Jane Austen was well acquainted, as having been her place of residence from the year 1801 till 1805.

I.—The Vain Baronet of Kellynch Hall

Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage. There he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect by contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest patents; there any unwelcome sensations derived from domestic affairs changed naturally into pity and contempt as he turned over the almost endless creations of the last century; and there, if every other leaf was powerless, he could read his own history with an interest which never failed. This was the page at which the favourite volume always opened:

"ELLIOT OF KELLYNCH HALL."

Page 110

“Walter Elliot, born March 1, 1760, married July 15, 1784, Elizabeth, daughter of James Stevenson, Esq., of South Park, in the county of Gloucester; by which lady (who died 1800) he has issue, Elizabeth, born June 1, 1785; Anne, born August 9, 1787; a still-born son, November 5, 1789; Mary, born November 20, 1791.”

Precisely thus had the paragraph originally stood from the printer’s hands. But Sir Walter had improved it by adding, for the information of himself and his family, these words, after the date of Mary’s birth: “Married, December 16, 1810, Charles, son and heir of Charles Musgrove, Esq., of Uppercross, in the county of Somerset,” and by inserting most accurately the day of the month on which he had lost his wife.

Then followed the history and rise of the ancient and respectable family in the usual terms; how it had been first settled in Cheshire; how mentioned in Dugdale, serving the office of High Sheriff, representing a borough in three successive parliaments, exertions of loyalty, and dignity of baronet, in the first year of Charles II., with all the Marys and Elizabeths they had married; forming altogether two handsome duodecimo pages, and concluding with the arms and motto: “Principal seat, Kellynch Hall, in the county of Somerset,” and Sir Walter’s handwriting again in the finale: “Heir-presumptive, William Walter Elliot, Esq., great-grandson of the second Sir Walter.”

Vanity was the beginning and end of Sir Walter Elliot’s character—vanity of person and of situation. He had been remarkably handsome in his youth, and, at fifty-four, was still a very fine man. Few women could think more of their personal appearance than he did, nor could the valet of any new-made lord be more delighted with the place he held in society. He considered the blessing of beauty as inferior only to the blessing of a baronetcy; and the Sir Walter Elliot, who united these gifts, was the constant object of his warmest respect and devotion.

His good looks and his rank had a fair claim on his attachment, since to them he must have owed a wife of very superior character to anything deserved by his own. Lady Elliot had been an excellent woman, sensible and amiable, whose judgment and conduct, if they might be pardoned the youthful infatuation which made her Lady Elliot, had never required indulgence afterwards. Three girls, however—the two eldest sixteen and fourteen—were an awful legacy for a mother to bequeath, an awful charge rather to confide, to the authority of a conceited, silly father. Fortunately, Lady Elliot had one very intimate friend, Lady Russell, a sensible, deserving woman, who had been brought, by strong attachment to herself, to settle close by her in the village of Kellynch; and on her kindness Lady Elliot mainly relied for the best help and maintenance of the good principles and instruction which she had been anxiously giving her daughters.

Page 111

Elizabeth had succeeded at sixteen to all that was possible of her mother's rights and consequence; and being very handsome, and very like himself, her influence had always been great, and they had gone on together most happily. His two other children were of very inferior value. Mary had acquired a little artificial importance by becoming Mrs. Charles Musgrove; but Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody with either father or sister. To Lady Russell, indeed, she was a most dear and highly valued god-daughter, favourite and friend. Lady Russell loved them all; but it was only in Anne that she could fancy the mother to revive again.

It sometimes happens that a woman is handsomer at twenty-nine than she was ten years before; and, generally speaking, it is a time of life at which scarcely any charm is lost. It was so with Elizabeth, still the same handsome Miss Elliot that she had begun to be thirteen years ago; and Sir Walter might be excused, therefore, in forgetting her age, or, at least, be deemed only half a fool for thinking himself and Elizabeth as blooming as ever, amid the wreck of the good looks of everybody else.

Elizabeth did not quite equal her father in personal contentment. She had the consciousness of being nine-and-twenty to give her some regrets and some apprehensions. Moreover, she had been disappointed by the heir-presumptive, the very William Walter Elliot, Esq., whose rights had been so generously supported by her father. Soon after Lady Elliot's death, Sir Walter had sought Mr. Elliot's society, and had introduced him to Elizabeth, who was quite ready to marry him. But despite the assiduity of the baronet, the younger man let the acquaintance drop, and married a rich woman of inferior birth, for whom, at the present time (the summer of 1814), Elizabeth was wearing black ribbons.

Anne, too, had had her disappointment. Eight years ago, before she had lost her bloom, when, in fact, she had been an extremely pretty girl, with gentleness, modesty, taste and feeling added, she had fallen in love with Captain Wentworth, a young naval officer who had distinguished himself in the action off Domingo; but her father and Lady Russell had frowned upon the match, and, persuaded chiefly by the arguments of the latter that it would be prejudicial to the professional interests of her lover, who had still his fortune to make, she had rather weakly submitted to have the engagement broken off. But though he had angrily cast her out of his heart, she still loved him, having in the meantime rejected Charles Musgrove, who subsequently consoled himself by marrying her sister Mary. So that when her father's embarrassed affairs compelled him to let Kellynch Hall to Admiral Croft, an eminent seaman who had fought at Trafalgar, and had happened to marry a sister of Captain Wentworth, she could not help thinking, with a gentle sigh, as she walked along her favourite grove: "A few months more, and he, perhaps, may be walking here."

Page 112

II.—Anne Elliot and her Old Lover

Sir Walter and Elizabeth went to Bath, and settled themselves in a good house in Camden Place, while it was arranged that Anne should divide her time between Uppercross Cottage—where Mr. and Mrs. Charles Musgrove lived—and Kellynch Lodge, and come on from the latter house to Bath when Lady Russell was prepared to take her. Sir Walter had included in his party a Mrs. Clay, a young widow, with whom, despite the fact that she had freckles and a projecting tooth, and was the daughter of Mr. Shepherd, the family solicitor, Elizabeth had recently struck up a great friendship. Anne had tried to warn her sister against this attractive and seemingly designing young woman, but her advice had not been taken in good part; and she had to content herself with hoping that, though her suspicion had been resented, it might yet be remembered.

At Uppercross she found things very little altered. The

Musgroves saw too much of one another. The two families were so continually meeting, so much in the habit of running in and out of each other's houses at all hours, that their various members inevitably found much to complain of in one another's conduct. These complaints were brought to Anne, who was treated with such confidence by all parties that if she had not been a very discreet young lady she might have considerably increased the difficulties of the situation. Mary she found as selfish, as querulous, as ready to think herself ailing, as lacking in sense and understanding, as unable to manage her children as ever.

Charles Musgrove was civil and agreeable; in sense and temper he was undoubtedly superior to his wife, though neither his powers nor his conversation were remarkable. He did nothing with much zeal but sport; and his time was otherwise trifled away without benefit from books or anything else. He had, however, excellent spirits, which never seemed much affected by his wife's occasional moroseness; and he bore with her unreasonableness sometimes to Anne's admiration. As for the Miss Musgroves, Henrietta and Louisa, young ladies of nineteen and twenty, they were living to be fashionable, happy and merry. Their dress had every advantage, their faces were pretty, their spirits good, their manners unembarrassed and pleasant; they were of consequence at home, and favourites abroad.

The Crofts took possession of Kellynch Hall with true naval alertness, and, naturally enough, intercourse was soon established between them and the Musgroves. Soon it was known that the admiral's brother-in-law, Captain Wentworth, had come to stop with them; and one day he made the inevitable call at the Cottage on his way to shoot with Charles. It was soon over. Anne's eyes half met his; a bow, a courtesy passed. He talked to Mary, said all that was right, said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing. Charles showed himself at the window, all was ready, their visitor had bowed and was gone; the Miss Musgroves were gone, too, suddenly resolving to walk to the end of the village with the sportsmen.

Page 113

She had seen him; they had met. They had been once more in the same room. Now, how were his sentiments to be read? On one question she was soon spared all suspense; for, after the Miss Musgroves had returned and finished their visit at the Cottage, she had this spontaneous information from Mary: "Captain Wentworth is not very gallant by you, Anne, though he was so attentive to me. Henrietta asked him what he thought of you. 'You were so altered he should not have known you again,' he said."

Doubtless it was so; and she could take no revenge, for he was not altered, or not for the worse. No; the years which had destroyed her bloom had only given him a more glowing, manly, open look, in no respect lessening his personal advantages.

"Altered beyond his knowledge." Frederick Wentworth had used such words, or something like them, but without an idea that they would be carried round to her. He had thought her wretchedly altered, and, in the first moment of appeal, had spoken as he felt. He had not forgiven Anne Elliot. She had used him ill—deserted and disappointed him; and worse, in doing so had shown weakness and timidity. He had been most warmly attached to her, and had never seen a woman since whom he thought her equal. It was now his object to marry. He was rich, and, being turned on shore, intended to settle as soon as he could be tempted. "Yes, here I am, Sophia," he said to his sister, "quite ready to make a foolish match. Anybody between fifteen and thirty may have me for the asking. A little beauty, and a few smiles, and a few compliments to the navy, and I am a lost man."

It looked, indeed, as if he would soon be lost, either to Louisa or to Henrietta. It was soon Uppercross with him almost every day. The Musgroves could hardly be more ready to invite than he to come; and as for Henrietta and Louisa, they both seemed so entirely occupied by him that nothing but the continued appearance of the most perfect goodwill between themselves could have made it credible that they were not decided rivals. Indeed, Mr. Charles Hayter, a young curate with some expectations, who was a cousin of the Musgroves, began to get uneasy. Previous to Captain Wentworth's introduction, there had been a considerable appearance of attachment between Henrietta and himself; but now he seemed to be very much forgotten.

III.—Love-making at Lyme Regis

At this interesting juncture the scene of action was changed from Uppercross to Lyme Regis, owing to Captain Wentworth's receipt of a letter from his old friend Captain Harville, announcing his being settled at this latter place. Captain Wentworth, after a visit to Lyme Regis, gave so interesting an account of the adjacent country that the young people were all wild to see it. Accordingly, it was agreed to stay the night there, and not to be expected back till the next day's dinner.

Page 114

They found Captain Harville a tall, dark man, with a sensible, benevolent countenance: a little lame, but unaffected, warm and obliging. Mrs. Harville, a degree less polished than her husband, seemed to have the same good feelings and cordiality; while Captain Benwick, who was the youngest of the three naval officers and a comparatively little man, had a pleasing face and a melancholic air, just as he ought to have. He had been engaged to Captain Harville's sister, and was now mourning her loss. They had been a year or two waiting for fortune and promotion. Fortune came, his prize-money as lieutenant being great; promotion, too, came at last; but Fanny Harville did not live to know it. She had died the preceding summer while he was at sea; and the friendship between him and the Harvilles having been augmented by the event which closed all their views of alliance, he was now living with them entirely. A man of retiring manners and of sedentary pursuits, with a decided taste for reading, he was drawn a good deal to Anne Elliot during this excursion, and talked to her of poetry, of Scott and Byron, of "Marmion" and "The Lady of the Lake," of "The Giaour" and "The Bride of Abydos." He repeated with such feeling the various lines of Byron which imaged a broken heart, or a mind destroyed by wretchedness, and looked so entirely as if he meant to be understood, that Anne ventured to recommend to him a larger allowance of prose in his daily study.

Another interesting person whom the Uppercross party met at Lyme was Mr. Elliot. He did not recognise Anne and her friends, or did they till he had left the town find out who he was; but he was obviously struck with Anne, and gazed at her with a degree of earnest admiration which she could not be insensible of. She was looking remarkably well, her very regular, very pretty features having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion, and by the animation of eye which it had also produced.

It was evident that the gentleman admired her exceedingly. Captain Wentworth looked round at her, in a way which showed his noticing of it. He gave her a momentary glance, a glance of brightness, which seemed to say: "That man is struck with you; and even I, at this moment, see something like Anne Elliot again."

But the folly of Louisa Musgrove, and the consequences that attended it, soon obliterated from Anne's memory all such recollections as these. Louisa, who was walking with Captain Wentworth, persuaded him to jump her down the steps on the Lower Cob. Contrary to his advice, she ran up the steps to be jumped down again; and, being too precipitate by a second, fell on the pavement and was taken up senseless. Fortunately, no bones were broken, the only injury was to the head; and Captain and Mrs. Harville insisting on her being taken to their house, she recovered health so steadily that before Anne and Lady Russell left Kellynch Lodge for Bath there was talk of the possibility of her being able to be removed to Uppercross.

Page 115

When the accident occurred, Captain Wentworth's attitude was very much that of the lover. "Oh, God! that I had not given way at the fatal moment!" he cried. "Had I but done as I ought! But so eager and so resolute; dear, sweet Louisa!"

Anne feared there could not be a doubt as to what would follow the recovery; but she was amused to hear Charles Musgrove tell how much Captain Benwick admired herself —"elegance, sweetness, beauty!" Oh, there was no end to Miss Elliot's charms!

Another surprise awaited her at Bath, where she found her father and sister Elizabeth happy in the submission and society of the heir-presumptive. He had explained away all the appearance of neglect on his own side as originating in misapprehension. He had never had an idea of throwing himself off; he had feared that he was thrown off, and delicacy had kept him silent. These explanations having been made, Sir Walter took him by the hand, affirming that "Mr. Elliot was better to look at than most men, and that he had no objection to being seen with him anywhere."

The gentleman called one evening, soon after Anne's arrival in the town; and his little start of surprise on being introduced to her showed that he was not more astonished than delighted at meeting, in the character of Sir Walter's daughter, the young lady who had so strongly struck his fancy at Lyme. He stopped an hour, and his tone, his expressions, his choice of subject, all showed the operation of a sensible, discerning mind.

Still, Anne could not understand what his object was in seeking this reconciliation. Even the engagement of Louisa Musgrove to Captain Benwick, which was announced to her by Mary about a month later, seemed more susceptible of explanation—had not the young couple been thrown together for weeks?—than this determination of Mr. Elliot to become friends with relations from whom he could derive no possible advantage.

IV.—Love Triumphant

Following close on the news of Louisa's engagement came the arrival at Bath of Admiral and Mrs. Croft. He had come for the cure of his gout; and he was soon followed by Captain Wentworth, who, for the first time since their second meeting, deliberately sought Anne out at a concert which she and her people were attending. The most significant part of their conversation was his comment on Louisa's engagement to Captain Benwick. He frankly confessed he could not understand it as far as it concerned Benwick.

"A man like him, in his situation, with a heart pierced, wounded, almost broken! Fanny Harville was a very superior person, and his attachment to her was indeed attachment. A man does not recover from such a devotion of the heart to such a woman. He ought not; he does not."

But the captain was prevented from saying much more by the assiduous attention which Mr. Elliot paid to her at this concert.

“Very long,” said he, “has the name of Anne Elliot possessed a charm over my fancy; and, if I dared, I would breathe my wishes that the name might never change.”

Page 116

Such language might almost be taken to be a proposal; but Anne was too much interested in watching Captain Wentworth to pay much attention to it.

She had still in mind the words which her sometime lover had spoken at the concert, when a visit she had paid to an invalid friend, an old schoolfellow of hers called Mrs. Smith, gave her complete enlightenment as to the character and present objects of Mr. Elliot. Mrs. Smith, who was a widow, and whose husband had been a bosom friend of Mr. Elliot's, described him as "a man without heart or conscience, a designing, wary, cold-blooded being, who thinks only of himself; who for his own interest or ease would be guilty of any cruelty, or any treachery that could be perpetrated without risk of damaging his general character." She told how he had encouraged her husband, to whom he was under great obligations, to indulge in the most ruinous expense, and then, on his death, caused her endless difficulties and distress by refusing to act as his executor. She also informed Anne that he had married his first wife, whom he treated badly, entirely on account of her fortune, and that, though among the present reasons for continuing the acquaintance with his relations was a genuine attachment to herself, his original intention in seeking a reconciliation with Sir Walter had been to secure for himself the reversion of the baronetcy by preventing the holder of the title from falling into the snares of Mrs. Clay.

The next day a party of the Musgroves appeared at Camden Place. Mrs. Musgrove, senior, had some old friends at Bath whom she wanted to see; Mrs. Charles Musgrove could not bear to be left behind in any excursion which her husband was taking; Henrietta, who had arrived at an understanding with Mr. Charles Hayter, had come to buy wedding clothes for herself and Louisa; and Captain Harville had come on business. It was on a visit to the Musgroves, who were stopping at the White Hart Hotel, that Anne had a momentous conversation with the last-named person. The captain had been reverting to the topic of his friend Benwick's engagement, and Anne had been saying that women did not forget as readily as men.

"No, no," said Harville, "it is not man's nature to forget. I will not allow it to be more man's nature than woman's to be inconstant and to forget those they do love or have loved. I believe the reverse. I believe in a true analogy between our bodily frames and our mental; and that as our bodily frames are stronger than yours, so are our feelings."

"Your feelings may be the stronger," replied Anne, "but the same spirit of analogy will authorise me to assert that ours are the more tender. Man is more robust than woman, but he is not longer lived; which exactly explains my view of the nature of their attachment."

Captain Wentworth, who was sitting down at a writing-table in another part of the room, engaged in correspondence, seemed very much interested in this conversation; and a few minutes later he placed before Anne, with eyes of glowing entreaty, a letter addressed to "Miss A. E."

Page 117

“I offer myself to you again,” he wrote, “with a heart even more your own than when you almost broke it eight years and a half ago. Dare not say that man forgets sooner than woman, that his love has an earlier death; I have loved none but you.”

To such a declaration there could be but one answer; and soon Frederick Wentworth and Anne Elliot were exchanging again those feelings and those promises which once before had seemed to secure everything, but which had been followed by so many years of division and estrangement.

This time there was no opposition to the engagement. Captain Wentworth’s wealth, personal appearance, and well-sounding name enabled Sir Walter to prepare his pen, with a very good grace, for the insertion of the marriage in the volume of honour.

As for Mr. Elliot, the news of his cousin Anne’s engagement burst on him with unexpected suddenness. He soon quitted Bath; and on Mrs. Clay’s leaving it shortly afterwards and being next heard of as established under his protection in London, it was evident how double a game he had been playing, and how determined he was to save himself at all events from being cut out by one artful woman at least.

* * * * *

HONORE DE BALZAC

Eugenie Grandet

Honore de Balzac was born May 20, 1799, at Tours, in France, and died at Paris, Aug. 18, 1850. His early life was filled with hard work and oppressed by poverty. He attained success by the publication of “Les Derniers Chouans” in 1829, and he soon established his fame as the leader of realistic fiction. In spite of frequent coarseness, he stands for all time as a great writer by reason of his powers of character analysis. “Eugenie Grandet” is, justly, one of the most famous of Balzac’s novels. As a study of avarice, in the character of old Grandet, it is superb, and the picture of manners in the country town of Saumur is painted as only a supreme artist like Balzac could paint it. The pathos of Eugenie’s wasted life, the long suffering of *Mme*. Grandet, the craft and cunning of the Des Grassins and the Cruchots, the fidelity of Nanon, and the frank egotism of Charles Grandet—all these things combine to make the book a masterpiece of French fiction. “Eugenie Grandet” was written in the full vigour of Balzac’s genius in 1833, and was published in the first volume of “Scenes of Provincial Life” in 1834, and finally included in the “Human Comedy” in 1843.

I.—The Rich Miser of Saumur

The town of Saumur is old-fashioned and in every way “provincial.” Its houses are dark within, its shops, undecorated, recall the workshops of the Middle Ages. Its inhabitants

gossip freely, according to the fashion of country towns, and the arrival of a stranger in the town is an important item of news. The trade of Saumur depends upon the vineyards of the district. The prosperity of landowners, vinegrowers, coopers, and innkeepers rises or falls according to whether the season is good or bad for the grapes.

Page 118

A certain house in Saumur, larger and more sombre than most, and once the residence of nobility, belonged to M. Grandet.

This M. Grandet was a master cooper in 1789, a good man of business with a remarkable head for accounts. He prospered in the Revolution, bought the confiscated Church lands at a low price, married the daughter of a wealthy timber merchant, was made mayor under the consulate, became Monsieur Grandet when the empire was established, and every year grew wealthier and more miserly.

In 1817 M. Grandet was 68, his wife 47, and their only child, Eugenie, was 21.

A careful, cunning, silent man was M. Grandet, who loved his gold and to get the better in a bargain beyond all else. He cultivated 100 acres of vineyard, had thirteen little farms, an old abbey, and 127 acres of grazing land, and owned the house he lived in. The town estimated old Grandet's income to be five or six million francs, but only two people were in a position to guess with any chance of probability, and these were M. Cruchot the notary, and M. des Grassins the banker, and they disclosed no secrets.

Both M. Cruchot and M. des Grassins were men of considerable importance in Saumur, and enjoyed the right of entry to M. Grandet's house—a privilege extended to only a very few of their neighbours.

There was rivalry between these two families of the Cruchots and Des Grassins, rivalry for the hand of Grandet's daughter, Eugenie. Cruchot's nephew was a rising lawyer, already, at the age of thirty-three, a president of the court of first instance, and Cruchot's brother was an abbe of Tours. The hopes of the Cruchots were centred on the successful marriage of the nephew (who called himself Cruchot de Bonfons, after an estate he had bought) with Grandet's heiress.

Mme. des Grassins was equally hopeful and indefatigable on behalf of her son Adolphe.

The whole town knew of the struggle between these two families, and watched it with interest. Would *Mlle*. Grandet marry M. Adolphe des Grassins or M. le President? There were others who declared the old cooper was rich enough to marry his daughter to a peer in France.

With all his wealth and the fortune his wife brought him, M. Grandet lived as meanly and cheaply as he could. His house was cold and dreary, and his table was supplied with poultry, eggs, butter and corn by his tenants. M. Grandet never paid visits or invited people to dinner.

One servant, Nanon, a big, strong woman of five feet eight inches, did all the work of the house, the cooking and washing, the baking and cleaning, and watched over her master's interests with an absolute fidelity. The strength of Nanon appealed to M.

Grandet when he was on the lookout for a housekeeper before his marriage, and the girl, out of work and wretched, had never lost her gratitude for having been taken into his service. For twenty-eight years Nanon had worked early and late for the Grandets,

Page 119

and on a yearly wage of seventy livres had accumulated more money than any other servant in Saumur. She was one of the family, spending her evenings in the sitting-room of her employers, where a single candle was all that was allowed for illumination. M. Grandet also decided that no fire must be lit in the sitting-room from April 1 to October 31, and every morning he went into the kitchen and doled out the bread, sugar, and other provisions for the day to Nanon, and candles to his daughter.

As for *Mme*. Grandet, her gentleness and meekness could not stand up against her husband's force of character. She had brought more than 300,000 francs to her husband, and yet had no money save an occasional six francs for pocket-money, and the only certain source of income was four or five louis which Grandet made the Belgian merchants, who bought his wine, pay over and above the stipulated price. Often enough he would borrow some of this money even. *Mme*. Grandet was too gentle to revolt, but her pride forbade her ever asking a sou from her husband. With her daughter she attended to the household linen, and found compensation for the unhappiness of her lot in the consolations of religion, and also in the company of Eugenie. It never occurred to M. Grandet that his wife suffered, or had reason to suffer. He was making money; every year his riches increased. He paid for sittings in church, and gave his daughter five francs a month for a dress allowance. That his wife hardly ever left the house except occasionally to go to church, that her dress was invariably the same, and that she never asked him for anything, never troubled M. Grandet. Avarice was his consuming passion, and it was satisfactory to him that no one attempted to cross him.

Twice a year, on her birthday, and on the day of her patron saint, Eugenie received some rare gold coin from her father, and then he would take pleasure in looking at her store—for these coins were not to be spent. Old M. Grandet liked to think that his daughter was learning to appreciate gold, and that in giving her these precious coins he was not parting with his money, but only putting it in another box.

II.—Eugenie's Springtime of Love

On Eugenie's twenty-third birthday, November, 1819, the three Cruchots—the notary, the abbe, and the magistrate—and the three Des Grassins—M. des Grassins, *Mme*. des Grassins, and their son Adolphe— hastened to pay their respects to the heiress as soon as dinner was over. Mr. Grandet, in honour of the occasion, lit a second candle in the sitting-room. "It is Eugenie's birthday, and we must have an illumination," he remarked. The Cruchots all brought handsome bouquets of flowers for Eugenie, but their gifts were eclipsed by a showy workbox fitted with trumpery gilded silver fittings, which *Mme*. des Grassins presented, and which filled Eugenie with delight. "Adolphe brought it from Paris," whispered *Mme*. des Grassins in the girl's ear. Old Grandet quite

understood that both families were in pursuit of his daughter for the sake of her fortune, and made up his mind that neither of them should have her.

Page 120

They all sat down to play lotto at half-past eight, except old Grandet, who never played any game. Just as *Mme*. Grandet had won a pool of sixteen sous, a heavy knock at the front door startled everybody in the room. Nanon took up one of the candles and went to the door, followed by Grandet. Presently they returned with a young man, good-looking, and fashionably dressed. This was Charles Grandet, the son of the old cooper's brother, a merchant in Paris. The young man brought a good many trunks, and while Nanon saw to the bestowal of his luggage, all the lotto players looked at the visitor. Old Grandet took the only remaining candle from the table to read a long letter which his nephew had brought. Charles had set off from Paris at his father's bidding to pay a visit to his uncle at Saumur. He was a dandy, and his appearance was in striking contrast to the attire of the Cruchots and the Des Grassins. Moreover, he already had had a love affair with a great lady whom he called Annette, and he was a good shot. Altogether, Charles Grandet was a vain and selfish youth, conscious of his superiority over the unfashionable provincials of Saumur, but determined at all costs to enjoy himself as best he could.

As for Eugenie, it seemed to her that she had never seen such a perfect gentleman as this cousin from Paris, and, at the risk of incurring her father's wrath, succeeded in persuading Nanon to do what she could to make things comfortable for their guest in the cold and dreary house.

Nanon was milking the cow when Eugenie preferred her kindly and considerate request, and the faithful serving-maid at once obligingly promised to save a little cream from her master's supply of milk. The Cruchots and Des Grassins retired discomfited before the presence of Charles Grandet. The young Parisian, brought up in luxury by his father, could not understand why he should have been sent to this outlandish place, and he was the more mystified by his uncle telling him they would talk over "important business" on the morrow. Then, indeed, in plain and brutal words he learnt the contents of the fatal letter he had brought from his father. It was twenty-three years since old Grandet had seen his brother in Paris, but this brother had become a rich man, too; of that old Grandet was aware. And now Victor-Ange-Guillaume Grandet wrote to him from Paris, saying: "By the time that this letter is in your hands, I shall cease to exist. The failure of my stockbroker and my notary has ruined me, and while I owe nearly four million francs, my assets are only a quarter of my debts. I cannot survive the disgrace of bankruptcy. I know you cannot satisfy my creditors, but you can be a father to my unhappy child, Charles, who is now alone in the world. Lay everything before him, and tell him that in my work he can restore the fortune he has lost. My failure is due neither to dishonesty nor to carelessness, but to causes beyond my control."

Page 121

Old Grandet told his nephew plainly that his father was dead, and even showed him a paragraph already in the papers referring to the ruin and suicide of the unhappy man—-so quickly is such news spread abroad.

For the moment, his penniless state was nothing to the young man; the loss of his father was the only grief.

Old Grandet let him alone, and in a day or two Charles gathered up strength to face the situation.

Mme. Grandet and Eugenie were full of tender sympathy for the unhappy young man, and this sympathy in Eugenie's case ripened into love. One day, when Eugenie passed her cousin's chamber, the door stood ajar; she thrust it open, and saw that Charles had fallen asleep in his chair. She entered and found out from a letter her cousin had written to Annette, which she read as it lay on the table, that he was in want of money—for old Grandet was resolved to do nothing for his nephew beyond paying his passage to Nantes. The next night she brought him all her store of gold coins, worth six thousand francs. Her confidence and devoted affection touched Charles deeply. He accepted the money, and in return gave into her keeping a small leather box containing portraits of his father and mother, richly set in gold. Eugenie promised to guard this box until he returned.

For it was decided that Charles Grandet must go to the Indies to seek his fortune. He sold his jewels and finery, and paid his personal debts in Paris, and waited on at Saumur till the ship should be ready to sail for Nantes.

And in those few weeks came the springtime of love for Eugenie.

Old Grandet was too busy to trouble about his nephew, who was so shortly to be got rid of, and both Nanon and *Mme*. Grandet liked and pities the young man.

Charles Grandet, on his side, was conscious that his Parisian friends would not have shown him a like kindness, and the purity and truth of Eugenie's love were something he had not hitherto experienced.

The cousins would snatch a few moments together in the early morning, and once, only a few days before his departure, they met in the long, dark passage at the foot of the staircase. "Dear cousin, I cannot expect to return for many years," Charles said sadly. "We must not consider ourselves bound in any way."

"You love me?" was all Eugenie asked. And on his reply, she added: "Then I will wait for you, Charles."

Presently his arms were round her waist. Eugenie made no resistance, and, pressed to his heart, received her lover's kiss.

“Dear Eugenie, a cousin is better than a brother; he can marry you,” said Charles.

Thus the lovers vowed themselves to each other. Then came the terrible hour of parting, and Charles Grandet sailed from Nantes for the Indies; and the old house at Saumur suddenly seemed to Eugenie to have become very empty and bare indeed.

III.—M. Grandet’s Discovery

Page 122

Grandet, on the advice of M. Cruchot, the notary, saved the honour of his dead brother. There was no act of bankruptcy. M. Cruchot, to gain favour with old Grandet, proposed to go to Paris to look after the dead man's affairs, but suggested the payment of expenses. It was M. des Grassins, however, who went to Paris, for he undertook to make no charge; and the banker not only attended to Guillaume Grandet's creditors, but stayed on in Paris—having been made a deputy—and fell in love with an actress. Adolphe joined his father, and achieved an equally unpleasant reputation.

The property of Guillaume Grandet realised enough money to pay the creditors a dividend of 47 per cent. They agreed that they would deposit, upon certain conditions, their bills with an accredited notary, and each one said to himself that Grandet of Saumur would pay.

Grandet of Saumur, however, did not pay. Endless delays were forthcoming, and Des Grassins was always holding out promises that were not fulfilled.

As years went by some of the creditors gave up all hope of payment, others died; till at the end of five years the deficit stood at 1,200,000 francs.

In the meantime, a terrible blow had fallen on Mine. Grandet. On January 1, 1820, old Grandet, according to his wont, presented his daughter with a gold coin, and asked to see her store of gold pieces.

All Eugenie would tell him was that her money was gone. In vain the old man stormed. Eugenie kept on saying: "I am of age; the money was mine."

Grandet raved at his wife, who, weary and ill, gave him no satisfaction. In fact, Mine. Grandet's character had become stronger through her daughter's trouble, and she refused to support her husband's angry demands.

Then old Grandet ordered Eugenie to retire to her own apartment. "Do you hear what I say? Go!" he shouted.

Soon all the town knew that Eugenie was a prisoner in her own room, seeing no one but her mother and old Nanon; and public opinion, knowing nothing of the cause of the quarrel, blamed the old cooper. For six months this state of things lasted, and Mine. Grandet's illness became steadily worse. M. Cruchot, the notary, warned old Grandet that, in the event of his wife's death, he would have to give an account to Eugenie of her mother's share in the joint estate; and that Eugenie could then, if she chose, demand her mother's fortune, to which she would be entitled.

This seriously alarmed the avaricious old cooper, and he made up his mind to a reconciliation, for his wife assured him she would never get better while Eugenie was treated so badly. Eugenie and her mother were talking of Charles, from whom no letter

had come, and getting what pleasure they could from looking at the portraits of his parents, when old Grandet burst into the room. Catching sight of the gold fittings, he snatched up the dressing-case, and would have wrenched off the precious metal. “Father, father,” Eugenie called out, “this case is not yours; it is not mine, it is a sacred trust! It belongs to my unhappy cousin. Do not pull it to pieces!”

Page 123

Old Grandet took no notice.

“Oh, have pity; you are killing me!” said the mother.

Eugenie caught up a knife, and her cry brought Nanon on the scene.

“Father, if you cut away a single piece of gold, I shall stab myself. You are killing my mother, and you will kill me, too.”

Old Grandet for once was frightened. He tried to make it up with his wife, he kissed Eugenie, and even promised that Eugenie should marry her cousin if she wanted to.

Mme. Grandet lingered till October, and then died. “There is no happiness to be had except in heaven; some day you will understand that,” she said to her daughter just before she passed away.

M. Cruchot was called in after Mine. Grandet’s death, and in his presence Eugenie agreed to sign a deed renouncing her claim to her mother’s fortune while her father lived. She signed it without making any objection, to old Grandet’s great relief, and he promised to allow her 100 francs a month. But the old man himself was failing. Bit by bit he relinquished his many activities, but lived on till seven years had passed. Then he died, his eyes kindling at the end at the sight of the priest’s sacred vessels of silver. His brother’s creditors were still unpaid. Eugenie was informed by M. Cruchot that her property amounted to 17,000,000 francs. “Where can my cousin be?” she asked herself. “If only we knew where the young gentleman was, I would set off myself and find him,” Nanon said to her. The poor heiress was very lonely. The faithful Nanon, now fifty-nine, married Antoine Cornoiller, the bailiff of the estates, and these two, who had known one another for years, lived in the house.

The Cruchots still hoped to marry M. le President to Eugenie, and every birthday the magistrate brought a handsome bouquet. But the heart of Eugenie remained steadfast to her cousin.

“Ah, Nanon,” she would say, “why has he never written to me once all these years?”

Mme. des Grassins, unwilling to see the triumph of her old rivals, the Cruchots, went about saying that the heiress of the Grandet millions would marry a peer of France rather than a magistrate. Eugenie, however, thought neither of the peer nor of the magistrate. She gave away enormous sums in charity, and lived on quietly in the dreary old house. Her wealth brought her no comfort, her only treasures were the two portraits left in her charge. Yet she went on loving, and believed herself loved in return.

IV.—The Honour of the Grandets

Charles Grandet, in the course of eight years, met with considerable success in his trading ventures. He saw very quickly that the way to make money in the tropics, as in Europe, was to go in for buying and selling men, and so he plunged into the slave trade of Africa, and under the name of Carl Shepherd was known in the East Indies, in the United States, and on the African coasts. His plan was to get rich as speedily as possible, and then return to Paris and live respected. For a time—that is, on his first voyage—the thought of Eugenie gave him infinite pleasure; but soon all recollection of Saumur was blotted out, and his cousin became merely a person to whom he owed 6,000 francs.

Page 124

In 1827, Charles returned to Bordeaux with 1,900,000 francs in gold dust. On board the ship he became very intimate with the d'Aubrions, an old aristocratic but impoverished family. *Mme*. d'Aubrion was anxious to secure Charles Grandet for her only daughter, and they all travelled to Paris together. *Mme*. d'Aubrion pointed out to Grandet that her influence would get him a court appointment, with title of Comte d'Aubrion; and Annette, with whom Grandet took counsel, approved the alliance.

Des Grassins, hearing of the wanderer's return, called, and, anxious to get some remuneration for all the trouble he had taken, explained that 300,000 francs were still owing to his father's creditors. But Charles Grandet answered coolly that he had nothing to do with his father's debts.

Des Grassins, however, wrote to his wife that he would yet make the dead Guillaume Grandet a bankrupt, and that would stop the marriage, and *Mme*. des Grassins showed the letter to Eugenie.

Eugenie had already heard from her cousin. Charles Grandet sent a cheque for 8,000 francs, asked for the return of his dressing-case, and casually mentioned that he was going to make a brilliant marriage with *Mlle*. d'Aubrion, for whom he admitted he had not the slightest affection.

This was the shipwreck of all Eugenie's hopes—the utter and complete ruin.

"My mother was right," she said, weeping. "To suffer, and then die—that is our lot!"

That same evening when M. Cruchot de Bonfons, the magistrate, called on Eugenie, she promised to marry him on condition that he claimed none of the rights of marriage over her, and that he would immediately go and settle all her uncle's creditors in full.

M. de Bonfons, only too thankful to win the heiress of the Grandet millions on any terms, agreed, and set off at once for Paris with a cheque for 1,500,000 francs. He carried a letter from Eugenie to Charles Grandet, a letter that contained no word of reproach, but announced the full discharge of his father's debts.

Charles was astonished to hear from M. de Bonfons of his forthcoming marriage with Eugenie, and he was dumfounded when the president told him that *Mlle*. Grandet possessed 17,000,000 francs.

Mme. d'Aubrion interrupted the interview; her husband's objection to Grandet's marriage with his daughter was removed with the payment of the long-standing creditors and the restoration of the family honour of the Grandets.

M. de Bonfons, who now dropped the name of Cruchot, married Eugenie, and shortly afterwards was made Councillor to the Court Royal at Angers. His loyalty to the

government was rewarded with further office. M. de Bonfons became deputy of Saumur; and then, dreaming of higher honours, perhaps a peerage, he died.

M. de Bonfons always respected his wife's request that they should live apart; with remarkable cunning he had drafted the marriage contract, in which, "In case there was no issue of the marriage, husband and wife bequeathed to each other all their property, without exception or reservation." Death disappointed his schemes. *Mme*. de Bonfons was left a widow three years after marriage, with an income of 800,000 livres.

Page 125

She is a beautiful woman still, but pale and sorrowful. In spite of her income she lives on in the old house, and cold and sunless it bears a likeness to her own life. Spending little on herself, *Mme*. de Bonfons gives away large sums in succouring the unfortunate; but she is very lonely—without husband, children, or kindred. She dwells in the world, but is not of it.

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Old Goriot

"Old Goriot," or, to give it its French title, "Le Pere Goriot," is one of the series of novels to which Balzac gave the title of "The Comedy of Human Life." It is a comedy, mingled with lurid tragic touches, of society in the French capital in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The leading character in this story is, of course, Old Goriot, and the passion which dominates him is that of paternity. In the picture which Balzac draws of Parisian life, from the sordid boarding-house to the luxurious mansions of the gilded aristocracy in the days of the Bourbon Restoration, the author exhibits that tendency to over-description for which he was criticised by his contemporaries, and to dwell too much on petty details. It may be urged, however, that it is the cumulative effect of these minute touches that is necessary for the true realisation of character.

I.—In a Paris Boarding-House

Madame Vauquer, nee Conflans, is an elderly lady who for forty years past has kept a Parisian middle-class boarding-house, situated in the Rue Neuve Sainte-Genevieve, between the Latin Quarter and the Faubourg Saint Marcel. This pension, known under the name of the Maison Vauquer, receives men as well as women—young men and old; but hitherto scandal has never attacked the moral principles on which the respectable establishment has been conducted. Moreover, for more than thirty years, no young woman has been seen in the house; and if any young man ever lived there, it was because his family were able to make him only a very slender allowance. Nevertheless, in 1819, the date at which this drama begins, a poor young girl was found there.

The Maison Vauquer is of three stories, with attic chambers, and a tiny garden at the back. The ground floor consists of a parlour lighted by two windows looking upon the street. Nothing could be more depressing than this chamber, which is used as the sitting-room. It is furnished with chairs, the seats of which are covered with strips of alternate dull and shining horsehair stuff, while in the centre is a round table with a marble top. The room exhales a smell for which there is no name, in any language, except that of *odour de pension*. And yet, if you compare it with the dining-room which adjoins, you will find the sitting-room as elegant and as perfumed as a lady's boudoir. There misery reigns without a redeeming touch of poesie—poverty, penetrating, concentrated, rasping. This room

Page 126

appears at its best when at seven in the morning Madame Vauquer, preceded by her cat, enters it from her sleeping chamber. She wears a tulle cap, under which hangs awry a front of false hair; her gaping slippers flop as she walks across the room. Her features are oldish and flabby; from their midst springs a nose like the beak of a parrot. Her small fat hands, her person plump as a church rat, her bust too full and tremulous, are all in harmony with the room. About fifty years of age, Madame Vauquer looks as most women do who say that they have had misfortunes.

At the date when this story opens there were seven boarders in the house. The first floor contained the two best suites of rooms. Madame Vauquer occupied the small, and the other was let to Madame Couture, the widow of a paymaster in the army of the French Republic. She had with her a very young girl, named Victorine Taillefer. On the second floor, one apartment was tenanted by an old gentleman named Poiret; the other by a man of about forty years of age, who wore a black wig, dyed his whiskers, gave out that he was a retired merchant, and called himself Monsieur Vautrin. The third story was divided into four single rooms, of which one was occupied by an old maid named Mademoiselle Michonneau, and another by an aged manufacturer of vermicelli, who allowed himself to be called “Old Goriot.” The two remaining rooms were allotted to a medical student known as Bianchon, and to a law student named Eugene de Rastignac. Above the third story were a loft where linen was dried, and two attic rooms, in one of which slept the man of all work, Christophe, and in the other the fat cook, Sylvie.

The desolate aspect of the interior of the establishment repeated itself in the shabby attire of the boarders. Mademoiselle Michonneau protected her weak eyes with a shabby green silk shade mounted on brass wire, which would have scared the Angel of Pity. Although the play of passions had ravished her features, she retained certain traces of a fine complexion, which suggested that the figure conserved some fragments of beauty. Poiret was a human automaton, who had earned a pension by mechanical labour as a government functionary.

Mademoiselle Victorine Taillefer was of a sickly paleness, like a girl in feeble health; but her grey-black eyes expressed the sweetness and resignation of a Christian. Her dress, simple and cheap, betrayed her youthful form. Happy, she might have been beautiful, for happiness imparts a poetic charm to women, as dress is the artifice of it. If love had ever given sparkle to her eyes, Victorine would have been able to hold her own with the fairest of her compeers. Her father believed he had reason to doubt his paternity, though she loved him with passionate tenderness; and after making her a yearly allowance of six hundred francs, he disinherited her in favour of his only son, who was to be the sole successor to his millions. Madame Couture was a distant relation of Victorine’s mother, who had died in her arms, and she had brought up the orphan as her

own daughter in a strictly pious fashion, taking her with rigid regularity to mass and confession.

Page 127

Eugene de Rastignac, the eldest son of a poor baron of Angouleme, was a characteristic son of the South. His complexion was clear, hair black, eyes blue. His figure, manner, and habitual poses proved that he was a scion of a noble family, and that his early education had been based on aristocratic traditions. The connecting link between these two individuals and the other boarders was Vautrin—the man of forty, with the dyed whiskers. He was one of that sort of men who are familiarly described as "jolly good fellows." His face, furrowed with premature wrinkles, showed signs of hardness which belied his insinuating address. He was invariably obliging, with a breezy cheerfulness, though at times there was a steely expression in the eyes which inspired his fellow-boarders with a sense of fear. He knew or guessed the affairs of everybody in the house, but no one could divine his real business or his most inmost thoughts.

II.—The Beginnings of the Tragedy

Such a household ought to offer, and did present in miniature, the elements of a complete society. Among the inmates there was, as in the world at large, one poor discouraged creature—a butt on whom mocking pleasantries were rained. This patient sufferer was the old vermicelli maker, Goriot. Six years before, he had come to live at the Maison Vauquer, having, so he said, retired from business. He dressed handsomely, wore a gold watch, with thick gold chain and seals, flourished a gold snuff-box, and, when Madame Vauquer insinuated that he was a gallant, he smiled with the complacency of vanity tickled. Among the china and silver articles with which he decorated his sitting-room were a dish and porringer, on the cover of which were figures representing two doves billing and cooing.

"That," said Goriot, "is the present which my wife made to me on the first anniversary of our wedding-day. Poor dear, she bought it with the little savings she hoarded before our marriage. Look you, madame, I would rather scratch the ground with my nails for a living than part with that porringer. God be praised, however, I shall be able to drink my coffee out of this dish every morning during the rest of my days. I cannot complain. I have on the shelf, as the saying is, plenty of baked bread for a long time to come."

At the close of his first year Goriot began to practise little economies; at the end of the second he removed his rooms to the second floor, and did without a fire all the winter. This although, as Madame Vauquer's prying eyes had seen, Goriot's name appeared in the list of state funds for a sum representing an income of from eight to ten thousand francs. Henceforth she denounced him to the other paying-guests as an unprincipled old libertine, who lavished his enormous income from the funds on unknown youthful charmers. The boarders agreed; and when two young ladies in the most fashionable and costly attire visited him in succession in a semi-stealthy manner, their suspicions, as they believed, were confirmed. On one occasion, Sylvie followed Old Goriot and his beautiful visitor to a side street, and saw that there was a splendid carriage waiting and that she got into it. When challenged upon the point, the old man meekly declared that

they were his daughters, though he never disclosed that their occasional visits were paid only to wheedle money from him.

Page 128

The years passed, and with the gentleness of a broken spirit, beaten down to the docility of misery, Goriot curtailed his personal expenses, and again removed his lodgings; this time to the third floor. His dress turned shabbier; with each ascending grade his diamonds, gold snuff-box, and jewels disappeared. He grew thinner in person; his face, which had once the beaming roundness of a well-to-do middle-class gentleman, became furrowed with wrinkles. Lines appeared in his forehead, his jaws grew gaunt and sharp; and at the end of the fourth year he bore no longer the likeness of his former self. He was now a wan, worn-out septuagenarian—stupid, vacillating.

Eugene de Rastignac had ambitions, not only to win distinction as a lawyer, but also to play a part in the aristocratic society of Paris. He observed the influence which women exert upon society; and at his suggestion his aunt, Madame de Marcillac, who lived with his father in the old family chateau near Angouleme, and who had been at court in the days before the French Revolution, wrote to one of her great relatives, the Viscomtesse de Beauseant, one of the queens of Parisian society, asking her to give kindly recognition to her nephew. On the strength of that letter Eugene was invited to a ball at the mansion of the viscomtesse in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. The viscomtesse became interested in him, especially as she was suffering from the desertion of the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto, a Portuguese nobleman who had been long her lover, and stood sponsor for him in society. At the Faubourg, Eugene met the Duchesse de Langeais, from whom he learned the history of Old Goriot.

"During the Revolution," said the duchesse, "Goriot was a flour and vermicelli merchant, and, being president of his section, was behind the scenes. When a great scarcity of food was at hand he made his fortune by selling his goods for ten times what they cost him. He had but one passion; he loved his daughters, and by endowing each of them with a dot of eight hundred thousand francs, he married the eldest, Anastasie, to the Count de Restaud, and the youngest, Delphine, to the Baron de Nucingen, a rich German financier. During the Empire, his daughters sometimes asked their father to visit them; but after the Restoration the old man became an annoyance to his sons-in-law. He saw that his daughters were ashamed of him; he made the sacrifice which only a father can, and banished himself from their homes. There is," continued the duchesse, "something in these Goriot sisters even more shocking than their neglect of their father, for whose death they wish. I mean their rivalry to each other. Restaud is of ancient family; his wife has been adopted by his relatives and presented at court. But the rich sister, the beautiful Madame Delphine de Nucingen, is dying with envy, the victim of jealousy. She is a hundred leagues lower in society than her sister. They renounce each other as they both renounced their

Page 129

father. Madame de Nucingen would lap up all the mud between the Rue Saint-Lazare and the Rue de Crenelle to gain admission to my salon." What the duchesse did not reveal was that Anastasie had a lover, Count Maxime de Trailles, a gambler and a duellist. To pay the gambling losses of this unscrupulous lover, to the extent of two hundred thousand francs, the Countess de Restaud induced Old Goriot to sell out of the funds nearly all that remained of his great fortune, and give the proceeds to her.

Returning to his lodgings from a ball in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, Eugene saw a light in Goriot's room; and, without being noticed, watched the old man laboriously twisting two pieces of silver plate—his precious dish and porringer—into one lump.

"He must be mad," thought the student.

"The poor child!" groaned Goriot.

The next morning Goriot visited a silversmith, and the Countess de Restaud received the money to redeem a note of hand which she had given to a moneylender on behalf of her lover.

"Old Goriot is sublime," muttered Eugene when he heard of the transaction.

Delphine de Nucingen also had an admirer, Count de Marsay, through whose influence she expected to be introduced into the exclusive aristocratic society to which even the great wealth of her husband and his German patent of nobility could not secure an entry. Apart from her social aspirations, Delphine was personally extravagant; and as the baron was miserly and only gave her a very scanty allowance, she visited the gambling dens of the Palais Royale to try and raise the money which she could no longer coax from her old father.

III.—A Temptation and a Murder

To be young, to thirst after a position in the world of fashion, to hunger for the smiles of beautiful women, to obtain an entry into the salons of the Faubourg, meant to Rastignac large expenditure. He wrote home asking for a loan of twelve hundred francs, which, he said, he must have at all costs. The Viscomtesse de Beauseant had taken him under her protection, and he was in a situation to make an immediate fortune. He must go into society, but had not a penny even to buy gloves. The loan would be returned tenfold.

The mother sold her jewels, the aunt her old laces, his sisters sacrificed their economies, and the twelve hundred francs were sent to Eugene. With this sum he launched into the gay life of a man of fashion, dressed extravagantly, and gambled recklessly. One day Vautrin arrived in high spirits, surprising Eugene conversing with

Victorine. This was Vautrin's opportunity, for which he had been preparing. When Victorine retired, Vautrin pointed out how impossible it was to maintain a position in society as a law student, and if Eugene wished to get on quickly he must either be rich, or make believe to be so.

Page 130

“In view of all the circumstances, therefore, I make a proposition to you,” said Vautrin to Eugene, “which I think no man in your position should refuse. I wish to become a great planter in the Southern States of America, and need two hundred thousand francs. If I get you a dot of a million, will you give me two hundred thousand francs? Is twenty per cent, commission on such a transaction too much? You will secure the affection of a little wife. A few weeks after marriage you will seem distracted. Some night, between kisses, you can own a debt of two hundred thousand francs, and ask your darling to pay it. The farce is acted every day by young men of good family, and no amorous young wife will refuse the money to the man she adores. Moreover, you will not lose the money; you will easily get it back by judicious speculation!”

“But where can I find such a girl?” said Eugene.

“She is here, close at hand.”

“Mademoiselle Victorine?”

“Precisely!”

“But how can that be?”

“She loves you; already she thinks herself the little Baroness de Rastignac.”

“She has not a penny!” cried Eugene in amazement.

“Ah, now we are coming to the point,” said Vautrin.

Thereupon, Vautrin insinuated that if papa Taillefer lost his son through the interposition of a wise Providence, he would take back his pretty and amiable daughter, who would inherit his millions. To this end he, Vautrin, frankly volunteered to play the part of destiny. He had a friend, a colonel in the army of the Loire, who would pick a quarrel with Frederic, the young blackguard son who had never sent a five-franc piece to his poor sister, and then “to the shades”—making a pass as if with a sword.

“Silence, monsieur! I will hear no more.”

“As you please, my beautiful boy! I thought you were stronger.”

A few days after this scene, Mademoiselle Michonneau and Poiret were sitting on a bench in the Jardin des Plantes, when they were accosted by the chief of the detective force. He told them that the minister of police believed that a man calling himself Vautrin, who lived with them in the Maison Vauquer, was an escaped convict from Toulon galleys, Jacques Collin, but known by the nickname of Trompe-la-Mort, and one of the most dangerous criminals in all France. In order to obtain certainty as to the identity of Vautrin with Collin he offered a bribe of three thousand francs if mademoiselle

would administer a potion in his coffee or wine, which would affect him as if he were stricken with apoplexy. During his insensibility they could easily discover whether Vautrin had the convict's brand on his shoulder. The pair accepted the bribe, and the plot succeeded. Vautrin was identified as Collin and arrested, just as a messenger came to announce that Frederic Taillefer had been killed in a duel, and Victorine was carried off with Madame Couture to her father's home, the sole heir

Page 131

to his millions. When he was being pinioned to be conveyed back to the galleys, Collin looked upon his late fellow boarders with fierce scorn. “Are you any better than we convicts are?” said he. “We have less infamy branded on our shoulders than you have in your hearts—you flabby members of a gangrened society. There is some virtue here,” exclaimed he, striking his breast. “I have never betrayed anyone. As for you, you old female Judas,” turning to Mademoiselle Michonneau, “look at these people. They regard me with terror, but their hearts turn with disgust even to glance at you. Pick up your ill-gotten gains and begone.” As Jacques Collin disappeared from the Maison Vauquer, and from our story, Sylvie, the fat cook, exclaimed: “Well, he was a man all the same!”

Although the way was now clear for Rastignac to marry the enormously wealthy Victorine, he paid court instead to Delphine, the Baroness de Nucingen, and dined with her every night. Old Goriot was informed of the intrigue by the baroness’s maid. He did not resent but rather encouraged the liaison, and spent his last ten thousand francs in furnishing a suite of apartments for the young couple, on condition that he was to be allowed to occupy an adjoining room, and see his daughter every day.

IV.—Old Goriot’s Death-Bed

The Viscomtesse de Beauseant was broken-hearted when the marriage of her lover was accomplished, but to maintain a brave spirit in the face of society she gave a farewell ball before retiring to her country estate. Among those invited was the Countess de Restaud, who ordered a rich costume for the occasion, which, however, she was unable to pay for. Her husband, the count, insisted on her appearing at the ball and wearing the family diamonds, which she had pawned to discharge her lover’s gambling debts, and which had been redeemed to save the family honour. Anastasie sent her maid to Old Goriot, who rose from a sick-bed, sold his last forks and spoons for six hundred francs, pledged his annuity for four hundred francs, and so raised a thousand, which enabled Anastasie to obtain the gown and shine at the ball. Through Rastignac’s influence, Delphine, Baroness de Nucingen, received from the viscomtesse a ticket for the dance, and insisted on going, as Rastignac declared “even over the dead body of her father,” to challenge her sister’s social precedence at the supreme society function. The ball was the most brilliant of the Parisian season. Both Goriot’s daughters satisfied their selfish ambitions and gave never a thought to their old parent in the wretched Maison Vauquer.

For Old Goriot was sick unto death. His garret was bare; the walls dripped with moisture; the floor was damp; the bed was comfortless, and the few faggots which made the handful of fire had been bought only by the money got from pawning Eugene’s watch. Christophe, the man servant, was sent by Rastignac to tell the daughters of their father’s condition.

Page 132

“Tell them that I am not very well,” said Old Goriot; “that I should like to see them, to kiss them before I die.”

By and by, when the messenger had gone, the old man said: “I don’t want to die. To die, my good Eugene, is—not to see them there, where I am going. How lonely I shall be! Hell, to a father, is to be without his children. Tell me, if I go to heaven, can I come back in spirit and hover near them? You saw them at the ball; they did not know that I was ill, did they?”

On the return of the messenger, Old Goriot was told that both his daughters refused to come and see him. Delphine was too tired and sleepy; Anastasie was discussing with her husband the future disposition of her marriage portion. Then alternately Goriot blamed his daughters and pardoned their unfilial and selfish behaviour.

“My daughters were my vice—my mistresses. Oh, they will come! Come, my darlings! A kiss, a last kiss, the viaticum of your father! I am justly punished; my children were good, and I have spoiled them; on my head be their sins. I alone am guilty; but guilty through love.” Eugene tried to soothe the old man by saying that he would go himself to fetch his daughters; but Goriot kept muttering in his semi-delirium. “Here, Nasie! here Delphine, come to your father who has been so good to you, and who is dying! Are they coming? No? Am I to die like a dog? This is my reward; forsaken, abandoned! They are wicked; they are criminal. I hate them. I will rise from my coffin to curse them. Oh, this is horrible! Ah, it is my sons-in-law who keep them away from me!”

“My good Old Goriot,” said Eugene, “be calm.”

“Not to see them—it is the agony of death!”

“You shall see them.”

“Ah! my angels!”

And with these feeble words, Old Goriot sank back on the pillow and breathed his last.

Anastasie did come to the death-chamber, but too late. “I could not escape soon enough,” she said to Rastignac. The student smiled sadly, and Madame de Restaud took her father’s hand and kissed it, saying, “Forgive me, my father.”

Goriot had a pauper’s funeral. The aristocratic sons-in-law refused to pay the expenses of the burial. These were scraped together with difficulty by Eugene de Rastignac, the law student, and Bianchon, the medical student, who had nursed him with loving tenderness to the last. At the graveside in Pere Lachaise, Eugene and Christophe were the only mourners; Bianchon’s duties detained him at the hospital. When the body of Old Goriot was lowered into the earth, the clergy recited a short prayer—all that could be given for the student’s money. The pall of night was falling; the mist struck a chill on

Eugene's nerves, and when he took a last glance at the shell containing all that was mortal of his old friend, he buried the last tear of his young manhood—a tear drawn by a sacred emotion from a pure heart.

Eugene wandered to the most elevated part of the cemetery, whence he surveyed that portion of the city between the Place Vendome and the dome of the Invalides, where lives that world of fashion which he had hungered to penetrate. With bitterness he muttered: "Now there is relentless war between us." And as the first act of defiance which he had sworn against society, Rastignac went to dine with Madame Nucingen!

Page 133

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The Magic Skin

In no other work is the special quality of Balzac's genius displayed so completely as in "La Peau de Chagrin," which we render as "The Magic Skin." Published in 1831, it is the earliest in date of his veritable masterpieces, and the finest in conception. There is no novel more soberly true to life than this strange fairy tale. His hero, the Marquis de Valentin, is a young aristocrat of the Byronic type. He rejects the simple joys and stern realities of human existence; he wants more than life can give. He gets what he wants. He obtains a magic skin which enables him to fulfil his every wish. But in so doing he uses up his vital powers. Such is the idea which makes this fantastic story a profound philosophical study.

I.—The Seal of Solomon

On a dull morning towards the end of October, 1830, a tall, pale, and rather handsome young man came to the Pont Royal, and leaned over the bridge, and gazed with wild and yet resolute eyes at the swirling waters below. Just as he was preparing to leap down, a ragged old woman passed by.

"Wretched weather for drowning oneself, isn't it?" she said, with a grin. "How cold and dirty the Seine looks!"

The young man turned and smiled at her in the delirium of his courage. Then, suddenly he shuddered. On a shed by the Tuileries he saw, written in large letters: "Help for the drowned." He foresaw the whole thing. A boat would put off to the rescue. If the rowers did not smash his skull in with their oars as he came to the surface, he would be taken to the shed and revived. If he were dead, a crowd would collect, newspaper men would come; his body would be recognised; and the Press would publish the news of the suicide of Raphael de Valentin. No! He would wait till nightfall, and then in a decent, private manner bequeath an unrecognizable corpse to a world that had disregarded his genius.

With the air of a wealthy man of leisure sauntering about the streets to kill time, the young marquis strolled down the Quai Voltaire, and followed the line of shops, looking listlessly at every window. But as he thought of the fate awaiting him at nightfall, men and houses swam in a mist before his eyes. To recover himself he entered a curiosity shop. "If you care to go through our galleries," said the red-haired shop-boy, "you will find something worth looking at."

Raphael climbed up a dark staircase lined with mummies, Indian idols, stuffed crocodiles, and goggle-eyed monsters. They all seemed to grin at him as he passed.

Haunted by these strange shapes belonging to the borderland between life and death, he walked in a kind of dream through a series of long, dimly lighted galleries, in which was piled, in mad confusion, the work of every age and every clime. Here was a lovely statue by Michael Angelo, from which dangled

Page 134

the scalp of a Red Indian. There, cold and impassive, was the lord of the ancient world, the Emperor Augustus, with a modern air-pump sticking in his eye. The walls were hung with priceless pictures, which were half-hidden by grimacing skeletons, rude wooden idols with horrible features, tall suits of gleaming armour, and figures of Egyptian deities, with the bodies of men and heads of animals. The place was a kitchen of all the arts and religions and interests of mankind.

This extraordinary confusion was rendered still more bizarre by the dim cross-lights that played upon everything. Raphael's eyes grew weary with gazing, and his mind was oppressed by the spectacle of the ruined splendours of thousands of years of human life. A fever born of hunger and exhaustion possessed him. The pictures appeared to light up, the statues seemed to move. Everything danced and swayed around him. Then a horrible Chinese monster advanced upon him with menacing eyes from the other side of the room, and he swooned away in terror.

When he came to, his eyes were dazzled by a flood or radiance streaming from a circle of crimson light. Before him, holding a bright red lamp, was a frail, white-haired, extraordinary man, clad in a long robe of black velvet. His body was wasted by extreme old age. His skin was like wrinkled parchment, and his lips were so thin and colourless that it was hardly possible to discern on his ivory-white face the line made by his mouth. But his eyes were marvellous. They were calm, clear and searching, and they glowed with the light and freshness of youth.

"So you have been looking over my collection," the old man said. "Do you wish to buy anything?"

"Buy?" said Raphael, with a strange smile. "I am utterly penniless. I have been examining your treasures just to while away the time till I could drown myself quietly and secretly at night. You will not grudge this last pleasure to a poet and man of learning, will you?"

"Penniless?" said the old man. "But you do not want to die because you are penniless! A young, handsome, intellectual lad like you could pick up a living somehow. What is it? Some woman, eh? Now let me help——"

"I want no help or advice or consolation," said Raphael furiously.

"And I will give you none," said the old man. "But as you are resolved to die, will you do something for me. I want to get rid of this."

He held the lamp up the wall, and showed Raphael a piece of very old shagreen, about the size of a fox's skin.

“Ah!” said Raphael. “A wild ass’s skin engraved with Sanscrit characters. Why, here’s the mark that some of the Eastern races call the Seal of Solomon!”

“You are truly a man of learning,” said the strange old merchant, his breath coming in quick pants through his nostrils. “No doubt you can read the inscription.”

“I should translate it thus,” said Raphael, fixing his eyes upon the skin.

Page 135

POSSESSING ME THOU POSSESSEST EVERYTHING. YET I
POSSESS THEE. SO GOD HAS WILLED IT. WISH, AND
THY WISHES SHALL BE ACCOMPLISHED. BUT MEASURE
THE WISHES ACCORDING TO THY LIFE. HERE
IT IS. I SHALL SHRINK WITH EACH WISH, AND
SO SHALL THY LIFE, WILT THOU TAKE ME?
TAKE ME! GOD WILL HEAR THEE. AMEN.

"Is it a joke or a mystery?"

"I do not know," said the old man. "I have offered the magic skin to many men. They laughed at it; but none would take it. I am like them. I doubt its power, but will not put it to the test."

"What!" said Raphael. "You have never formed a wish all the time you had it?"

"No!" said the old man. "I have discovered the great secret of human life. Look! I am a hundred and two years old. Do you know why men die? Because they use up the energy of life by wishing to do things and doing them. I am content to know things. My days have been spent wandering quietly over all the earth in the calm acquisition of knowledge. All desire, all lust after power are dead within me. So this skin, which I picked up in India, has never shrunk an inch since it came into my possession."

"You have never lived!" cried Raphael, turning from the old man, and seizing the skin. "Yes, I will take you. Now for a test. I am starving. Set before me a splendid banquet. Let me have as guests all the wildest, gayest, wittiest minds of young France. And women? Oh, the prettiest, wickedest women of the town! Wine, wit and women!"

A roar of laughter came from the old man. It resounded in the ears of Raphael like the laughter of a fiend from hell.

"Do you think my floors are going to open, and tables, waiters, and guests pop up before your eyes?" he said. "No! Your first wish is mean and vulgar; but it will be fulfilled in a natural manner. You wanted to die, eh? Your suicide is only postponed."

Raphael put the skin in his pocket, and abruptly left, saying, "You have never lived. I wish you knew what love was."

He heard the old man groan strangely, but without listening to his reproaches he rushed out of the shop, and in the street ran full tilt up against three young men.

"Brute! Ass! Idiot! Why, it's Raphael!" they cried. "You must come. Talk about a Roman orgy I We've been all over Paris looking, for you. A gorgeous feed. And all the girls from the Opera! The ancient Romans aren't in it."

“One at a time,” said Raphael. “Now, Emile, just tell me what are you all shouting about?”

“Do you know Taillefer, the wealthy banker?” said Emile. “He is founding a newspaper. All the talent of young France is to be enlisted. You’re invited to the inaugural festival to-night at the Rue Joubert. The ballot girls of the Opera are coming. Oh, Taillefer’s doing the thing in style!”

Page 136

Arm linked in arm, the four friends made their way to Taillefer's mansion, and there, in a large room brilliantly set out, they were welcomed by all the younger men of note in Paris. For some time Raphael felt ill at ease. He was surprised by the natural manner in which his wish had suddenly been accomplished. He took the magic skin out of his pocket, and looked at it. Magic? What man could believe nowadays in magic? But, nevertheless, he marvelled at the accidents of human life.

II—A Fight Against Fate

Although the banquet which he had desired was now set before him, Raphael was still very moody. Deaf to the loud, wild merriment of his companions, he thought sadly of the misfortune which had driven him that morning to the brink of the grave. Many noblemen find it difficult to exist in Paris on an income of several thousand pounds. The young Marquis de Valentin had lived there very happily on L12 a year. In 1826, his father, who had lost his wealth and lands in the Revolution, had died, leaving him L40. Taking a garret in the Rue des Cordiers, he had set about earning his living with his pen, and for three years he had laboured at a great work on "The Theory of the Will." He never went into society, but found a pleasant distraction from his studies in educating the daughter of his landlady.

Pauline Gaudin was a charming and beautiful child; her father, a baron of the empire, and an officer in the Grand Army, had been taken prisoner by the Russians in 1812, and never heard of since. Raphael was moved by the grace and innocence of the lovely human flower, that grew from a bud into an opening blossom under his care. But as he was too poor to marry her, he never made love to her.

Then, in January, 1830, he met the Countess Foedora, a brilliant, wealthy woman of society, widowed at the age of thirty, and eager to shine and astonish and captivate. For her sake, Raphael had put aside his scholarly studies and engaged in money-making hack-work. But after keeping him dangling about her for some months, she had cast him off, and in his misery he had resolved to end his life. Now he had got the magic skin. What if it were true what the strange old man had said? Should he wish to win the heart of Foedora? No! She was a woman without a heart. He would have nothing to do with women. Still, this skin!

"Measure it! Measure it!" he cried, flinging it down on the table.

"Measure what?" said Emile. "Has Taillefer's wine got into your head already?"

Raphael told them of the curiosity shop.

"That can be easily tested," said Emile, taking the skin and drawing its outline on a napkin. "Now wish, and see if it shrinks."

“I wish for six million pounds!” said Raphael.

“Hurrah!” said Emile. “And while you’re about it make us all millionaires.”

Taillefer’s notary, Cardot, who had been gazing at Raphael during the dinner, walked across the room to him.

Page 137

“My dear marquis,” he said, “I’ve been looking for you all the evening. Wasn’t your mother a Miss O’Flaharty?”

“Yes, she was,” said Raphael—“Barbara O’Flaharty.”

“Well, you are the sole heir of Major O’Flaharty, who died last August at Calcutta, leaving a fortune of six millions.”

“An incalculable fortune,” said Emile. Raphael spread out the skin upon the napkin. He shuddered violently on seeing a slight margin between the pencil-line on the napkin and the edge of the skin.

“What’s the matter?” said the notary. “He has got a fortune very cheaply.”

“Hold him up,” said some one. “The joy will kill him.”

A ghostly whiteness spread over the face of the happy heir. He had seen Death! He stared at the shrunken skin and the merciless outline on the napkin, and a feeling of horror came over him. The whole world was his; he could have all things. But at what a cost!

“Do you wish for some asparagus, sir?” said, a waiter.

“*I wish for nothing!*” shrieked Raphael. And he fled from the banquet.

“So,” he said, when he was at last alone, “in this enlightened age, when science has stripped the very stars of their secrets, here am I frightened out of my senses by an old piece of wild ass’s skin. To-morrow I will have it examined by Planchette, and put an end to this mad fancy.”

Planchette, the celebrated professor of mechanics, treated the thing as a joke.

“Come with me to Spieghalter,” he said. “He has just built a new kind of hydraulic press which I designed.”

Arrived there, Planchette asked Spieghalter to stretch the magic skin. “Our friend,” he said, “doubts if we can do it.”

“You see this crank?” said Spieghalter to Raphael, pointing to the new press. “Seven turns to it, and a solid steel bar would break into thousands of pieces.”

“The very thing I want,” said Raphael.

Planchette put the skin between the metal plates, and, proud of his new invention, he energetically twisted the crank.

“Lie flat all of you!” shouted Spieghalter. “We’re dead men.”

There was an explosion, and a jet of water spurted out with terrific force. Falling on a furnace it twisted up the mass of iron as if it had been paper. The hydraulic chamber of the press had given way.

“The skin is untouched,” said Planchette. “There was a flaw in the press.”

“No, no!” said Spieghalter. “My press was as sound as a bell. The devil’s in your skin, sir. Take it away!”

Spieghalter seized the talisman, and flung it on an anvil, and furiously belaboured it with a heavy sledgehammer. He then pitched it in a furnace, and ordered his workmen to blow the coal into a fierce white heat. At the end of ten minutes he drew it out with a pair of tongs uninjured. With a cry of horror the workmen fled from the foundry.

“I now believe in the devil,” said Spieghalter.

Page 138

“And I believe in God,” said Planchette.

Raphael departed in a hard, bitter rage. He was resolved to fight like a man against his strange fate. He would follow the example of the former owner of the magic skin, and give himself up to study and meditation, and live his life in the tranquil acquisition of knowledge, undisturbed by passion and desire, and lust for power, and dominion and glory. On receiving his vast inheritance, he bought a mansion in the Rue de Varenne, and engaged a crowd of intelligent, quiet servants to wait upon him.

But his first care had been to seek out his foster-father, Jonathan, the old and devoted servitor of his family. To him he confided his dreadful secret.

“You must stand between the world and me, Jonathan,” he said. “Treat me as a baby. Never ask me for orders. See that the servants feed me, and tend me, and care for me in absolute silence. Above all things, never let anyone pester me. Never let me form a wish of any kind.”

For some months, the eccentric Marquis de Valentin was the talk of Paris. He lived in monastic silence and seclusion, and Jonathan never permitted any of his friends to enter the mansion. But one morning his old tutor, Porriquet, called, and Jonathan thought he might cheer his young master. He could not ask Raphael: “Do you wish to see M. Porriquet?” But after some thought he found a way of putting the question: “M. Porriquet is here, my lord. Do you think he ought to enter?”

Raphael nodded. Porriquet was alarmed at the appearance of his pupil. He looked like a plant bleached by darkness. The fact was, Raphael had surrendered every right in life in order to live. He had despoiled his soul of all the romance that lies in a wish. The better to struggle with the cruel power that he had challenged, he had stifled his imagination. He did not allow himself even the pleasures of fancy, lest they should awaken some desire. He had become an automaton.

Porriquet, unfortunately, was now an irritating old proser. He had failed in life and wanted to air all his grievances. At the end of five minutes’ talk Raphael was about to wish that he would depart, when he caught sight of the magic skin hanging in a frame, with a red line drawn around it. Suppressing, with a shudder, his secret desire, he patiently bore with the old man’s prolixity. Porriquet wanted very much to ask him for money, but did not like to do so, and after complaining for quite an hour or more about things in general, he rose to depart.

“Perhaps,” he said, as he turned to leave the room, “I shall hear of a headmastership of a good school.”

“The very thing for you!” said Raphael. “I *wish* you could get it.”

Then, with a sudden cry, he looked at the frame. There was a thin white edge between the skin and the red line.

“Go, you fool!” he shouted. “I have made you a headmaster. Why didn’t you ask me for an annuity of a thousand pounds instead of using up ten years of my life on a silly wish? I could have won Foedora at the price! Conquered a kingdom!”

Page 139

His lips were covered with froth, and there was a savage light in his eyes. Porriquet fled in terror. Then Raphael fell back in a chair, and wept.

“Oh, my precious life!” he sobbed. “No more kindly thoughts! No more friendship!”

III.—The Agony of Death

Raphael’s condition had by now become so critical that a trip to Savoy was advised, and a few weeks later he was at Aix. One day, moving among the crowd of pleasure-seekers and invalids, a number of young men deliberately picked a quarrel with him, with the result that from one of them he received a challenge to fight a duel. Raphael did his utmost to persuade the other to apologise, even going to the extent of informing him of the terrible powers he possessed. Failing in his object, the fatal morning came round, and the unfortunate individual was shot through the heart. Not heeding the fallen man, Raphael hurriedly glanced at the skin to see what another man’s life had cost him. The talisman had shrunk to the size of a small oak-leaf.

Seeing that his master was given over to a gloomy despair that verged upon madness, Jonathan resolved to distract his mind at all costs, and knowing that he was passionately fond of music, he engaged a box for him at the Opera. But Raphael was afraid above all things, of falling in love. Under the illimitable desire of passion the magic skin would shrivel up in an hour. So he used a strange, distorting opera-glass which made the loveliest face seem hideous.

With this he sat in his box, he surveyed the scene around him. Who was that old man over there, sitting beside a dancing-girl that Raphael had seen at Taillefer’s? The owner of the curiosity shop! He had at last fallen in love, as Raphael had jestingly desired. No doubt the magic skin had shrunk under that wish before Raphael had measured it. A beautiful woman entered the theatre with a peer of France at her side. A murmur of admiration arose as she took her seat. She smiled at Raphael. In spite of the distorted image on his opera-glass, Raphael knew her. It was the Countess Foedora! In a single glance of intolerable scorn the man she had played false avenged himself. He did not waste an ill-wish on her. He merely took the glasses from his eyes, and answered her smile with a look of cold contempt. Everybody observed the sudden pallor of the countess; it was a public rejection.

“Raphael!”

The marquis turned at the sound of a beloved voice. Pauline was sitting in the box next to his. How beautiful she had grown! How maidenly she was still! Putting down his opera-glasses, Raphael talked to her of old times.

“You must come and see me to-morrow,” said Pauline. “I have your great work on ‘The Theory of the Will.’ Don’t you remember leaving it in the garret?”

“I was mad and blind then,” said Raphael. “But I am cured at last.”

“I wish Pauline to love me!” he kept repeating to himself all the way home. “I wish Pauline to love me!”

Page 140

With a strange mixture of wild anguish and fierce joy, he looked at the magic skin to see what this vehement wish had cost him. Nothing! Not a sign of shrinkage could be discerned. The fact was that even the greatest talisman could not realise a desire which had long since been fulfilled. Pauline had loved Raphael from the time when they first met; while he had been priding himself on living on twelve pounds a year, she had been painting screens up to two or three o'clock every night, in order to buy him food and firing.

"Oh, my simple-minded darling," she said to him the next day, sitting on his lap and twining her arms about his neck, "you will never know what a pleasure it was for me to pay my handsome tutor for all his kindness. And wasn't I cunning? You never found me out."

"But I've found out now," said Raphael, "and I am going to punish you severely. Instead of marrying you in three months' time, as you suggest, I shall marry you at the end of this week."

Raphael was now the happiest man in Paris. Seeing that the magic skin had not shrunk with his last wish, he thought that the spell over his life was removed. And that morning he had thrown the talisman down a disused well in the garden.

At the end of the week, Pauline was sitting at breakfast with Raphael in the conservatory overlooking the garden. She was wearing a light dressing-gown; her long hair was all dishevelled, and her little, white, blue-veined feet peeped out of their velvet slippers. She gave a little cry of dismay, when the gardener appeared.

"I've just found this strange thing at the bottom of one of the wells," he said.

He gave Raphael the magic skin. It was now scarcely as large as a rose leaf.

"Leave me, Pauline! Leave me at once!" cried Raphael. "If you remain I shall die before your eyes."

"Die?" she said. "Die? You cannot. I love you—I love you!"

"Yes, die!" he exclaimed, showing her the little bit of skin. "Look, dearest. This is a talisman which represents the length of my life, and accomplishes my wishes. You see how little is left."

Pauline thought he had suddenly grown mad. She bent over him, and took up the magic skin. As Raphael saw her, beautiful with love and terror, he lost all control over his desires. To possess her again, and die on her breast!

"Come to me Pauline!" he said.

She felt the skin tickling her hand as it rapidly shrivelled up. She rushed into the bedroom, and closed the door.

“Pauline! Pauline!” cried the dying man, stumbling after her. “I love you! I want you! I wish to die for you!”

With extraordinary strength—the last outburst of life—he tore the door off the hinges, and saw Pauline in agony on a sofa. She had stabbed herself.

“If I die, he will live!” she was crying.

Raphael staggered across the room, and fell into the arms of beautiful Pauline, dead.

Page 141

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The Quest of the Absolute

“La Recherche de l’Absolu” was published in 1834, with a touching dedication to Madame Josephine Delannoy: “Madame, may it please God that this, my book, may live when I am dead, that the gratitude which is due from me to you, and which equals, I trust, your motherlike generosity to me, may hope to endure beyond the limits set to human love.” The novel became a part of the “Human Comedy” in 1845. The struggle of Balthazar Claes in his quest for the Absolute, his disregard of all else save his work, and the heroic devotion of Josephine and Marguerite, are characteristic features of Balzac’s art; the sordidness of life and the mad passion for the unattainable are admirably relieved, as in “Eugenie Grandet” and “Old Goriot,” by a certain nobility and purity of motive. The novel is generally acknowledged one of Balzac’s masterpieces, both in vigour of portraiture and minuteness of detail. Perhaps no one was ever better fitted to depict the ruin wrought by a fixed idea than Balzac himself, who wasted much of his laborious life in struggling to discover a short cut to wealth.

I.—Claes, the Alchemist

In Douai, situated in the Rue de Paris, there is a house which stands out from all the rest in the city by reason of its purely Flemish character. In all its details, this tall and handsome house expresses the manners of the domesticated people of the Low Countries. The name of the house for some two centuries has been Maison Claes, after the great family of craftsmen who occupied it. These Van Claes had amassed fortunes, played a part in politics, and had suffered many vicissitudes in the course of history without losing their place in the mighty bourgeois world of commerce. They were substantial people, princes of trade.

At the end of the eighteenth century the representative of this ancient and affluent family was Balthazar Claes, a tall and handsome young man, who after some years’ residence in Paris, where he saw the fashionable world and made acquaintance with many of the great savants, including Lavoisier the chemist, returned to his home in Douai, and set himself to find a wife.

It was on a visit to a relation in Ghent that he heard gossip concerning a young lady living in Brussels, which made him curious to see so interesting a person. Rumour had two tales to tell of this *Mlle*. Josephine Temninck. She was beautiful, but she was deformed. Could deformity be triumphed over by beauty of face? A relative of Claes thought that it could, and maintained this opinion against the opposite camp. This relative spoke of *Mlle*. Temninck’s character, telling how the sweet girl had surrendered her share of the family estate that her younger brother might make a great marriage,

and how she had quite resigned herself, even on the threshold of her life, to the idea of spinsterhood and narrow means.

Page 142

Claes sought out this noble soul. He found her inexpressibly beautiful, and the malformation of one of her shoulders appeared as nothing in his eyes. He lost his heart to Josephine, and made passionate love to her. Distracted by such adoration, the beautiful cripple was now lifted to dizzy heights of joy and now plunged into abysmal depths of despair. She had deemed herself irreparably plain; in the eyes of a charming young man, she found herself beautiful. But, could such love endure through life? To be loved was delicious, but to be deceived after so surprising a release from solitude would be terrible.

Conscious of her deformity, intimidated by the future, she became in the purity of her soul a coquette. She dissimulated her feelings, became exacting, and hid from her lover the passion of joy which was consuming her; indeed, she only revealed her true self after marriage had shown her the steadfast nobility of her husband's character, when she could no longer doubt of his affection. He loved her with fidelity and ardour. She realised all his ideals, and no consideration of duty entered into their passionate affection. She was Spanish, and had the secret of charm in her variety of attraction; ill-educated though she was, like most daughters of Spanish noblemen, she was engaging and bewildering in the force of her own nature and the religion of her absorbing love. In society she was dull; for her husband alone she was enchanting. No couple could have been happier.

They had four children, two boys and two girls; the eldest a girl named Marguerite.

Fourteen years after their marriage, in the year 1809, a change appeared in Balthazar, but so gradually that *Mme*. Claes did not at first question it. He became thoughtful, reflective, silent, preoccupied. When Josephine Claes noticed this change, it was too late for her to ask questions; she waited for Balthazar to speak. She began to fear. Balthazar, whose whole heaven had lain in the happiness of the family life, who had loved to play with his children, to attend to his tulips, to sun himself in the dark eyes of Josephine, seemed now to forget the existence of them all. He was indifferent to everything.

People who questioned her were put off with the brave story that Balthazar had a great work in hand, which would bring fame one day to his native town. Josephine's hazard was founded on truth. Workmen had been engaged for some time in the garret of the house, and there Claes spent the greater part of his time. But the poor lady was to learn the full truth from the neighbours she had attempted to hoodwink. They asked her if she meant to see herself and her children ruined, adding that her husband was spending a fortune on scientific instruments, machinery, books, and materials in a search for the Philosopher's Stone.

Humiliated that the neighbours should know more than she did, and terrified by the prospect in front of her, Josephine at last spoke to her husband.

Page 143

“My dear,” he said, “you would not understand what I am about. I am studying chemistry, and I am perfectly happy.”

Things went from bad to worse. Claes became more taciturn and more invisible to his family. He was slovenly in dress and untidy in his habits. Only his servant Lemulquinier, or Mulquinier, as he was often called, was allowed to enter the attic and share his master’s secrets. *Mme*. Claes had a rival. It was science.

One day she went to the garret, but Claes repulsed her with wrath and roughness.

“My experiment is absolutely spoilt,” he cried vehemently. “In another minute I might have resolved nitrogen.”

II.—The Riddle of Existence

Josephine consulted Claes’s notary, M. Pierquin, a young man and a relative of the family. He looked into matters, and found that Claes owed a hundred thousand francs to a firm of chemists in Paris. He warned Josephine that ruin was certain if this state of things continued. Hitherto she had loved husband more than children; now the mother was roused in her, and for her children’s sakes she determined to act. She had sold her diamonds to provide for the housekeeping, since for six months Claes had given her nothing; she had sent away the governess; she had economised in a hundred directions. Now she must act against her husband. But her children came between her and her true life, since her true life was Balthazar’s. She loved him with a sublime passion which could sacrifice everything except her children.

One Sunday, after vespers, in 1812, she sent for her husband, and awaited him at a window of one of the lower rooms, which looked on the garden. Tears were in her eyes. As she sat there, suddenly over her head sounded the footsteps of Claes, making her start. No one could have heard that slow and dragging step unmoved. One wondered if it were a living thing.

He entered the apartment, thin, round-shouldered, with disordered long hair, his cravat awry, his clothes stained and torn.

“Are you so absorbed in your work, Balthazar?” said Josephine. “It is thirty-three Sundays since you have been either to vespers or mass.”

“Vespers?” he questioned, vaguely. Then added: “Ah, the children have been to church,” and walked to the window and looked at the tulips. As he stood there, he said to himself: “But yes, why shouldn’t they combine in a given time?”

His poor wife asked herself in despair, “Is he going mad?” Then, rousing herself, she called him by his name. Without paying heed to her he coughed and went to one of the spittoons beside the wainscot.

“Monsieur, I speak to you!”

“What of that?” he demanded, turning swiftly. She became deadly white.

“Forgive me, dear,” she whispered, and cried: “Ah, this is killing me!”

Tears in her eyes roused Claes out of his reverie. He took her into his arms, pushed open a door, and sprang lightly up the staircase. Finding the door of her apartment locked, he laid her gently in an armchair.

Page 144

“Thank you, dear,” she murmured. “I have not been so near your heart for a long time.”

Her loveliness postponed disaster. Enamoured by her beauty, rescued to humanity, Claes returned for a brief interval to the family life, and was adorable to his wife, charming to his children. When they were alone together, Josephine questioned him as to his secret work, telling him that she had begun to study chemistry in order that she might share his life. Touched by this devotion, Claes declared his secret. A Polish officer had come to their house in 1809, and had discussed chemistry with Claes. The result of the conversations had set Claes to search for the single element out of which all things are perhaps composed. The Polish officer had confided certain secrets to him, saying: “You are a disciple of Lavoisier; you are wealthy, you are free; I will give you my idea. The Primitive Element must be common to oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbon. Force must be the common principle of positive and negative electricity. Demonstrate these two hypotheses, and you will hold in your hands the First Cause, the solution of the great riddle of existence.”

As Claes rattled away, Josephine suddenly exclaimed, against her will: “So it was this man, who spent but one night with us, that stole your love from me and your children! Did he make the Sign of the Cross? Did you observe him closely? He was Satan! Only the devil could have stolen you from me. Ever since his visit you have ceased to be father and husband.”

“Do you rebuke me,” Balthazar asked, “for being superior to common men?”

And he poured out a tale of his achievements. In the height of his passion for her Josephine had never seen his face so shining with enthusiasm as it was now. Tears came into her eyes.

“I have combined chlorine and nitrogen,” he rhapsodised; “I have analysed endless substances. I have analysed tears! Tears are nothing more than phosphate of lime, chloride of sodium, mucus, and water.”

He ran on till she cried upon him to stop.

“You horrify me,” she said, “with your blasphemies. What my love is——”

“Spiritualised matter, given off,” replied Claes; “the secret, no doubt, of the Absolute. If I am the first to find it out! Think of it! I will make metals and diamonds. What Nature does I will do.”

“You trespass on God!” Josephine exclaimed impatiently. “You deny God! Ah, God has a force which you will never exercise!”

“What is that?” he demanded.

“Motion. Analysis is one thing, creation is another,” she said. Her pleadings were successful. Balthazar abandoned his researches, and the family removed to the country. He was awakened by his wife’s love to the knowledge that he had brought his fortune to the verge of ruin. He promised to abandon his experiments. As some amends, he threw himself into preparations for a great ball at the Maison Claes in honour of his wedding

Page 145

day. The festivity was saddened by the news of disaster to the Grand Army at Beresina. One of the letters that arrived that day was from the Polish officer, dying of his wounds, who sent Claes, as a legacy, some of his ideas for discovering the Absolute. No one danced; the fete was gloomy; only Marguerite shone like a lovely flower on the anxious company. When the guests departed, Balthazar showed Josephine the letter from the Pole. She did everything a woman could do to distract his thoughts. She made the home life enchanting. She entertained. She introduced the movement of the world into the great house. In vain. Her husband's *ennui* was terrible to behold. "I release you from your promise," she said to him one day.

Balthazar returned with Lemulquinier to the attic, and the experiments began anew. He was quite happy again.

A year passed; the Absolute was undiscovered. Once more ruin haunted the state room of the Maison Claes. Josephine's confessor, the Abbe de Solis, who had sold her jewels, now suggested selling some of the Flemish pictures. Josephine explained the situation to her husband.

"What do you think?" he cried. "I am within an ace of finding the Absolute. I have only to discover—"

Josephine broke down. She left her husband, and retired downstairs to her children. The servants were summoned. Madame Claes looked like death. Everybody was alarmed. Lemulquinier was told to go for the priest. He said he had monsieur's orders to see to in the laboratory.

III.—The Passing of Josephine

It was the beginning of the end for Josephine. As she lay dying, she saw judgment in the eyes of Marguerite—judgment on Balthazar. Her last days were sorrowed by the thought that the children would condemn their father. Balthazar came sometimes to sit with her, but he appeared to be unaware of her situation. He was charming to the younger children, but he was dead to the true condition of his wife.

One thing gave her peace. The Abbe de Solis brought his nephew to the house, and this young man, Emmanuel, who was good and noble, evidently created a favourable impression on Marguerite. The dying mother watched the progress of this love story with affectionate satisfaction. It was all she had to light her way to the grave. Pierquin told her that Balthazar had ordered him to raise three hundred thousand francs on his estate. She saw that ruin could not be averted; she lay at death's door, deserted by the husband she still worshipped, thinking of the children she had sacrificed. The noble

character of Marguerite cheered her last hours. In that child, she would live on and be a providence to the family.

One day she wrote a letter, addressed and sealed it, and showed it to Marguerite. It was addressed: “To my daughter, Marguerite.” She placed it under her pillow, said she would rest, and presently fell into a deep slumber. When she awoke, all her children were kneeling round her in prayer, and with them was Emmanuel.

Page 146

“The hour has come, dear children,” she said gently, “when we must say farewell. You are all here”—she looked about her—“and he...” Marguerite sent Emmanuel for her father, and Balthazar’s answer to the summons was, “I am coming.”

When Emmanuel returned, Madame Claes sent him for his uncle the priest, bidding him take the two boys with him; then she turned to her daughters. “God is taking me,” she said. “What will become of you? When I am gone, Marguerite, if you are ever in need of food, read this letter which I have addressed to you. Love your father, but shield your sister and your brothers. It may be your duty to withstand him. He will want money; he will ask you for it. Do not forget your duty to your father, but remember your duty to your sister and brothers. Your father would not injure his children of set purpose. He is noble, he is good. He is full of love for you. He is a great man working at a great task. Fill my place. Do not cause him grief by reproaches; never judge him; be, between him and those in your charge, a gentle mediator.”

One of the servants had to go and bang on the laboratory door for Claes. “Madame is dying!” cried the indignant old body. “They are waiting for you to administer the last sacrament.”

“I’ll be there in a minute,” answered Claes. When he entered the room, the Abbe de Solis and the children were kneeling round the mother’s bed. His wife’s face flushed at his entrance. With a loving smile, she asked: “Were you on the point of resolving nitrogen?”

“I have done it!” he answered, with triumph; “nitrogen is made up of oxygen and------” He stopped, checked by a murmur, which roused him from his dream. “What did they say?” he asked. “Are you really worse? What has happened?”

“This has happened,” said the Abbe; “your wife is dying, and you have killed her.”

Priest and children withdrew.

“What does he mean?” asked Claes.

“Dearest,” she answered, “your love was my life; I could not live without it.”

He took her hand, and kissed it.

“When have I not loved you?” he asked.

She refused to utter a reproach. For her children’s sake she told the narrative of his six years’ search for the Absolute, which had destroyed her life and swallowed up two

million francs, making him see the horror of their desolation. “Have pity, have pity,” she cried, “on our children!”

Claes shouted for Lemulquinier, and bade him go instantly to the laboratory and smash everything. “I abandon science for ever!” he cried.

“Too late!” sighed the dying woman; then she cried, “Marguerite!”

The child came from the doorway, horrified by the stricken face of her mother. Once again the loved name was repeated, “Marguerite!” loudly, as though to fix in her mind the charge laid upon her soul. It was the last word uttered by Josephine. As the soul passed, Balthazar, from the foot of the bed, looked up to the pillows where Marguerite was sitting, and their eyes met. The father trembled.

Page 147

In the sorrow of bereavement Marguerite discovered that she possessed two friends—-Pierquin the notary, and Emmanuel de Solis. Pierquin thought it would be a suitable thing to save the wreckage of the estate and marry the beautiful Marguerite, whose family was doubly noble. Emmanuel offered to prepare Marguerite's brothers for college, with a tact and a charm which declared a fine nature. Pierquin was a man of business turned lover. Emmanuel was a lover turned by misfortune into a man of action.

IV.—The Hour of Darkness

For some considerable time Balthazar avoided experimental chemistry, and confined himself to theoretical speculations. He took long walks on the ramparts; was gloomy, restless, and preoccupied at home. Marguerite endeavoured to distract his thoughts. One day the old servant, Martha, said to her: "All is over with us; master is on the road to hell again!" And she pointed to clouds of smoke issuing from the laboratory chimney. Marguerite lived as carefully as a nun; all expenses were cut down. She denied herself ordinary comforts to prepare for the crash. Thanks to Emmanuel, the boys were now advancing in their studies, and their future was at least unclouded. But Balthazar had developed the gambler's recklessness. He sold a forest; he mortgaged his house and silver; he had no more food than a nigger who sells his wife for a glass of brandy in the morning, and weeps over his loss at night. Once Marguerite spoke to her father. She acknowledged that he was master, that his children would obey him at all costs; but he must know that they scarcely had bread in the house.

"Bread!" he cried; "no bread in the house of a Claes! Where is all our property, then?"

She told him how he had sold everything.

"Then, how do we live?"

She held up her needle.

Time went on, and fresh debts hammered at the door of the Maison Claes. At last Marguerite was obliged to face her father, and charge him with madness.

"Madness!" he cried, firing up and springing to his feet. There was something so majestic and commanding in his attitude that made Marguerite tremble at his feet. "Your mother would never have used that word; she always attached due importance to my scientific researches."

She could not bear his reproaches, and fled from him. She felt that the time had come, for they were now on the verge of beggary, to break the seal of her mother's letter. That letter expressed the most divine love, praying that God would permit her spirit to be with Marguerite while she read the words of this last message; and it told her that the Abbe

Solis, if living, or his nephew, held for her a sum of a hundred and seventy thousand francs, and on this sum she must live, and leave her father if he refused to abandon his researches. “I could never have said these words,” Josephine had written; “not even on the brink of the grave.” And she entreated her child to be reverent in withstanding

Page 148

her father, and if resistance was inevitable to resist him on her knees. The abbe was dead, but Emmanuel held the money. In their discussions about the management of this sum, the two young people drew closer together. The poor father, brought to ruin, confessed his madness, and uttered the terrible despair of a beaten scientist. To comfort him, Marguerite said that his debts would be paid with her money. His face lit up. "You have money! Give it to me; I will make you rich." Once more the madness returned.

Emmanuel came with three thousand ducats in his pockets. They were hiding them in the hollow column of a pedestal, when, looking up, Marguerite saw her father observing them. "I heard gold," he said, advancing. To save her, Emmanuel lied. He sinned against his conscience for her sake. The money, he said belonged to him, and he had lent it to Marguerite. When he was gone, Claes said: "I must have that money."

"If you take it," answered Marguerite, "you will be a thief."

He knelt to her; she would not relent. He caressed her; she called God to look down upon them if he stole the money. He rose, bade her a sorrowful farewell, and left the room. Something warned her; she hurried after him, to find him with a pistol at his head. "Take all I possess," she cried. Embracing her, he promised that if he failed this time he would deliver himself into her hands.

Time passed and the Absolute was not discovered. A wealthy cousin of Claes, M. Conyncks, came to Douai in his travelling carriage, and soon after he and Marguerite journeyed to Paris. When she returned, it was to announce that, through M. Conynck's influence, Balthazar had been appointed receiver of taxes in Brittany, and must set out at once to take up the appointment.

"You drive me out of my own house!" he exclaimed, with anger. At first he refused to go, furious and indignant; but she persisted, and he had to surrender. He went with Lemulquinier to his laboratory for the last time. The two old men were very sad as they released the gases and evaporated acids.

"Ah, look," said Claes, pausing before a capsule connected with the wires of a battery; "if only we could watch out the end of this experiment! Carbon and sulphur. Crystallisation should take place; the carbon might certainly result in a crystal ..."

While Claes was in exile, fortune came to the family. The son Gabriel, assisted by M. Conyncks, had made a large sum of money as the engineer of a canal. Emmanuel de Solis had given Marguerite the fortune he inherited from ancestors in Spain. Pierquin, who had turned his attention to Marguerite's younger sister, had proved himself kind to

the family. Once again the Maison Claes was in prosperity, with pictures on its walls, and with handsome furniture in its state apartments.

When Conyncks and Marguerite went to fetch the father, they found him old and broken. The child was greatly touched by his appearance, and questioned him alone. She discovered that instead of saving money, he was heavily in debt, and that he had been seeking the Absolute as industriously in Brittany as in the attic of the Maison Claes.

Page 149

On his return, the old man brightened and became glad. The ancient home gave him joy. He embraced his children, looked around the happy house of his fathers, and exclaimed: "Ah, Josephine, if only you were here to admire our Marguerite!" The marriages of Marguerite and Felicie, the younger sister, were hurried forward. During the reading of the contracts Lemulquinier suddenly burst into the room, crying: "Monsieur! Monsieur!"

Claes whispered to his daughter that the servant had lent him all his savings—20,000 francs—and had doubtless come to claim them on learning that the master was once more a rich man. But Lemulquinier cried: "Monsieur! Monsieur!"

"Well?" demanded Claes.

In the trembling hand of the old servant lay a diamond. Claes rushed towards him.

"I went to the laboratory," began the servant—Claes looked up at him quickly, as though to say: "You were the first to go there!"—"and I found in the capsule we left behind us this diamond! The battery has done it without our help!"

"Forgive me!" cried Claes, turning to his children and his guests. "This will drive me mad! Cursed exile! God has worked in my laboratory, and I was not there to see! A miracle has taken place! I might have seen it—I have missed it for ever!" Suddenly he checked, and advancing to Marguerite, presented her with the diamond. "My angel," he said gently, "this belongs to you." Then, to the notary: "Let us proceed."

V.—Discovery of the Absolute

Happiness reigned in the Maison Claes, Balthazar conducted a few but inexpensive experiments, and surrendered himself more and more to the happiness of home life. It was as if the devil had been exorcised. The death of relatives presently carried Emmanuel and Marguerite to Spain, and their return was delayed by the birth of a child. When they did arrive in Flanders, one morning towards the end of September, they found the house in the Rue de Paris shut up, and a ring at the bell brought no one to open the door. A shopkeeper near at hand said that M. Claes had left the house with Lemulquinier about an hour ago. Emmanuel went in search of them, while a locksmith opened the door of the Maison Claes. The house was as if the Absolute in the form of fire had passed through all its rooms. Pictures, furniture, carpets, hangings, carvings—-all were swept clean away. Marguerite wept as she looked about her, and forgave her father. She went downstairs to await his coming. How he must have suffered in this bare house! Fear filled her heart. Had his reason failed him? Should she see him enter—a tottering and enfeebled old man, broken by the sufferings which he had borne so proudly for science? As she waited, the past rose before her eyes—the long past of struggle against their enemy, the Absolute; the long past, when she was a child, and her mother had been now so joyous and now so sorrowful.

Page 150

But she did not realise the calamity of her father's tragedy—a tragedy at once sublime and miserable. To the people of Douai he was not a scientific genius wrestling with Nature for her hidden mysteries, but a wicked old spendthrift, greedy like a miser for the Philosopher's Stone. Everybody in Douai, from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie to the people, knew all about old Claes, "the alchemist." His home was called the "Devil's House." People pointed at him, shouted after him in the street. Lemulquinier said that these were murmurs of applause for genius.

It happened that on this morning of Marguerite's return, Balthazar and Lemulquinier sat down on a bench in the Place Saint-Jacques to rest in the sun. Some children passing to school saw the two old men, talked about them, laughed together, and presently approached. One of them, who carried a basket, and was eating a piece of bread and butter, said to Lemulquinier: "Is it true you make diamonds and pearls?"

Lemulquinier patted the urchin's cheek.

"Yes, little fellow, it is true," he said. "Stick to your books, get knowledge, and perhaps we will give you some."

They began to crowd round, and became more daring.

"You should show respect to a great man," said Lemulquinier. At this the children laughed aloud, and began to shout: "Sorcerers! Old sorcerers!" Lemulquinier sprang up with his stick raised, and the children, beating a retreat, gathered up mud and stones. A workman, seeing Lemulquinier making for the children with a stick, came to their rescue with the dangerous cry: "Down with sorcerers!"

Thus emboldened, the children made a savage attack upon the two old men with a shower of stones. At this moment Emmanuel came upon the scene. He was too late. Claes had been suddenly jerked from the ideal world in which he theorised and toiled into the real world of men. The shock was too much for him; he sank into the arms of Lemulquinier, paralysed.

He lived in this condition for some time, expressing all his affection and gratitude to Marguerite by pressing her hand with his cold fingers. She refurnished the house, and surrounded him with comforts. His children were affectionate to him. They came and sat by his bedside, and took their meals in his room. His great happiness was listening to Emmanuel's reading of the newspapers.

One night he became very much worse, and the doctor was summoned in haste. The stricken man made violent efforts to speak. His lips trembled, but no sound issued. His eyes were on fire with the thoughts he could not utter. His face was haggard with agony. Drops of perspiration oozed out of his forehead. His hands twitched convulsively in the despair of his mind.

On the following morning his children saluted him with deepest and most lingering love, knowing that the last hour was at hand. His face did not light; he made none of his usual responses to their tender affection. Pierquin signalled to Emmanuel, and he broke the wrapper of the newspaper, and was about to read aloud in order to distract Claes, when his eyes were arrested by the heading:

Page 151

DISCOVERY OF THE ABSOLUTE

In a low voice he read the intelligence to his wife. It narrated that a famous mathematician in Poland had made terms for selling the secret of the Absolute, which he had discovered. As Emmanuel ceased to read, Marguerite asked for the paper; but Claes had heard the almost whispered words.

Of a sudden the dying man lifted himself up on his elbows. To his frightened family his glance was like the flash of lightning. The fringe of hair above his forehead stood up; every line in his countenance quivered with excitement, a thrill of passion moved across his face and made it sublime.

He lifted a hand, which was clenched with excitement, and uttering the cry of Archimedes—“Eureka!”—fell back with the heaviness of a dead body, and expired with an agonised groan. His eyes, till the doctor closed them, expressed a frenzied despair. It was his agony that he could not bequeath to science the solution of the great riddle which was only revealed to him as the veil was rent asunder by the hand of Death.

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WILLIAM BECKFORD

History of the Caliph Vathek

William Beckford, son of the famous Lord Mayor, was born at Fonthill, Wiltshire, England, Sept. 29, 1759, and received his education at first from a private tutor, and then at Geneva. On coming of age, he inherited a million sterling and an annual income of L100,000, and three years later he married the fourth Earl of Aboyne’s daughter, Lady Margaret Gordon, who died in May, 1786. In 1787 Beckford’s romance, the “History of the Caliph Vathek,” appeared in its original French, an English translation of the work having been published “anonymously and surreptitiously” in 1784. “Vathek” was written by Beckford in 1781 or 1782 at a single sitting of three days and two nights. Beckford was a great traveller and a great connoisseur and collector both of pictures and of books; and, apart from “Vathek” and some volumes of travels, he is best known for having secluded himself for twenty years in the magnificent residence which he built in Fonthill. He died on May 2, 1844.

I.—Vathek and the Magic Sabres

Vathek, ninth caliph of the race of the Abassides, was the son of Motassem, and the grandson of Haroun al Raschid. From an early accession to the throne, and the talents he possessed to adorn it, his subjects were induced to expect that his reign would be long and happy. His figure was pleasing and majestic; but when he was angry one of his eyes became so terrible that no person could bear it, and the wretch upon whom it

was fixed instantly fell backward, and sometimes expired. For fear, however, of depopulating his dominions and making his palace desolate, he but rarely gave way to his anger.

Page 152

Being much addicted to the pleasures of the table, he sought by his affability to procure agreeable companions; and he succeeded the better as his generosity was unbounded, and his indulgences were unrestrained; for he was by no means scrupulous, nor did he think, with the caliph Omar Ben Abdalaziz, that it was necessary to make a hell of this world to enjoy paradise in the next. He surpassed in magnificence all his predecessors. The palace of Alkoremmi, which his father, Motassem, had erected on the hill of Pied Horses, and which commanded the whole city of Samarah was, in his idea, far too scanty. He added, therefore, five wings, or rather other palaces, which he destined for the particular gratification of each of his senses.

But the unquiet and impetuous disposition of the caliph would not allow him to rest there; he had studied so much for amusement in the lifetime of his father as to acquire a great deal of knowledge, though not a sufficiency to satisfy himself—for he wished to know everything, even sciences that did not exist. He was fond of engaging in disputes with the learned and with the orthodox, but liked them not to push their opposition with warmth; he stopped with presents the mouths of those whose mouths could be stopped, while others, whom his liberality was unable to subdue, he sent to prison to cool their blood, a remedy that often succeeded.

The great prophet Mohammed, whose vicars the caliphs are, beheld with indignation from his abode in the seventh heaven the irreligious conduct of such a vice-regent.

“Let us leave him to himself,” said he to the genii, who are always ready to receive his commands. “Let us see to what lengths his folly and impiety will carry him. If he run into excess we shall know how to chastise him. Assist him, therefore, to complete the tower which, in imitation of Nimrod, he hath begun, not, like that great warrior, to escape being drowned, but from the insolent curiosity of penetrating the secrets of heaven; he will not divine the fate that awaits him.”

The genii obeyed, and when the workmen had raised their structures a cubit in the daytime, two cubits more were added in the night. Vathek fancied that even invisible matter showed a forwardness to subserve his designs, and his pride arrived at its height when, having ascended for the first time the eleven thousand stairs of his tower, he cast his eyes below and beheld men not larger than pismires, mountains than shells, and cities than beehives. He now passed most of his nights on the summit of his tower, till he became an adept in the mysteries of astrology, and imagined that the planets had disclosed to him the most marvellous adventures which were to be accomplished by an extraordinary personage from a country altogether unknown.

Prompted by motives of curiosity, he had always been courteous to strangers, but from this instant he redoubled his attention, and ordered it to be announced by sound of trumpet through all the streets of Samarah that no one of his subjects, on pain of displeasure, should either lodge or detain a traveller, but forthwith bring him to the palace.

Page 153

Not long after this there arrived in the city a hideous man who to Vathek's view displayed slippers which enabled the feet to walk, knives that cut without a motion of the hand, and sabres which dealt the blow at the person they were wished to strike, the whole enriched with gems that were hitherto unknown. The sabres, whose blades emitted a dazzling radiance, fixed more than all the caliph's attention, who promised himself to decipher at his leisure the uncouth characters engraven on their sides. Without, therefore, demanding their price, he ordered all the coined gold to be brought from his treasury, and commanded the merchant to take what he pleased. The stranger complied with modesty and silence; but, having maintained an obstinate silence on all the points on which the caliph questioned him, he was committed to prison, from which he was found the next day to have vanished, leaving his keepers dead.

Vathek was at first enraged, but having been comforted by his mother, the Princess Carathis, who was a Greek and an adept in all the sciences and systems of her country, he issued, at her suggestion, a proclamation promising the liberality for which he was renowned to whoever should decipher the characters on the sabres, and eventually had the gratification of meeting with an old man, who read them as follows: "We were made where everything good is made; we are the least of the wonders of a place where all is wonderful, and deserving the sight of the first potentate on earth." Unfortunately, however, when the old man was ordered the next morning to re-read the inscription, he was then found to interpret it as denouncing: "Woe to the rash mortal who seeks to know that of which he should remain ignorant." "And woe to thee!" cried the caliph, in a burst of indignation, and telling him to take his reward and begone.

II.—The Caliph's Strange Adventures

It was not long before Vathek discovered abundant reason for regretting his precipitation. He plainly perceived that the characters on the sabres changed every day; and the anxiety caused by his failure to decipher them, or to read anything from the stars, brought on a fever, which deprived him of his appetite, and tormented him with an absolutely insatiable thirst. From this distress he was at length delivered by a meeting with the stranger, who cured him by giving him to drink of a phial of red and yellow mixture. But when this insolent person, at a banquet given in his honour, burst into shouts of laughter on being asked to declare of what drugs the salutary liquor had been compounded, and from what place the sabres had come, Vathek kicked him from the steps, and, repeating the blow, persisted with such assiduity as incited all present to follow his example. The stranger collected into a ball, rolled out of the palace, followed by Vathek, the court, and the whole city, and, after passing through all the public places, rolled onwards to the Plain of Catoul, traversed the valley at the foot of the mountain of the Four Fountains, and bounded into the chasm formed there by the continual fall of the waters.

Page 154

Vathek would have followed the perfidious giaour had not an invisible agency arrested his progress and that of the multitude; and he was so much struck by the whole circumstance that he ordered his tents to be pitched on the very edge of the precipice. After keeping several vigils there, he was accosted one night by the voice of the giaour, who amid the darkness caused by a total eclipse of the moon and the stars, offered to bring him to the palace of subterranean fire, where he should behold the treasures which the stars had promised him, and the talismans that control the world, if he would abjure Mohammed, adore the terrestrial influences, and satiate the stranger's thirst with the blood of fifty of the most beautiful Samarahite boys.

The unhappy caliph lavished his promises in the utmost profusion, and by arranging for the celebration near the chasm of some juvenile sports, which were not concluded till twilight, was able to make the direful libation. As the boys came up one by one to receive their prizes, he pushed them into the gulf, the dreadful device being executed with so much dexterity that the boy who was approaching him remained unconscious of the fate of his forerunner.

The popular tumult roused by this atrocity having been appeased by the princess, who possessed the most consummate skill in the art of persuasion, there was offered on the tower a burnt sacrifice to the infernal deities, the main ingredients of which were mummies, rhinoceros' horns, oil of the most venomous serpents, various aromatic woods, and one hundred and forty of the caliph's most faithful subjects. These preliminaries having been settled, a parchment was discovered, in which Vathek was thanked for his burnt offering, and told to set forth with a magnificent retinue for Istakar, where he would receive the diadem of Gian Ben Gian, the talismans of Soliman, and the treasures of the pre-Adamite sultans. But he was warned not to enter any dwelling on his route.

Vathek and the cavalcade set out, and for three days all went well. But on the fourth a storm burst upon them, the frightful roar of wild beasts resounded at a distance, and they soon perceived in the forest glaring eyes that could only belong to devils or tigers. Fire destroyed their provisions, and they would have starved had not two dwarfs, who dwelt as hermits on the top of some rocks, received divine intimation of their plight and revealed it to their emir, Fakreddin. The dwarfs were entertained, caressed, and seated with great ceremony on little cushions of state. But they clambered up the sides of the caliph's seat, and, placing themselves each on one of his shoulders, began to whisper prayers in his ears; and his patience was almost exhausted when the acclamations of the troops announced the approach of Fakreddin. He hastened to their assistance, but being punctiliously religious and likewise a great dealer in compliments, he made an harangue five times more prolix and insipid than his harbingers had already delivered.

Page 155

At length, however, all got in motion, and they descended from the heights to the valley by the large steps which the emir had cut in the rocks, and reached a building of hewn stone overspread by palm-trees and crowned with nine domes. Beneath one of these domes the caliph was entertained with excellent sherbet, with sweetbreads stewed in milk of almonds, and other delicacies of which he was amazingly fond.

But, unfortunately, the sight of the emir's young daughter tempted the prophet's vice-regent to violate the rites of hospitality. Vathek fell violently in love with Nouronihar, who was sprightly as an antelope and full of wanton gaiety; and though she was contracted to her cousin and dearly beloved companion Gulchenrouz, he demanded her hand from Fakreddin, who, rather than force his daughter to break her affiances, presented his sabre to Vathek. "Strike your unhappy host," he said. "He has lived long enough if he sees the prophet's vice-regent violate the rites of hospitality." Nouronihar fell down in a swoon, and of this swoon the emir took advantage to carry out a scheme which should deliver him from his difficulties. He gave out that both the children had died from the effect of the caliph's glances, and, having administered to them a narcotic powder that would give them the appearance of death for three days, had them conveyed away to the shores of a desolate lake, where, attended by the dwarfs, they were put upon a meagre diet and told that they were in the other world, expiating the little faults of which their love was the cause.

But Nouronihar, remembering a dream in which she was told that she was destined to be the caliph's wife, and thereby to possess the carbuncle of Giamsched, and the treasures of the pre-Adamite sultans, indulged doubts on the mode of her being, and scarcely could believe that she was dead. She rose one morning while all were asleep, and having wandered some distance from the lake, discovered that she knew the district.

This fact, and a meeting with Vathek, convinced her that she was alive, and, submitting to the caliph's embraces, she consented to become his bride, and to go with him to the subterranean palace.

III.—The Palace of Subterranean Fire

When Princess Carathis heard of the dissolute conduct of her son she sent for Morakanabad.

"Let me expire in flames," she cried.

Having said this, she whirled herself round in a magical way, striking poor Morakanabad in such a way as caused him to recoil. Then she ordered her great camel, Aboufaki, to be brought, and, attended by her two hideous and one-eyed negresses, Nerkes and Cafour, set out to surprise the lovers. She burst in upon them, foaming with indignation, and said to Vathek: "Free thyself from the arms of this paltry doxy; drown her in the

water before me, and instantly follow my guidance." But Vathek replied civilly, but decisively, that he was taking Nouronihar with him; and the princess, having heard her declare that she would follow him beyond the Kaf in the land of the Afrits, was appeased, and pronounced Nouronihar a girl of both courage and science.

Page 156

With a view, however, of preventing any further trouble arising from Gulchenrouz, of whose affection for his cousin Vathek had informed her, she sought to capture the boy, intending to sacrifice him to the giaour. But as he was fleeing from her he fell into the arms of a genius, the same good old genius who, happening on the cruel giaour at the instant of his growling in the horrible chasm, had rescued the fifty little victims which the impiety of Vathek had devoted to his maw. The genius placed Gulchenrouz in a nest higher than the clouds, and there kept him ever young.

Nor was this the only hope of the princess's that was doomed to be frustrated. She learnt from her astrolabes and instruments of magic that Motavakel, availing himself of the disgust which was now inveterate against his brother, had incited commotions among the populace, made himself master of the palace, and actually invested the great tower. So she reluctantly abandoned the idea of accompanying Vathek to Istakar, and returned to Samarah; while he, attended by Nouronihar, resumed his march and quickly reached the valley of Rocnabad. Here the poor Santons, filled with holy energy, having bustled to light up wax torches in their oratories and to expand the Koran on their ebony desks, went forth to meet the caliph with baskets of honeycomb, dates, and melons. Vathek gave them but a surly reception. "Fancy not," said he, "that you can detain me; your presents I condescend to accept, but beg you will let me be quiet, for I am not overfond of resisting temptation. Yet, as it is not decent for personages so reverend to return on foot, and as you have not the appearance of expert riders, my eunuchs shall tie you on your asses, with the precaution that your backs be not turned towards me, for they understand etiquette."

Even this outrage could not persuade Vathek's good genius to desert him, and he made one final effort to save the caliph from the fate awaiting him. Disguised as a shepherd, and pouring forth from his flute such melodies as softened even the heart of Vathek, he confronted him in his path, and warned him so solemnly against pursuing his journey that when night fell almost every one of his attendants had deserted him. But Vathek, in his obduracy, went on, and at length arrived at the mountain which contains the vast ruins of Istakar and the entrance to the realm of Eblis.

Nouronihar and he, having ascended the steps of a vast staircase of black marble, reached the terrace, which was flagged with squares of marble and resembled a smooth expanse of water. There, by the moonlight, they read an inscription which proclaimed that, despite the fact that Vathek had violated the conditions of the parchment, he and Nouronihar would be allowed to enter the palace of subterranean fire.

Page 157

Scarcely had these words been read when the mountain trembled, and the rock yawned and disclosed within it a staircase of polished marble, down which they descended. At the bottom they found their way impeded by a huge portal of ebony, which, opening at the giaour's command, revealed to them a place which, though roofed with a vaulted ceiling, was so spacious and lofty that at first they took it for an immeasurable plain. In the midst of this immense hall a vast multitude was incessantly passing, who severally kept their right hands on their hearts, without once regarding anything about them. They had all the livid paleness of death; their eyes, deep-sunk in their sockets, resembled those phosphoric meteors that glimmer by night in places of interment. Some stalked slowly along, absorbed in profound reverie; some, shrieking with agony, ran furiously about like tigers wounded with poisonous arrows; whilst others, grinding their teeth in rage, foamed along, more frantic than the wildest maniacs. They all avoided each other, and, though surrounded by a multitude that no one could number, each wandered at random, unheedful of the rest, as if alone on a desert no foot had trodden.

Vathek and Nouronihar, frozen with terror at a sight so baleful, demanded of the giaour what these appearances might mean, and why these ambulating spectres never withdrew their hands from their hearts.

"Perplex not yourselves," replied he, bluntly, "with so much at once; you will soon be acquainted with all. Let us haste and present you to Eblis."

They continued their way through the multitude, and after some time entered a vast tabernacle carpeted with the skins of leopards and filled with an infinity of elders with streaming beards and Afrits in complete armour, all of whom had prostrated themselves before the ascent of a lofty eminence, on the top of which, upon a globe of fire, sat the formidable Eblis. He received Vathek's and Nouronihar's homage, and invited them to enjoy whatever the palace afforded—the treasures of the pre-Adamite sultans and their bickering sabres and those talismans which compel the Dives to open the subterranean expanses of the mountain of Kaf.

The giaour then conducted them to a hall of great extent, covered with a lofty dome, round which appeared fifty portals of bronze, secured with as many fastenings of iron. A funereal gloom prevailed over the whole scene. Here, upon two beds of incorruptible cedar, lay recumbent the fleshless forms of pre-Adamite kings, who had been monarchs of the whole earth; they still possessed enough of life to be conscious of their deplorable condition; their eyes retained a melancholy motion; they regarded each other with looks of the deepest dejection, each holding his right hand motionless on his heart. Soliman Ben Daoud, the most eminent of them, told Vathek the story of his great state, of his worship of fire and the hosts of the sky, and of heaven's vengeance upon him. "I

Page 158

am in torments, ineffable torments!" said he. "An unrelenting fire preys upon my heart." Having uttered this exclamation, Soliman raised his hands towards heaven in token of supplication, and the caliph discerned through his bosom, which was as transparent as crystal, his heart enveloped in flames. At a sight so full of horror, Nouronihar fell back like one petrified into the arms of Vathek, who cried out with a convulsive sob: "O Mohammed! remains there no more mercy?"

"None, none!" replied the malicious Dive. "Know, miserable prince, thou art now in the abode of vengeance and despair! A few days are allotted thee as respite, and then thy heart also shall be kindled like those of the other worshippers of Eblis."

This, indeed, was the dreadful fate of Vathek and Nouronihar, a fate indeed to which the Princess Carathis was also most righteously condemned; for Vathek, knowing that the principles by which his mother had perverted his youth had been the cause of his perdition, summoned her to the palace of subterranean fire and enrolled her among the votaries of Eblis. Carathis entered the dome of Soliman, and she too marched in triumph through the vapour of perfumes.

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APHRA BEHN

Oroonoko: the Royal Slave

In her introduction to "Oroonoko," Mrs. Aphra Behn states that her strange and romantic tale is founded on facts, of many of which she was an eye-witness. This is true. She was born at Wye, England, July 10, 1640, the daughter, it is said, of a barber. As a child, she went out to Dutch Guiana, then an English colony named after the Surinam River, returning to England about 1658. After the death of her husband, in 1666, she was dispatched as a spy to Antwerp by Charles II., and it was she who first warned that monarch of the Dutch Government's intention to send a fleet up the Thames. She died on April 16, 1689, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. It was while in Dutch Guiana that she met Oroonoko, in the circumstances described in the story. No doubt she has idealised her hero somewhat, but she does not seem to have exaggerated the extraordinary adventures of the young African chief. In the licentious age of the Restoration, when she had become famous—or, rather, notorious—as a writer of unseemly plays, she astonished the town, and achieved real fame by relating the story of Oroonoko's life. There are few plots of either plays or novels so striking as that of "Oroonoko." It is the first of those romances of the outlands, which, from the days of Defoe to the days of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, have been one of the glories of English literature.

I.—The Stolen Bride

Page 159

I do not pretend to entertain the reader with a feigned hero, whose adventures I can manage according to my fancy. Of many of the events here set down, I was an eye-witness, and what I did not see myself, I learnt from the mouth of Oroonoko. When I made his acquaintance I was living in that part of our South American colony called Surinam, which we lately ceded to the Dutch—a great mistake, I think, for the land was fertile, and the natives were friendly, and many Englishmen had set up sugar plantations, which they worked by means of negroes. Most of these slaves came from that part of Africa known as Coromantien. The Coromantiens, being very warlike, were continually fighting other nations, and they always had many captives ready to be sold as slaves to our planters.

The king of Coromantien was a hundred years of age. All his sons had fallen in battle, and only one of them had left behind him an heir. Oroonoko, as the young prince was called, was a very intelligent and handsome negro, and as his grandfather engaged a Frenchman of wit and learning to teach him, he received an education better than that of many European princes. This I can speak of from my own knowledge, as I have often conversed with him. He had a great admiration for the ancient Romans; and in everything but the colour of his skin he reminded me of those heroes of antiquity.

His nose was finely curved, and his lips, too, were well shaped, instead of being thick as those of most Africans are. As the king of Coromantien, by reason of his great age, was unable to bear arms, he entrusted his chief headman with the duty of training Oroonoko in the arts of war. For two years, the young prince was away fighting with a powerful inland nation; the chief headman was killed in a fierce battle, and Oroonoko succeeded him in the command of the army. He was then only seventeen years of age, but he quickly brought the long war to a successful conclusion, and returned home with a multitude of captives. The greater part of these he gave to his grandfather, and the rest he took to Imoinda, the daughter and only child of the chief headman, as trophies of her father's victories.

Imoinda was a marvellously beautiful girl; her features, like those of Oroonoko, were regular and noble, and more European than African. It was a case of love at first sight on both sides, and the young prince presented the lovely maiden with a hundred and fifty slaves, and returned home in a fever of passion. It was necessary for him to obtain his grandfather's consent to his marriage, but for some days he was so perplexed by the flood of strange, new feelings surging in his young heart that he remained silent and moody.

His followers, however, were loud in their praises of Imoinda. They extolled her ravishing charms even in the presence of the old king, so that nothing else was talked of but Imoinda. Oroonoko's love rapidly became too strong for him to control, and one night he went secretly to the house of his beloved, and wooed her with such fervency of soul that even she was astonished by it. It was the savage custom of his country for a

king to have a hundred wives, as his grandfather had; but Oroonoko was an enlightened and chivalrous man.

Page 160

“Never, Imoinda,” he cried, “shall you have a rival. You are the only woman I shall love, the only woman I shall marry. Come, my darling, and let us try and raise our people up by our example.”

Imoinda was naturally overjoyed to become the wife of so noble and cultivated a prince, and she waited the next morning in a state of delicious excitement for Oroonoko to return and claim her as his bride. But, to her dismay and horror, four headmen with their servants came at daybreak to her house with a royal veil. This is a rudely embroidered cloth which the king of Coromantien sends to any lady whom he has a mind to make his wife. After she is covered with it, the maid is secured for the king’s otan, or harem, and it is death to disobey the royal summons.

Trembling and almost fainting, Imoinda was compelled to suffer herself to be covered and led away to the old king. His imagination had been excited by the wild way in which the followers of his grandson had praised the beauty of the maiden, and, carried away by unnatural jealousy, he had resolved, in a fit of madness, to possess her at all costs. In spite of all he had heard, he was amazed by her loveliness. Rising up from his throne, he came towards her with outstretched arms.

“I am already married,” she cried, bursting into tears and throwing herself at his feet. “Do not dishonour me! Let me return to my own house.”

“Who has dared to marry the daughter of my chief headman without my consent?” said the old king, his eyes rolling in anger. “Whoever he is, he shall die at once.”

Imoinda began to fear for Oroonoko, and tried to undo the effect of her words.

“He—he is not exactly my husband yet,” she stammered. “But, oh, I love him! I love him! And I have promised to marry him.”

“That’s nothing,” said the king, his eyes now lighting up with pleasure. “You must be my wife.”

In the afternoon, Oroonoko, who had gone in search of Imoinda, returned. Having heard that she had received the royal veil, he came in so violent a rage that his men had great trouble to save him from killing himself.

“What can I do?” he cried desperately. “Even if I slew my grandfather, I could not now make Imoinda my wife.”

II.—A White Man’s Treachery

By the custom of the country, it would have been so great a crime to marry a woman whom Us grandfather had taken that Oroonoko’s people would probably have risen up against him. But one of his men pointed out that, as Imoinda was his lawful wife by

solemn contract, he was really the injured man, and might, if he would, take her back—-the breach of the law being on his grandfather's side. Thereupon, the young prince resolved to recover her, and in the night he entered the otan, or royal harem, by a secret passage, and made his way to the apartment of Imoinda. Had he found the old king there, he no doubt would have killed him; but, happily, the lovely maid was alone, and quietly sleeping in her bed. He softly awakened her, and she trembled with joy and fear at his boldness. But they had not been long together when a sudden noise was heard and a band of armed men with spears burst into the room.

Page 161

“Back!” shouted the young prince, lifting up his battle-axe. “Back, all of you! Do you not know Oroonoko?”

“Yes,” said one of the men. “The king has sent us to take you, dead or alive.”

But when Oroonoko attacked them, they allowed him to fight his way out of the otan, but tore the maid from his arms and took her to the king. The old man was blind with rage, and, seizing a spear, he staggered to his feet, determined to kill her by his own hand. But Imoinda was in no mood to die. She knew that her lover had fled to his camp, and intended to return at the head of a large army and rescue her by main force. If she could only calm the anger of the old king for a few days, all would be well. So, with the guile of a woman, she flung herself at the king’s feet, protesting in a flood of tears, that Oroonoko had broken into her room and taken her by force.

“Very well,” said the old king, with a cruel look in his eyes, “I will forgive you. Having received the royal veil, you cannot marry my grandson. On the other hand, since he has entered your room, you cannot remain any longer in the otan. You must be sent out of the country.”

And early the next morning some of his servants were commanded to dress her so that she could not be recognised, and then she was carried down to the shore and sold to the captain of a slave ship.

The king did not dare to tell his grandson that he had sold Imoinda as a slave, for the Coromantiens justly reckon slavery as something worse than death; so he sent a messenger to say that she was dead. At first, Oroonoko was minded to attack his grandfather, but better feelings prevailed; and he led his army against a hostile nation, resolved to perish on the battlefield. So desperate was his courage that he defeated his far more numerous foes, and took a great multitude of them captives. Many of these he sold to the captain of a slave-ship, then lying off Coromantien. When the bargain was concluded, the captain invited the prince and all his attendants to a banquet on board his ship, and so plied them with wine that, being unaccustomed to drink of this sort, they were overcome by it.

When Oroonoko recovered his senses, he found himself chained up in a dark room, and all his men were groaning in fetters around him. The cunning slave-dealer had got out of paying for his cargo of slaves, and increased their number by carrying off the young prince and his companions. This was how I came to meet Oroonoko. The unscrupulous slave-dealer brought him to Surinam, and sold him and seventeen of his followers to our overseer, a young Cornishman named Trefry.

Trefry, a man of great wit and fine learning, was attracted by the noble bearing of Oroonoko, and treated him more as a friend than as a servant. And when, to his great astonishment, he found that the young prince was his equal in scholarship, and could

converse with him in English, French, and Spanish, he asked him how it was he had become a slave. Oroonoko then related the story of the slave-dealer's treachery, and Trefry was so moved by it that he promised to find the means to free him from slavery and enable him to return to Coromantien.

Page 162

When Oroonoko arrived at our plantation, all our negroes left off work and came to see him. When they saw that he was really the great prince of Coromantien, who had conquered them in battle and sold them into slavery, they cast themselves at his feet, crying out in their own language: "Live, O king! Long live, O king!" They kissed his feet and paid him divine homage—for such is the nature of this people, that instead of bearing him any grudge for selling them into captivity, they were filled with awe and veneration for him.

Mr. Trefry was glad to find Oroonoko's statement of his royal rank confirmed by the adoration of all the slaves.

"There's one girl," he said, "who did not come to greet you. I am sure you will be delighted to find you have so beautiful a subject. If it is possible for anyone to console you for the loss of Imoinda, she will do so. To tell the truth, I've been in love with her myself, but I found that I could not win her."

"I do not want to see her," said Oroonoko. "If I go back to Coromantien, I will not take any woman with me. I vowed to Imoinda that I would never have any wife but her, and, though she is dead, I shall keep my vow."

The next morning Trefry took Oroonoko for a walk, and by design brought him to the house of the beautiful slave.

"Clemene," he said, "did you not hear that one of the princes of your people arrived in Surinam yesterday? However you may fly from all white men, you surely ought to pay some respect to him."

Oroonoko started when a girl came out, with her head bowed down as if she had resolved never to raise her eyes again to the face of a man.

"Imoinda! Imoinda!" Oroonoko cried after a moment's silence. "Imoinda!"

It was she. She looked up at the sound of his voice, and then tottered and fell down in a swoon, and Oroonoko caught her in his arms. By degrees she came to herself; and it is needless to tell with what transport, what ecstasies of joy, the lovers beheld each other. Mr. Trefry was infinitely pleased by this happy conclusion of the prince's misadventures; and, leaving the lovers to themselves, he came to Parham House, and gave me an account of all that had happened. In the afternoon, to the great joy of all the negroes, Oroonoko and Imoinda were married. I was invited to the wedding, and I assured Oroonoko that he and his wife would be set free as soon as the lord-governor of the colony returned to Surinam.

III.—The Taint of Slavery

Unhappily, the lord-governor was delayed for some months in the islands, and Oroonoko became impatient. After the trick played upon him by the captain of the slave-ship, he had become exceedingly suspicious of the honesty and good faith of white men. He was afraid that the overseer would keep him and his wife until their child was born, and make a slave of it. At last, he grew so moody and sullen that many persons feared that he would incite the negroes to a mutiny. In order to soothe the prince, I invited him and Imoinda to stay at my house, where I entertained them to the best of my ability.

Page 163

“Surely,” I said to him, “you do not suspect that we will break our word with you? Only wait patiently, my friend, till the lord-governor arrives, and you will be permitted to return to your own kingdom.”

“You do not understand,” Oroonoko replied. “I am angry with myself for remaining so long a slave. What! Do you white people think that I, the king of Coromantien, can be treated like the captives that I have taken in war and sold to you? Had it not been for Imoinda, I would long since have been free or dead.”

Unfortunately, both for me and Oroonoko, my father, who had been appointed lieutenant-general of the West Indies and Guiana, died at sea on his way to Surinam, and the new lord-governor was long in arriving. In the meantime, a child was born to Imoinda, and all the negroes, to the number of 300, came together to celebrate the event. Oroonoko, beside himself with anger, because his child had been born into slavery, made a harangue to the assembled multitude.

“Why should we be slaves to these white men?” he cried. “Have they conquered us nobly in battle? Are we become their captives by the chance of war? No! We have been bought and sold, like monkeys or cattle, to a set of cowards and rogues who have been driven out of their own country by reason of their villainy! Shall we let vile creatures such as these flog us and bruise us as they please?”

“No, no!” shouted the negroes. “Be our king, Oroonoko, and make us a free nation!”

Thereupon he commanded them to seize what arms they could, and tie up everything they wanted in their hammocks, and sling these over their shoulders, and march out, with their wives and children. The next morning, when the overseers went to call their slaves up to work, they found they had fled. By noon, 600 militiamen set out in search of the fugitives. The negroes were forced to travel slowly by reason of their women and children; and at the end of two days the militiamen, led by the new lord-governor, caught them up and surrounded them. In the battle that ensued, several Englishmen were killed and a great many wounded; but as they outnumbered the negroes, and were much better armed, they defeated them. Even then Oroonoko would not surrender. But the lord-governor parleyed with him, and promised that he would give him and his wife and child a free passage to Coromantien in the first ship that touched on the coast.

On this, Oroonoko surrendered. But, to his horror and surprise, he was taken back to Surinam, and tied to a stake at the whipping-place, and lashed until the very flesh was torn from his bones. His captors then bound him in chains, and cast him into a prison. From this, however, he was at last rescued by Mr. Trefry. But the shame and the torture had unhinged his fine mind. He led Imoinda and his child into a forest, and asked his wife whether she would prefer to remain the slave of the white devils, or die at once by his hand. Imoinda begged him rather to kill her, and Oroonoko did so. But, instead of putting an end to himself, the prince determined to die fighting. He turned back from the

forest, fiercely resolved to search out the lord-governor, and slay him; but, falling into the hands of the militiamen, he was killed in a very horrible manner.

Page 164

I can only say that this negro was the noblest and gentlest man I ever met. It needs more genius than I possess to praise him as he deserves; yet I hope the reputation of my pen is considerable enough to make his name survive to all ages, with that of the beautiful, brave, and constant Imoinda.

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CYRANO DE BERGERAC

A Voyage to the Moon

Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac has recently acquired a new lease of fame as the hero of Edmond Rostand's romantic comedy. Probably he is better known in France as a fighter than as a wit and a poet. Born about 1620, he entered the Regiment of the Guards in his nineteenth year, and quickly became renowned for his bravery. He was an indefatigable duellist; when he was about twenty years old, he found a hundred men assembled to insult one of his friends, and he attacked them, killed two, mortally wounded seven, and dispersed all the rest. He died at Paris in 1655, struck by a huge beam falling into the street. As an author he was strangely underrated by his fellow-countrymen. Moliere was the only man who really appreciated him. For some centuries his works have been more esteemed in England than in France. Many English writers, from Dean Swift to Samuel Butler, the author of "Erewhon," have been inspired by his "Voyage to the Moon," the English equivalent of the original title being, "Comic History of the States and Empires of the Moon and the Sun." This entertaining satire is as fresh as it was on the day it was written: flying machines and gramophones, for instance, are curiously modern. His inimitable inventiveness makes him the most delightful of French writers between Montaigne and Moliere.

I.—Arrival on the Moon

After many experiments I constructed a flying machine, and, sitting on top of it, I boldly launched myself in the air from the crest of a mountain. I had scarcely risen more than half a mile when something went wrong with my machine, and it shot back to the earth. But, to my astonishment and joy, instead of descending with it, I continued to rise through the calm, moonlight air. For three-quarters of an hour I mounted higher and higher. Then suddenly all the weight of my body seemed to fall upon my head. I was no longer rising quietly from the Earth, but tumbling headlong on to the Moon. At last I crashed through a tree, and, breaking my fall among its leafy, yielding boughs, I landed gently on the grass below.

I found myself in the midst of a wild and beautiful forest, so full of the sweet music of singing-birds that it seemed as if every leaf on every tree had the tongue and figure of a nightingale. The ground was covered with unknown, lovely flowers, with a magical

scent. As soon as I smelt it I became twenty years younger. My thin grey hairs changed into thick, brown, wavy tresses; my wrinkled face grew fresh and rosy; and my blood flowed through my veins with the speed and vigour of youth.

Page 165

I was surprised to find no trace of human habitation in the forest. But in wandering about I came upon two strong, great animals, about twelve cubits long. One of them came towards me, and the other fled into the forest. But it quickly returned with seven hundred other beasts. As they approached me, I perceived that they were creatures with a human shape, who, however, went on all-fours like some gigantic kind of monkey. They shouted with admiration when they saw me; and one of them took me up by the neck and flung me on his back, and galloped with me into a great town.

When I saw the splendid buildings of the city I recognised my mistake. The four-footed creatures were really enormous men. Seeing that I went on two legs, they would not believe that I was a man like themselves. They thought I was an animal without any reasoning power, and they resolved to send me to their queen, who was fond of collecting strange and curious monsters.

All this, of course, I did not understand at the time. It took me some months to learn their language. These men of the Moon have two dialects; one for the nobility, the other for the common people. The language of the nobility is a kind of music; it is certainly a very pleasant means of expression. They are able to communicate their thoughts by lutes and other musical instruments quite as well as by the voice.

When twenty or thirty of them meet together to discuss some matter, they carry on the debate by the most harmonious concert it is possible to imagine.

The common people, however, talk by agitating different parts of their bodies. Certain movements constitute an entire speech. By shaking a finger, a hand, or an arm, for instance, they can say more than we can in a thousand words. Other motions, such as a wrinkle on the forehead, a shiver along a muscle, serve to design words. As they use all their body in speaking in this fashion, they have to go naked in order to make themselves clearly understood. When they are engaged in an exciting conversation they seem to be creatures shaken by some wild fever.

Instead of sending me at once to the Queen of the Moon, the man who had captured me earned a considerable amount of money by taking me every afternoon to the houses of the rich people. There I was compelled to jump and make grimaces, and stand in ridiculous attitudes in order to amuse the crowds of guests who had been invited to see the antics of the new animal.

But one day, as my master was pulling the rope around my neck to make me rise up and divert the company, a man came and asked me in Greek who I was. Full of joy at meeting someone with whom I could talk, I related to him the story of my voyage from the Earth.

“I cannot understand,” I said, “how it was I rose up to the Moon when my machine broke down and fell to the Earth.”

Page 166

“That is easily explained,” he said. “You had got within the circle of lunar influence, in which the Moon exerts a sort of sucking action on the fat of the body. The same thing often happens to me. Like you, I am a stranger on the Moon. I was born on the Sun, but, being of a roving disposition, I like to explore one planet after another. I have travelled a good deal in Europe, and conversed with several persons whose names you no doubt know. I remember that I was once famous in ancient Greece as the Demon of Socrates.”

“Then you are a spirit?” I exclaimed.

“A kind of spirit,” he replied. “I was one of the large company of the Men of the Sun who used to inhabit the Earth under the names of oracles, nymphs, woodland elves, and fairies. But we abandoned our world in the reign of the Emperor Augustus; your people then became so gross and stupid that we could no longer delight in their society. Since then I have stayed on the Moon. I find its inhabitants more enlightened than the inhabitants of the Earth.”

“I don’t!” I exclaimed. “Look how they treat me, as if I were a wild beast! I am sure that if one of their men of science voyaged to the Earth, he would be better received than I am here.”

“I doubt it,” said the Man of the Sun. “Your men of science would have him killed, stuffed, and put in a glass case in a museum.”

II.—The Garb of Shame

At this point our conversation was broken off by my keeper. He saw that the company was tired of my talk, which seemed to them mere grunting. So he pulled my rope, and made me dance and caper until the spectators ached with laughter.

Happily, the next morning the Man of the Sun opened my cage and put me on his back and carried me away.

“I have spoken to the King of the Moon,” he said; “and he has commanded that you should be taken to his court and examined by his learned doctors.”

As my companion went on four feet, he was able to travel as fast as a racehorse, and we soon arrived at another town, where we put up at an inn for dinner. I followed him into a magnificently furnished hall, and a servant asked me what I would begin with.

“Some soup,” I replied.

I had scarcely pronounced the words when I smelt a very succulent broth. I rose up to look for the source of this agreeable smell; but my companion stopped me.

“What do you want to walk away for?” said he. “Stay and finish your soup.”

“But where is the soup?” I said.

“Ah,” he replied. “This is the first meal you have had on the Moon. You see, the people here only live on the smell of food. The fine, lunar art of cookery consists in collecting the exhalations that come from cooked meat, and bottling them up. Then, at meal-time, the various jars are uncorked, one after the other, until the appetites of the diners are satisfied.”

“It is, no doubt, an exquisite way of eating,” I said; “but I am afraid I shall starve on it.”

Page 167

“Oh, no, you will not,” said he. “You will soon find that a man can nourish himself as well by his nose as by his mouth.”

And so it was. After smelling for a quarter of an hour a variety of rich, appetising vapours, I rose up quite satisfied.

In the afternoon I was taken to the palace of the king, and examined by the greatest men of science on the Moon. In spite of all that my friend had said on my behalf, I was adjudged to be a mere animal, and again shut up in a cage. The king, queen, and courtiers spent a considerable time every day watching me, and with the help of the Man of the Sun I soon learned to speak a little of their, music-language. This caused a great deal of surprise. Several persons began to think that I was really a man who had been dwarfed and weakened from want of nourishment.

But the learned doctors again examined me, and decided that, as I did not walk on four legs, I must be a new kind of featherless parrot. Thereupon I was given a pole to perch on, instead of a nice warm bed to lie in; and every day the queen’s fowler used to come and whistle tunes for me to learn. In the meantime, however, I improved my knowledge of the language, and at last I spoke so well and intelligibly that all the courtiers said that the learned doctors had been mistaken. One of the queen’s maids of honour not only thought that I was a man, but fell in love with me. She often used to steal to my cage, and listen to my stories of the customs and amusements of our world. She was so interested that she begged me to take her with me if ever I found a way of returning to the Earth.

In my examination by the learned doctors I had stated that their world was but a Moon, and that the Moon from which I had come was really a world. It was this which had made them angry against me. But my friend, the Man of the Sun, at last prevailed upon the king to let me out of the cage on my retracting my wicked heresy. I was clad in splendid robes, and placed on a magnificent chariot to which four great noblemen were harnessed, and led to the centre of the city, where I had to make the following statement:

“People, I declare to you that this Moon is not a Moon but a world; and that the world I come from is not a world but a Moon. For this is what the Royal Council believe that you ought to believe.”

The Man of the Sun then helped me to descend from the chariot, and took me quickly into a house, and stripped me of my gorgeous robes. “Why do you do that?” I asked. “This is the most splendid dress I have ever seen on the Moon.”

“It is a garb of shame,” said my companion. “You have this day undergone the lowest degradation that can be imposed on a man. You committed an awful crime in saying

that the Moon was not a Moon. It is a great wonder you were not condemned to die of old age."

"Die of old age?" I said.

Page 168

“Yes,” replied my companion. “Usually, when a Man of the Moon comes to that time of life in which he feels that he is losing his strength of mind and body, he invites all his friends to a banquet. After explaining what little hope he has of adding anything to the fine actions of his life, he asks for permission to depart. If he has led a bad life, he is ordered to live; but if he has been a good man, his dearest friend kisses him, and plunges a dagger in his heart.”

As he was talking, the son of the man in whose house we were staying entered the room. My companion quickly rose on his four feet, and made the young man a profound bow. I asked him why he did this. He told me that on the Moon parents obey their children, and old men are compelled to show to young men the greatest respect.

“They are of opinion,” said my companion, “that a strong and active young man is more capable of governing a family than a dull, infirm sexagenarian. I know that on your Earth old men are supposed to be wise and prudent. But, as a matter of fact, their wisdom and prudence consists merely of a timid frame of mind and a disinclination to take any risks.”

The father then entered the room, and his son said to him in an angry voice:

“Why have you not got our house ready to sail away? You know the walls of the city have gone some hours ago. Bring me at once your image!”

The man brought a great wooden image of himself, and his son whipped it furiously for a quarter of an hour.

“And now,” said the young man at last, “go and hoist the sails at once!”

III.—Marvels of the Moon

There are two kinds of towns on the Moon: travelling towns and sedentary towns. In the travelling towns, each house is built of very light wood, and placed on a platform, beneath the four corners of which great wheels are fixed. When the time arrives for a voyage to the seaside or the forest, for a change of air, the townspeople hoist vast sails on the roofs of their dwellings, and sail away altogether towards the new site.

In the sedentary towns, on the other hand, the houses are made with great strong screws running from the cellars to the roofs, which enable them to be raised or lowered at discretion. The depth of the cellar is equal to the height of every house; in winter, the whole structure is lowered below the surface of the ground; in spring, it is lifted up again by means of the screw.

As, owing to the father’s neglect, the house in which we were staying could not set sail until the next day, my companion and I accepted an invitation to stay the night there.

Our host then sent for a doctor, who prescribed what foods I should smell, and what kind of bed I should lie in.

“But I am not sick!” I said to the Man of the Sun.

“If you were,” he replied, “the doctor would not have been sent for. On the Moon, doctors are not paid to cure men, but to keep them in good health. They are officers of the state, and, once a day, they call at every house, and instruct the inmates how to preserve their natural vigour.”

Page 169

“I wish,” I. said, “you could get him to order me a dozen roasted larks instead of the mere smell of them. I should like to taste some solid food just for a change.”

He spoke to the doctor, and at a sign from him, our host took a gun and led me into his garden.

“Are those the kind of birds you mean?” he said, pointing to a great swarm of larks singing high up in the sky.

I replied that they were, and he shot at them, and thirty larks tumbled over at our feet, not merely dead, but plucked, seasoned, and roasted.

“You see,” said my host, “we mix with our gunpowder and shot a certain composition which cooks as well as kills.”

I picked up one of the birds and ate it. In sober truth, I have never tasted on Earth anything so deliciously roasted.

When I had finished my repast, I was conducted to a little room, the floor of which was strewn with fine orange blossoms about three feet deep. The Men of the Moon always sleep on these thick, soft heaps of fragrant flowers, which are chosen for them every day by their doctors. Four servants came and undressed me, and gently rubbed my limbs and my body, and in a few moments I was fast asleep.

Early next morning I was awakened by the Man of the Sun, who said to me:

“I know you are anxious to return to your Earth and relate the story of all the strange and wonderful things you have seen on the Moon. If you care to while away an hour or two over this book, I will prepare for your return voyage.”

The book which he put into my hand was an extraordinary object. It was a kind of machine, full of delicate springs, and it looked like a new kind of clock. In order to read it, you had to use, not your eyes, but your ears. For on touching one of the springs, it began to speak like a man. It was a history of the Sun, and I was still listening to it when my companion arrived.

“I am now ready,” he said. “On what part of the Earth would you like to land?”

“In Italy,” I replied. “That will save me the cost and trouble of travelling to Rome—a city I have always longed to see.”

Taking me in his arms, the Man of the Sun rose swiftly up from the Moon and carried me across the intervening space, and dropped me rather roughly on a hill near Rome. When I turned to expostulate with him, I found that he had disappeared.

* * * * *

BJOERNSTJERNE BJOERNSON

Arne

Bjoernstjerne Bjoernson, one of the greatest Scandinavian writers, was born at Kvikne, in the wild region of the Dovre Mountains, Norway, Dec. 8, 1832. His father was the village pastor. Six years later the family removed to Naesset, on the west coast of Norway. From the grammar school at Molde young Bjoernson went to the University of Christiania, and it was then that he began to write verses and newspaper articles. At Upsala,

Page 170

in 1856, he understood that he had a definite call to literature, and at Copenhagen the following year he wrote his first masterpiece “Synnove Solbakken.” This was followed, in 1858, by “Arne,” a story which not only brought him into the front rank of contemporary writers, but also marked a new era in Norwegian literature. From that time there has been a succession of novels, short stories, and plays (Bjoernson on two occasions has been the director of a theatre) from his pen. A drama, “The King,” produced in 1877, had an after effect of immense political importance. It was undoubtedly an attack on the ruler of Norway and Sweden, and every Norwegian who wished his country to become an independent nation welcomed Bjoernson as the leader of this new movement—with what success there is now no need to relate, since it has become a matter of history. Bjoernson died April 25, 1910.

I.—The Little Song-Maker

It was up at Kampen that Arne was born. His mother was Margit, the only child at the little farm among the crags. When she was eighteen, she stopped too long at a dance one evening; her friends had gone off without her, so Margit thought the way home would be just as long whether she waited till the end of the dance or not.

Thus it came about that Margit remained sitting there till Nils Skraedder, the fiddler, suddenly laid aside his instrument, as was his wont when he had had more than enough to drink, left the dancers to hum their own tune, took hold of the prettiest girl he could find, and, letting his feet keep as good time to the dance as music to a song, jerked off with the heel of his boot the hat of the tallest man in the room. “Ho!” laughed he.

As Margit walked home that night, the moon was making wondrous sport over the snow. When she got to the loft where she slept, she could not help looking out at it again.

Next time there was a dance in the parish, Margit was present. She did not care much to dance that evening, but sat listening to the music. But when the playing ceased the fiddler rose and went straight across to Margit Kampen. She was scarcely aware of anything, but that she was dancing with Nils Skraedder!

Before long the weather grew warmer, and there was no more dancing that spring.

One Sunday, when the summer was getting on, Margit went to church with her mother. When they were at home again her mother threw both her arms around her. “Hide nothing from me, my child!” she cried.

Winter came again, but Margit danced no more. Nils Skraedder went on playing, drank more than formerly, and wound up each party by dancing with the prettiest girl there. It

was said for certain that he could have whichever he wished of the farmers' daughters, and that Birgit, the daughter of Boeen, was sick for love of him.

Just about this time a child of the cotter's daughter at Kampen was brought to be christened. It was given the name of Arne, and its father was said to be Nils Skraedder.

Page 171

The evening of that day saw Nils at a great wedding party. He would not play, but drank all he could, and was dancing the whole time. But when he asked Birgit Boeen for a dance, she refused him. He turned and took hold of the first good-looking girl near. She, too, held back, and answered a request he whispered in her ear with the words: "The dance might go further than I should like."

At that Nils drew back, and danced the "Halling" alone. Then he went into the barn, laid himself down, and wept.

Margit sat at home with her little boy. She heard about Nils going from dance to dance, and it was not very long before Arne learnt that Nils Skraedder was his father, and the kind of man he was.

It was when Arne was about six years old that two Americans, visiting the place when a bridal party was going on, were so much struck by the way Nils danced the "Halling" that they proposed to take him as their servant, at whatever wages he wanted. They would call for him on their way back in about a week's time. Nils was the hero of the evening.

The dance was resumed. Nils looked round at the girls, and went over to Birgit Boeen. He held out his hand, and she put out hers. Then, turning away with a laugh, he put his arm around the girl next to her, and danced off with boisterous glee.

Birgit coloured, and a tall, quiet-looking man took her hand, and danced away. Nils noticed it, and presently danced so hard against them that both Birgit and her partner fell to the ground.

The quiet-looking man got up, went straight to Nils, took him by the arm, and knocked him down with a blow over the eyes. Nils fell heavily, tried to rise, and found that he couldn't—his back was badly hurt.

Meantime, at Kampen, no sooner had the grandmother succeeded in paying off the last instalment of debt on the farm than she was stricken with mortal sickness and died.

A fortnight after the funeral six men brought in a litter, and on the litter lay Nils with his black hair and pale face.

In the springtime, a year after he had been brought to Kampen, Nils and Margit were married. The fiddler's health was ruined, but he was able to help in the fields, and look after things. Then, one Sunday afternoon, when Nils and Arne were out together they saw a wedding procession, fourteen carriages in all. Nils stood for a long time motionless after the bride and bridegroom had passed, and for the rest of the day he was sullen and angry. He went out before supper, and returned at midnight, drunk.

From that day Nils was constantly going into town and coming home drunk. He reproached Margit for his wretched life; he cursed her, he struck her, and beat her. Then would come fits of wild remorse.

As Arne grew up, Nils took him to dances, and the boy learnt to sing all sorts of songs. His mother taught him to read, and when he was fifteen he longed to travel and to write songs.

Page 172

At home, things got worse. As Nils grew feebler he became more drunken and violent, and often Arne would stay at home to amuse him in order that Margit might have an hour's peace. Arne began to loathe his father; but he kept this feeling to himself, as he did his love for his mother.

His one friend was Kristen, the eldest son of a sea-captain. With Kristen, Arne could talk of books and travel. But there came a day when Kristen went away to be a sailor, and Arne was left alone.

Life was very heavy for him. He made up songs and put his grief into them. But for his mother, Arne would have left Kampen—he stood between her and Nils.

One night, about this time, Nils came back late from a wedding-feast. Margit had gone to bed, and Arne was reading. The boy helped his father upstairs, and Nils began quoting texts from the Bible and cursing his own downfall, shedding drunken tears. Presently he made his way to the bed, and put his fingers on Margit's throat.

In vain the boy and his mother called on Nils to desist; the drunkard took no notice. Arne rushed to a corner of the room and picked up an axe; at the same moment Nils fell down, and, after a piercing shriek, lay quite still.

All that night they watched by the dead. A feeling of relief came upon them both.

"He fell of himself," Arne said simply, for at first his mother was terrified by the sight of the axe.

"Remember, Arne, it's for your sake I've borne it all," Margit said, weeping. "You must never leave me."

"Never, never," he answered fervently.

II.—The Call of the Mountains

Arne grew up reserved and shy; he went on tending the cattle and making songs. He was now in his twentieth year. The pastor lent him books to read, the only thing he cared for.

Many a time he would have liked to read aloud to his mother, but he could not bring himself to do it. One of the songs he made at this time began:

> The parish is all restless, but there's peace in grove and wood.
> No beadle here impounds you, to suit his crabbed mood;
> No strife profanes our little church, tho' there it rages high,
> But then we have no little church, and that, perhaps, is why!

The folks round about got to hear of his songs, and would have been glad to talk to him; but Arne was shy of people and disliked them, chiefly because he thought they disliked him.

He gave up tending the cattle, and stayed at home, looking after the farm. He was near his mother all day now, and she would give him dainty meals. In his heart was a song with the refrain “Over the mountains high!” Somehow, Arne could never finish this song.

There was a field labourer named Upland Knut, at whose side Arne often worked. This man had neither parents nor friends, and when Arne said to him, “Have you no one at all, then, to love you?” he answered, “Ah, no! I have no one.”

Page 173

Arne thought of his own mother, and his heart was full of love to her. What if he were to lose her because he had not sufficiently prized her, he thought; and he rushed home, to find his mother sleeping gently like a child.

Mother and son were much together in those days, and once they agreed to go to a wedding at a neighbouring farm.

For the first time in his life Arne drank too much, and all next day he lay in the barn. He was full of self-reproach, and it seemed to him that cowardice was his besetting sin.

Cowardice had been his failing as a boy. It had prevented him taking his mother's part against his father, from leaving home, from mixing with people. Cowardice had made him drunk, and, but for his fear and timidity, his verses would be better.

After searching everywhere for him, Margit eventually found him in the barn. He tried to soothe her, and vowed that he would join his life more closely to his mother's in future. What moved him was that his loving, patient mother said that she had done a grievous wrong against him, and implored his forgiveness.

"Of course, I forgive you," he said.

"God bless you, my dear, dear Arne."

From that day, Arne was not only happier at home, but he began to look at other people more kindly, more with his mother's gentle eyes. But he still went about alone, and a strange longing often possessed his soul.

One summer evening Arne had gone out to sit by the Black Lake, a piece of water very dark and deep. He sat behind some bushes and looked out over the water, and at the hills opposite, and at the homesteads in the valley.

Presently he heard voices close beside him. A young girl, he made out, was grumbling because she had got to leave the parsonage, where she had been staying with Mathilde, the parson's daughter, and it was her father who was taking her home. A third voice, sharp and strident, was heard.

"Hurry up, now, Baard; push off the boat, or we sha'n't be home to-night."

The rattle of cart-wheels followed, and Baard fetched a box out of the cart, and carried it down to the boat.

Then Mathilde, the parson's daughter, came running up calling, "Eli! Eli!"

The two girls wept in each other's arms.

“You must take this,” said Mathilde, giving her friend a bird-cage. “Mother wants you to. Yes, you must take Narrifas, and then you’ll often think of me.”

“Eli! Come, come, Eli!” came the summons from the boat.

A moment after, and Arne saw the boat out in the water, Eli standing up in the stern, holding the bird-cage and waving her hand to Mathilde. His eyes followed the boat, and he watched it draw near to the land. He could see the three forms mirrored in the water, and continued gazing until they had left the boat and gone indoors at the biggest house on the opposite side of the lake.

Mathilde had sat for some time by the landing stage, but she had left now, and Arne was alone when Eli came out again for a last look across the water. Arne could see her image in the lake. “Perhaps she sees me now,” he thought. Then, when the sun had set, he got up and went home, feeling that all things were at peace.

Page 174

Arne's fancies for some time now were of dreams of love and fair maidens. Old ballads and romances mirrored them for him, as the water had mirrored the young girl.

A two-fold longing—the yearning to have someone to love, and a desire to do something great—sprang up together in his soul, and melted into one. Again he began to work at the song, "Over the mountains high," altering it, and thinking each time, "One day it will carry me off." But he never forgot his mother in his thoughts of travel, and decided that he would send for her as soon as he had got a footing abroad.

There was in the parish a merry old fellow of the name of Ejnar Aasen. He was well off, and, in spite of a lameness that made him use a crutch, was fond of organising parties of children to go nutting. All the young people called him "godfather."

Aasen liked Arne, and invited him to join in the next nutting party, and though Arne blushed, and made excuses, he decided to go. He found himself the only young man among many girls. They were not the maidens of whom he had made songs, nor yet was he afraid of them. They were more full of life than anything he had seen, and they could make merry over anything. All of them laughed at Arne, as they caught at the branches, because he was serious, so that he could not help laughing himself.

After a while they all sat on a large knoll, old Aasen in the middle, and told stories. And then they were anxious to tell their dreams, but this could be done only to one person, and Arne was trusted to hear the dreams. The last of the girls to tell her dreams was called Eli, and she was the girl he had seen in the boat.

Arne had to say which was the best dream, and as he said he wanted time to think, they left him sitting on the knoll and trooped off with godfather. Arne sat for some time, and the old yearnings to travel came back, and drove him to his song, "Over the mountains high." Now, at last, he had got the words; and taking paper out of his pocket, he wrote the song through to the end. When he had finished he rose, and left the paper on the knoll; and later, when he found he had forgotten it, he went back. But the paper was gone.

One of the girls, who had returned to seek him, had found—not Arne, but his song.

III.—Love's Awakening

Whenever Arne mentioned his friend Kristen, and wondered why he never heard from him, his mother left the room, and seemed unhappy for days afterwards. He noticed, too, that she would get specially nice meals for him at such times.

He had never been so gentle since his father's death as he was that winter. On Sundays he would read a sermon to his mother, and go to church with her; but she knew this was only to win her consent to his going abroad in the spring. Upland Knut,

who had always been alone, now came to live at Kampen. Arne had become very skilful with axe and saw, and that winter he was often busy at the parsonage as well as Kampen.

Page 175

One day a messenger came from Boeen to ask him if he would go over there for some carpentry work. He answered "Yes," without thinking about the matter. As soon as the man had gone, his mother told him that it was Baard Boeen who had injured his father; but Arne decided to go all the same.

It was a fine homestead, and Baard and Arne soon became on friendly terms. He had many talks, too, with Eli, and at times would sing his own songs to her, and afterwards feel ashamed.

Then Eli fell ill, and Birgit blamed Baard because Mathilde had gone away from the parsonage on a visit to town without bidding good-bye to Eli. It seemed to Baard that whatever he did was wrong.

"You either keep silent too much, or you talk too much," said his wife.

During Eli's illness Baard would often sit and talk with Arne, and one day he told him how he had been driven to attack Nils, and then how he had courted and won Birgit.

"She was very melancholy at first," said Baard, "and I had nothing to say; and then she got into bustling, domineering ways, and I had nothing to say to that. But one day of real happiness I've not had the twenty years we've been married."

When Eli was getting better, her mother came down one evening and asked Arne, in her daughter's name, to go up and sing to her. Eli had heard him singing. Arne was confused, but gave in and went upstairs.

The room was in darkness, and he had not seen Eli since the day she had fallen ill, and he had helped to carry her to her room. Arne sat down in a chair at the foot of the bed. When people talk in the dark they are generally more truthful than when they see one another's faces.

Eli made Arne sing to her, first a hymn, and then a song of his own. For some time there was silence between them, and then Eli said, "I wonder, Arne, that you, who have so much that is beautiful within, should want to go away. You must not go away."

"There are times when I seem not to want to so much," he answered.

Presently Arne could hear her weeping, and he felt that he must move—either forward or back.

"Eli!"

"Yes." Both voices were at a whisper.

"Give me your hand."

She made no answer. He listened, quickly, closely, stretched out his own hand, and grasped a warm little hand that lay bare.

There was a step on the stairs; they let go of one another, and Birgit entered with a light. “You’ve been sitting too long in the dark,” she said, putting the candle on the table. But neither Eli nor Arne could bear the light; she turned to the pillow, and he shaded his face with his hands.

“Ah, yes; it’s a bit dazzling at first,” said the mother, “but the feeling soon passes away.”

Next day Arne heard that Eli was better and going to come down for a time after dinner. He at once put his tools together, and bade farewell to the farm. And when Eli came downstairs he was gone.

Page 176

IV.—After Many Years

It was springtime when Margit went up to the parsonage. There was something heavy on her heart. Letters had come from Kristen for Arne, and she had been afraid to give them to her son lest he should go away and join his friend. Kristen had even sent money, and this Margit had given to Arne, pretending it had been left him by his grandmother. All this Margit poured out to the old pastor, and also her fears that Arne would go travelling.

“Ah!” he said, smiling, “if only there was some little lassie who could get hold of him. Eli Boeen, eh? And if he could manage so that they could meet sometimes at the parsonage.”

Margit looked up anxiously.

“Well, we’ll see what we can do,” he went on; “for, to tell you the truth, my wife and daughter have long been of the same mind.”

Then came the summer, and one day, when the heavens were clear, Arne walked out and threw himself down on the grass. He meant to go to the parsonage and borrow a newspaper. He had not been to Boeen since that night in the sick-room, and now he glanced towards the house, and then turned away his eyes. Presently he heard someone singing his song, the song he had lost the very day he made it.

Fain would I know what the world may be
  Over the mountains high.
Mine eyes can nought but the white snow see,
And up the steep sides the dark fir-tree,
  That climbs as if yearning to know.
  Say, tree, dost thou venture to go?

There were eight verses, and Arne stood listening till the last word had died away. He must see who it was, and presently above him he caught sight of Eli.

The sunlight was falling straight on her, and it seemed to Arne, as he looked at her, that he had never seen or dreamt of anything more beautiful in his life. He watched her get up, without letting himself be seen, and presently she was gone. Arne no longer wanted to go to the parsonage, but he went and sat where she had sat, and his breast was full of gentle feelings.

Eli often went to the parsonage, and one Sunday evening Margit found her there, and persuaded the girl to walk back to Kampen with her. Eli entered the house only when she heard that Arne was not at home. It was the first time she had visited the

homestead. Margit took her all over the house, and showed her Arne's room, and opened a little chest full of silk kerchiefs and ribbons.

"He bought something each time he's been to the town," Margit remarked.

Eli would have given anything to go away, but she dared not speak.

In a special compartment in the chest she had seen a buckle, a pair of gold rings, and a hymn-book bound with silver clasps, and wrought on the clasps was:

"Eli Baardsdatter Boeen."

The mother put back the things, closed the box, and clasped the girl to her heart; for Eli was weeping.

Page 177

When they were downstairs again, they heard a man's step in the passage, and Arne entered, and saw Eli.

"You here?" he said, and blushed a fiery red. Then he put his arms around her, and she leant her head on his breast. He whispered something in her ear, and for a long while they stood in silence, her arms around his neck.

As they walked home together in the fair summer evening, they could utter but few words in their strange, new Happiness. Nature interpreted their hearts to one another, and on his way back from that first summer-night's walk, Arne made many new songs.

It was harvest time when the marriage of Eli with Arne was celebrated. The Black Water was full of boats taking people to Boeen.

All the doors were open at the house. Eli was in her room with Mathilde and the pastor's wife. Arne was downstairs looking out from the window.

Presently Baard and Birgit, both dressed, for church, met on the stairs, and went up together to a garret where they were alone. Baard had something to say, but it was hard to say it.

"Birgit," he began, "you've been thinking, as I've been, I daresay. *He* stood between us two, I know, and it's gone on a long time. To-day a son of his has come into our house, and to him we've given our only daughter.... Birgit, can't we, too, join our hearts to-day?"

His voice trembled, but no answer came.

They heard Eli outside, calling gently: "Aren't you coming, mother?"

"Yes, I'm coming now, dear!" said Birgit, in a choking voice. She walked across the room to Baard, took his hand in hers, and broke into violent sobs. The two hands clung tight and it was hand in hand they opened the door and went downstairs. And when the bridal train streamed down to the landing stage, and Arne gave his hand to Eli, Baard, against all custom, took Birgit's hand in his own and followed them calmly, happily, smilingly.

In the boat his eyes rested on the bridal pair and on his wife. "Ah!" he said to himself, "no one would have thought such a thing possible twenty years ago."

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In God's Way

"In God's Way" belongs to the second group of Bjoernson's novels, of which the first group is represented by early peasant tales like "Arne." In this later category the stories are of a more or less didactic nature. Although "In God's Way" lacks something of the freshness and beauty that distinguished "Arne," it is, nevertheless a powerful and vivid picture of Norwegian religious life; and it is, of all Bjoernson's books, the one by which he is most widely known outside his native country. In this story Bjoernson has been influenced by the social dramas of his compatriot, Ibsen; but it may be questioned whether he has not brought to his task a higher inspiration and a stronger faith in humanity than the famous dramatist possessed. Published in 1889, the main theme of "In God's Way" was undoubtedly suggested by the religious excitement which then prevailed in Norway.

I.—A Strange Home-coming

Page 178

Pastor Tuft was walking up and down his study, composing his Sunday sermon. He was a handsome man, with a long, fair face, and dreamy eyes; his wife, Josephine, in the days when she thought she was in love with him, used to call him Melanchthon—-that was not many years ago, and he still resembled in appearance the poet of the Reformation. But his features had now lost their fine serenity, and he was glad when his bitter and troubled thoughts on the doctrine of justification—a subject he had chosen for its bearing on his brother-in-law's conduct—were interrupted by his wife. Josephine burst into his study in a state of fierce excitement.

"They will be here in a moment," she said. "The steamer has arrived. Oh, that woman, that woman! She has ruined my brother's life!"

"If he wanted to settle again in Norway with her," said the pastor, "couldn't he have chosen some spot where the story of their misconduct was not known? But to come to the very town! Everybody will remember!"

"Yes," said Josephine; "it is only six years since Edward ran off to America with Soeren Kule's wife. Surely, he will not expect you, a minister, to receive the woman, especially as Kule is still living."

While she was talking, Tuft stared out of the window. A tall man in light clothes was coming to the house—a tall man, with a clear-cut, sunburnt face, and a lean, curved nose that gave him the air of a bird of prey. By his side was a lady with sweet, delicate features, dressed in a tartan travelling costume. There was a knock at the door. Josephine went down very slowly, and opened it. "Edward!"

There was a glow in her eyes as she welcomed her brother, and his eyes also lighted up. He was about to cross the threshold, when he noticed that she completely disregarded his companion. In the meantime, Tuft had come to the door; he, too, made no advances. There was always something of the keen, wild look of an eagle about Edward Kallem; it became still more striking as he glared at his sister and brother-in-law.

"Are you waiting," he said, "for me to introduce my wife? Well, here she is—Ragni Kallem."

So the pair had married in America! If Tuft and Josephine had not been so eager to impute every sort of misconduct to runaways, they would have foreseen this natural event. Tuft tried to find something to say, but failed, and glanced at Josephine. But she did not look as if she were willing to help him.

For the fact that Edward and Ragni were now married increased rather than diminished Josephine's bitterness. Although she would not admit it to herself, her religious objections were a mere pretence. She was jealous, jealous with the strange jealousy of

a sister who wanted to be all in all to her brilliant brother, and hated that another woman should be more to him than she was. All her life had been centred on him. She had married Ole Tuft, a poor peasant's son, because he was the bosom friend of Edward. Her marriage, she thought, would connect them still more closely. She wanted to live by his side, watching him rise into fame as the greatest doctor in Norway. For young Kallem's masters had predicted that he would prove to be a man of genius.

Page 179

Possessing considerable wealth, he had taken up the study of medicine, not as a means of livelihood, but as a matter of love and duty. Then, six years ago, he had run off with old Soeren Kule's young wife, and Josephine's dream had come to an end, leaving her life little more than a dull, empty round of routine housework.

This was why she now gazed with hard, cold eyes at Ragni. Edward Kallem saw her look of wild hatred, and, taking his weeping wife gently by the arm, he turned away, and led her from the house into the road.

Josephine went upstairs, and gazed from the study window at the retreating figures. Her husband followed her, with a curious look in his eyes. Neither of them spoke. In their hearts was raging a storm of passion wilder than the anger which possessed Kallem, and the sorrow which bowed down Ragni.

Josephine left the room without looking-at her husband. He gazed after her still with the same curious look in his eyes. Then, pulling himself together, he went on writing his sermon. "What makes God so merciful to sinners?" he wrote. "His infinite love? Yes, justification is certainly an act of mercy, but it is also an act of judgment. The claims of the law must be first fulfilled. A sinner must believe in order to be saved."

The point in this was that Edward Kallem was a freethinker. There could be no forgiveness for him. At the bottom of his heart, Tuft was glad that there had been no reconciliation. Ever since he had married the wealthy and beautiful sister of his bosom friend, he had been jealous of Josephine's passionate attachment to her brother. Her brother had remained her hero, and the peasant she had married and enriched was little more than her servant.

While, with these bitter thoughts in his head, Tuft was composing his sermon Josephine was writing a dastardly letter. It was to Soeren Kule. Edward and Ragni had returned, married. There was an empty house near the one they had bought. Would Soeren Kule come and live in it? So the letter ran. The next day, Sunday, Josephine went to church in a very Christianlike frame of mind. She felt she had done her duty, and avenged herself in doing it.

II.—The Poison of Tongues

At first things did not go as Josephine expected. With the exception of his sister and brother-in-law, everybody welcomed Edward Kallem and his wife back to his native town. At the house of Pastor Meek, the oldest and most influential of the clergy, Ragni was introduced to a middle-aged lady, who startled her by saying:

"I am Soeren Kule's sister. I want to tell you that, in your position, I should have acted just as you did."

Page 180

This, indeed, was the general verdict. No one who knew Soeren Kule blamed Ragni. An old rake, blind and half-paralysed as the immediate result of ill-living, he had worried his first wife, Ragni's sister, into the grave, and then taken advantage of the young girl's innocence to marry her. The man was a mass of corruption, and his second marriage was one of those strangely cruel crimes which go unpunished in the present state of society. Kallem, who was then lodging in the same house as Kule, was maddened by it. Being a doctor, he foresaw clearly the fate of the pure, lovely, girlish victim of Kule's brutal passion, and in rescuing her from it he had displayed, in the opinion of his friends, the chivalry of soul of a modern knight-errant.

Pastor Meek was a liberal-minded and courageous old man; he showed his sympathy with the Kallems, and his trust in them, in a practical manner.

"My grandson, Karl," he said to Kallem, "is at school here. I wish you would let him come, now and then, to your house. He is only nineteen years old, but he promises to be a first-rate composer. Your wife plays the piano beautifully. They ought to get on well together."

Kallem was so pleased with this mark of approval that he went the next morning to the young musician's lodgings, and invited him to come and live with him. Karl Meek was a lanky, awkward hobbledehoy, with a tousled head of hair and long red hands, which were always covered with chilblains. Ragni asked him to play a simple duet, but he made so many mistakes in playing that she got up from the piano. He was upset, and ran away from the house. Kallem spent an afternoon looking for him, and brought him back with his hair cut, his nails trimmed, and his clothes brushed.

"Can't you see?" said Kallem to his wife. "The lad's shy and afraid of you. Do, my dear, make him feel quite at home."

Ragni was a sweet and gentle woman, and though she did not like Karl much at first, she took him in hand, and, little by little, obtained a great influence over the wild creature. As his fine poetic nature gradually revealed itself, she began to mother him. They were often seen walking out together, and as soon as the snow was firm, they used to go and meet Kallem, and drive home with him, each standing on one of the runners of his sledge. One afternoon, after they had been skating together on the frozen bay, they were returning, without Kallem, when a carriage barred their way. At the sound of Ragni's voice, the man inside said:

"There she goes! Who is it with her? Another man? Ah, I thought that's what would happen!"

Ragni shuddered. It was Soeren Kule. The paralysed old rake turned his blind face upon her, as though he could see her, and had caught her doing wrong. The carriage stopped by the next house to the Kallems. Before Kule could get out, Ragni had run

indoors. Shortly afterwards her husband arrived. She saw that he, too, had met Kule, and he saw that she had gone into the bedroom to hide herself. She buried her head in his arms; it seemed to her that the air was now full of evil spirits.

Page 181

And so it was. Edward Kallem did not know it, as he was now too busy to go out anywhere. He was spending a great deal of his wealth in fitting out a private hospital for the study and treatment of the diseases that he specialised in. But Karl Meek soon became aware of malign influences working around him, and around the two persons for whom he would willingly, nay, happily, have laid down his life. He met an old friend in the street, who said to him:

“How do you stand in regard to Mrs. Kallem?”

Karl did not take in his meaning, and began to praise Ragni enthusiastically.

“Yes, I know all about that,” his friend interrupted. “But, to make a clean breast of it, are you her lover?”

“How dare you, how dare you!” cried Karl.

His friend quietly said that he only wanted to warn Karl; the report had certainly got about.

“You’ve been a great deal together, you know,” said his friend; “that has given the scandal-mongers something to go on.”

Both Edward and Ragni saw that something had happened to Karl when he returned. He was in a black mood; he did not speak; his blue eyes were, by turns, strangely savage and strangely sorrowful. He had to go home at once, he said. He could not tell them now what the matter was, but he would write to them, as soon as he could pluck up the courage to do so. He packed his luggage, and Kallem went to see him off.

A few days afterwards, Ragni received a letter from Karl. He was going to Berlin, he said, to take up the study of music seriously. And then, for four pages, he talked about his prospects. But there was another page, a loose one, on which was written in red ink: “Read this when you are alone.”

“I have decided, Ragni,” Karl wrote, “that it would be wisest to tell you why I left so suddenly. Someone has started a dreadful slander against us. If I do not now tell you, you will hear it from the lips of some enemy. Ah, God! that I should have brought this upon you! Love you? Of course I love you. How could I help doing so, after all your kindness to me? And as for Edward, I worship the ground he treads on. He is the noblest man I have ever met. But do not show him this letter. Spare him the evil news as long as possible. Now that I have gone away, it may all blow over.”

Kallem did not get home from the hospital that night until eight o’clock. When he came home his wife was lying in bed with a headache. She did not get up the next morning. She was in bed several days. When at last she got up, her husband noticed that she

had grown very thin; her face had a tired, delicate expression; there were dark rings around her sweet eyes, and she was troubled with a cough.

III.—The Fell Work of Slander

Ragni now did not stir outside her own door. She longed for fresh air, but she would not go out into the town for fear of the cruel, curious eyes of the scandal-mongers. Soeren Kule haunted her. His house overlooked her garden, and she got the strange fancy into her head that he was always sitting at the window blindly listening for her. So she never even went for a walk in the park-like grounds which Kallem had purchased wholly for her pleasure.

Page 182

The poison of scandal had done its work. Her husband, unfortunately, never suspected that she was really ill; he had a deep longing for a child of his marriage, and, misled by too eager a hope, he misinterpreted the strange alteration in his wife's health.

But one evening, when she coughed, some blood came up. Kallem saw it, and the hideous truth came upon him in a blinding flash. It was the terrible disease which he had spent the greater part of his fortune in fighting against. Tuberculosis! But how was it that it had come so suddenly, and ravaged her dear, sweet, tender body so furiously? She was in a galloping consumption, and the end was not far off ... a few weeks ... a few days, perhaps.

"Darling," he said, coming to her bedside one day, "isn't there some secret you would like to confide in me—some secret that has been hurting and distressing you? Tell me, dearest, for I shall have no peace until I know it."

"I will tell you," she said. "I have just been thinking about it. You will find some papers in my writing-table—they are all for you. Read them, dear, when——" she broke off abruptly—"by and by. You will understand that it was for your sake I kept it secret."

He went downstairs, and in the writing-table he found Karl's letter. Horror, indignation, and helplessness overcame him. Why had he not known of this in time? He would have gone to every soul in the town, and told them that they lied.

"Ay," he said, "I will tell them so yet. They have murdered her—cowardly murdered her! Ah, God, I have spent my life and my fortune in my endeavours to benefit them, and there's not one of them—not one—honest enough to tell me to defend my wife's good name!"

What drove him almost to madness was that there was none he could go to and take by the throat, exclaiming: "You have done this! You are answerable to me for this!" Still, there was one who stood apart from the others—Josephine. Josephine had not invented the slander; that was not her way. But she would believe what was invented when it concerned anyone she disliked. And how she disliked Ragni! Yes, it was Josephine and her hypocrite of a husband who had laid his darling open to this sort of attack. Very well! Everything else was gone—his joy of life, his interest in science, and his love of mankind. But he still had something to live for—vengeance!

As he was sitting one evening by the bedside of his wife the door opened, and Karl Meek came into the room. "Is she dead?" said the boy. Ragni heard the question. She looked up, and tried to smile. Her eyes rested for a moment on Karl, and then remained on her husband. A moment after she was dead.

Josephine was surprised to hear that Karl Meek was the only person whom her brother allowed to follow the coffin of his dead wife. Did that mean that Edward did not suspect him? Or, more likely, that he had forgiven him? Ah, if one could be as good as that!

Page 183

“God’s way with sinners,” said Tuft, “may seem cruel, but it is really kind and merciful. The death of that woman will work for Edward’s good: Of course, he feels it keenly now, but he will get over it. It is a blessing in disguise.”

As soon as Tuft uttered these words he felt the sheer brutality of them. By a strange irony of fate, his own child had fallen ill about the time that Ragni took to her bed, and the minister and his wife were now talking over the couch of their suffering little boy. Something was wrong with his chest, and Josephine would have liked to call in her clever brother in place of the ordinary family doctor, but she would not humble herself to beg his help. Perhaps it was the shock of her husband’s words that aroused her, but that night the springs of her nature were strangely opened. She came downstairs in her nightdress to Tuft’s bed, and awoke him. Her eyes were fixed in a blank stare.

“I can’t sleep, Ole,” she whispered. “I want to warn you. That woman— Edward’s wife —is trying to take away our boy. We have been too hard on her—too hard. Now she will make us pay for it.”

“You are not yourself, Josephine,” said Tuft, rising up, and dressing himself hastily. “I will fetch the doctor.”

“No, no!” she cried. “Ask Edward to come.”

Tuft did not dare do this himself, but he got his doctor to approach Kallem, who made an appointment to examine the child early next morning. Josephine shrieked when she saw him. Under the stress of mental suffering, the flesh on his face had wasted to the bone; he was the image of death. Without speaking to either of the parents he went to the child, tapped its chest lightly here and there, and then said something to the doctor and went out.

“He has gone to get his instruments,” the doctor whispered. “The case is extremely serious. An operation must be performed at once.”

Josephine did not speak, neither did Tuft. They had been watching Kallem’s face as he bent over their boy, and in it they seemed to read the sentence of death. They had called him in too late.

They were mistaken. Edward Kallem came hurrying back with a staff of trained assistants. Tuft and Josephine were locked outside their child’s room. An hour afterwards the door was opened. The boy’s life was saved. This they learnt from their own doctor, but Kallem himself departed without even speaking to them.

IV.—The Reconciliation

That night, over the body of the sleeping child, Ole Tuft at last dealt sternly and truly with himself. Three times, in the course of the day, had he gone to Kallem’s house to

thank him for saving his boy's life. But Kallem had refused to see him. At the third refusal Tuft understood. If ever he entered his brother-in-law's house he would enter it a changed man. He was now vowing that he would begin this new life by uniting Edward and Josephine. It was his jealousy, he admitted to himself, which had been the root of all the mischief.

Page 184

Edward had been his hero, too, in his younger days, and it was this common worship of a nobler and more gifted nature which had brought him and Josephine together. Why had he not let it remain the base of their intercourse? Their marriage would then have been a happy one, and his own life would have been filled with larger thoughts and more generous feelings.

While Pastor Tuft was meditating, his wife was acting. She too, had been refused admittance to her brother's house. So she was writing to him. For whatever wrong they might have done, she said, they wished to make amends. They had been intolerant, she allowed, and they were sorry for it. But surely they were worthy to be accused? Would he not, then, tell them plainly what they had done to make him so angry?

Some days afterwards, Josephine received a large envelope addressed to her by her brother. But she was surprised, on opening it, to find that it was full of papers in two strange handwritings. They were letters to Kallem, from Ragni and Karl Meek. Josephine trembled as she looked at them. She began by chance with Meek's letters. Ragni innocent? Good God! was she innocent? Yes! Now she understood why Edward had driven away on the day of the funeral with only Karl Meek by his side; but she could not understand how he had survived it.

The servant knocked at her bedroom door, saying that supper was ready.

"No, no!" she managed to exclaim, as she writhed in shame and sorrow. She must go at once to her brother if she had to go to him on her knees. But no! Here were Ragni's letters. She felt as if her brother were standing over her, and forcing her to read them. Some of them were early love-letters. There had been no misconduct. Her chivalrous brother and the sweet, gentle woman whom he had rescued from a horrible fate had lived apart from one another in America until the day of their marriage.

Josephine slipped from the chair down upon her knees, weeping and sobbing. "Forgive me! Forgive me!" she whispered, pressing Ragni's letters in her hands.

Then she forced herself to silence, so that no one might discover her crouching there in the shame of her crime. She had murdered her brother's wife—not by words, but by her silence! Yes, she was a murderess! Well, let Edward deal with her as he thought fit!

She ran wildly out of the house into the dark, rainy street, past her husband's church, past the white wall of Soeren Kule's dwelling. Her brother was standing in the open door, surrounded by trunks and boxes. Was he thinking of going away? Tears streamed down her face.

"Edward!"

She could get no further. He drew himself upright, his face white and stern.

“You shall never enter here!” he said, with a break in his voice.

Page 185

He bent down to do up a trunk. When he got up she was gone. With a fierce look in his eyes, he continued his preparations. He meant to catch the first train the next morning, and get at once far away from his native town. What he would then do he did not know, except that he would never return. When everything was ready, he locked the front door and went to bed. But he could not sleep. Twice in the night the door-bell rang, but he would not open the door. It rang a third time, and kept on ringing; and at last he got out of bed. It was Ole Tuft. His face was ghastly.

“Where is my wife, Edward Kallem? What have you done with my wife?” he moaned.

“Ragni’s grave,” said Kallem. “She is there, I think.”

And then he slammed the door to. Just as dawn was breaking, the bell rang again. Kallem went into the hall, and saw that two pieces of paper had been thrust through the letter-box. On one, Tuft had written: “She is not there, Edward; she was not there. I found this note on my writing-table among the letters you sent her. Oh, Edward, it was not like you to send her away!” On the other piece of paper Josephine had written: “Read these, Ole, and you will understand all. For my life’s sake, I am now going to my brother!”

“For my life’s sake!” Kallem shivered as he read it, and all his old love for his sister came back to him. Had he killed her? She had wronged Ragni, true; but it was merely out of jealousy. Jealousy because he had made Ragni all in all to him, and left her out of his life. He could have brought his wife and sister together, but he had not tried to do it. Ah, he, too, was guilty! All her life long Josephine had looked up to him and worshipped him. Then he had come back from America, and cast her off, for one who was not worthy of him, so it seemed to her. And in his fierce pride he had refused to reveal to her the fine character of his wife.

He rushed out of the door, resolved to find what had become of her. She was sitting on the steps of the house. As she saw him, she crouched down like a wounded bird, which cannot get away, yet must not be seen. He took her up into his arms, and carried her indoors.

“Let me stay, Edward—let me stay!” she said.

He bent over her and kissed her.

“God’s ways! God’s ways!” said Ole Tuft, as he and Edward and Josephine walked slowly towards his house through the empty streets in the early morning.

“But I still cannot share your faith,” Kallem said.

“It matters not,” said the minister. “There where good people walk, are God’s ways.”

* * * * *

WILLIAM BLACK

A Daughter of Heth

Page 186

William Black, born in Glasgow, Scotland, Nov. 13, 1841, was educated with a view to being a landscape painter, a training that clearly influenced his literary life. He became a painter of scenery in words. At the age of twenty-three he went to London, after some experience in Glasgow journalism, and joined the staff of the "Morning Star," and, later, the "Daily News," of which journal he became assistant-editor. His first novel appeared in 1868, but it was not until the publication of "A Daughter of Heth," in 1871, that Black secured the attention of the reading public. "The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton" followed, and in 1873 "A Princess of Thule" attained great popularity. Retiring from journalism the next year he devoted himself entirely to fiction. A score of novels followed, the last in 1898, just before his death on December 10 of that year. No novelist has lavished more tender care on the portrayal of his heroines, or worked up more delicately a scenic background for plaintive sentiment.

I.—In Strange Surroundings

"Noo, Wattie," said the Whaup, "ye maun say a sweer before ye get up. I'm no jokin', and unless ye be quick ye'll be in the water."

Wattie Cassilis, the "best boy" of the Airlie Manse, paragon of scholars, and exemplar to his four brothers, was depending from a small bridge over the burn, his head downward and a short distance from the water, his feet being held close to the parapet by the muscular arms of his eldest brother, Tammas Cassilis, commonly known as the Whaup.

"Wattie," repeated the Whaup, "say a sweer, or into the burn ye'll gang as sure as daith!" and he dipped Wattie a few inches, so that the ripples touched his head. Wattie set up a fearful howl.

"Now, will ye say it?"

"*Deevil!*" cried Wattie. "Let me up; I hae said a sweer!"

The other brothers raised a demoniac shout of triumph over his apostacy.

"Ye maun say a worse sweer, Wattie. Deevil is no bad enough."

"I'll droon first!" whimpered Wattie, "and then ye'll get your paiks, I'm thinking."

Down went Wattie's head into the burn again, and this time he was raised with his mouth sputtering out the contents it had received.

"I'll say what ye like! *D—n;* is that bad enough?"

With another unholy shout of derision Wattie was raised and set on the bridge.

“Noo,” said the Whaup, standing over him, “let me tell you this, my man. The next time ye gang to my faither, and tell a story about any one o’ us, or the next time you say a word against the French lassie, as ye ca’ her, do ye ken what I’ll do? I’ll take ye back to my faither by the lug, and I’ll tell him ye were sweerin’ like a trooper down by the burn, and every one o’ us will testify against you, and then, I’m thinking, it will be your turn to consider paiks.”

Catherine Cassilis, “the French lassie,” had arrived at the Manse a few weeks before, and she had sore need of a champion.

Page 187

Andrew Bogue, the ancient henchman of the Rev. Gavin Cassilis, minister of Airlie, who met her at the station, disapproved of her from the first as a foreign jade dressed so that all the men turned and looked at her as if she had been a snare of Satan. Then, had not young Lord Earlshope, after introducing himself, taken a seat in the trap and talked with her in her own language as if he had known her for years?

“They jabbered away in their foreign lingo,” said Andrew that evening to his wife Leezibeth, the housekeeper “and I’m thinking it was siccan a language was talked in Sodom and Gomorrah. And he was a’ smiles, and she was a’ smiles, and they seemed to think nae shame o’ themselves goin’ through a decent countryside!”

The Whaup himself had said, on the night of Coquette’s arrival, “Oh, she’s an actress, and I hate actresses!” But before many days had passed, he completely changed that hasty view. The big, sturdy, long-legged lad succumbed to the charms of his parentless cousin—the daughter of the minister’s brother, who had settled in France and taken to himself a French wife—and he became her defender against those inhabitants of the Manse and the parish—from his brother Wattie to the pragmatic schoolmaster—whose prejudices she unintentionally outraged.

Even the minister was grieved when Coquette, as her father had called her, made a casual remark about the “last time she had gone to the mass.”

“I am deeply pained,” said the minister gravely. “I knew not that my brother had been a pervert from the communion of our church.”

“Papa was not a Catholic,” said Coquette. “Mamma and I were. But it matters nothing. I will go to your church—it is the same to me. I only try to be kind to the people around me—that is all.”

“She has got the best part of all religions if she does her best for the people about her,” said the Whaup.

“Thomas,” remonstrated the minister severely, “you are not competent to judge of these things.”

Coquette’s second error was to play the piano on a Sabbath morning. She was stopped in this hideous offence by the housekeeper, Leezibeth.

“Is the Manse to be turned topsalteery, and made a byword a’ because o’ a foreign hussy?” asked Leezibeth.

“Look here,” said the Whaup, trying to comfort his weeping cousin, “you can depend on me. When you get into trouble, send for me, and if any man or woman in Airlie says a word to you, by jingo I’ll punch their head!”

The discovery of a crucifix over the head of the maiden's bed filled full the cup of Leezibeth's wrath and indignation.

"I thought the Cross was a symbol of all religions," said Coquette humbly. "If it annoys you, I will take it down. My mother gave it to me—I cannot put it away altogether."

"You shall not part with it," said the Whaup. "Let me see the man or woman who will touch that crucifix, though it had on it the woman o' Babylon herself!"

Page 188

But the Whaup himself was troubled by the acquaintance of Coquette with Lord Earlshope, which, from a casual meeting, developed with startling rapidity.

His lordship's reputation in the parish was far from good. He never attended the kirk; was seen walking about with his dogs and smoking on the Sabbath; and even, it was said, read novels on that holy day. His appearance in church on the first Sunday after Coquette's arrival in Airlie was not difficult to explain, and it was followed by interchanges of visits between the Manse and Earlshope House.

Soon the young lord and Coquette began to meet when she was taking her early walk, a form of "carrying on" which outraged the sentiments of the parish, and caused the Whaup to announce his intention of "giving her up" and going to sea.

The alienation of the Whaup made Coquette very miserable, and when her uncle discovered her walking alone with Lord Earlshope, she tearfully requested to be allowed to go back to France.

"I am suspected," she sobbed, in her foreign English; "I do hear they talk of me as dangerous. Is it wrong for me to speak to Lord Earlshope when I do see him kind to me? Since I left France I did meet no one so courteous as he has been. He does not think me wicked because I have a crucifix my mother gave me, and he does not suspect me."

Her second conquest—for the Whaup, on seeing her dejection, had relented and returned to his allegiance—was Leezibeth, and it was by music she was won. Coquette was playing and singing "The Flowers o' the Forest," when Leezibeth crept in, and said shamefacedly:

"Will ye sing that again, miss? Maybe ye'll no ken that me and Andrew had a boy—a bit laddie that dee'd when he was but seven years auld—and he used to sing the 'Flowers o' the Forest' afore a' the ither songs, and ye sing it that fine it makes a body amaist like to greet."

And from that day Leezibeth was the slave of Coquette; but, for the most part, the thoughts of her neighbours were no kinder to the gay and spontaneous "daughter of Heth" from the sunny South than were the grey and dreary skies of Scotland.

II.—The Lovers of Coquette

When Sir Peter and Lady Drum returned to Castle Cawmil, their home in the neighbourhood of Airlie, Lady Drum, whose joy it was to doctor her friends, prescribed at once a cruise for the drooping Coquette. And Lord Earlshope lent his yacht, and accompanied the party as a visitor. The minister, looking back anxiously at his parish, Coquette, and the Whaup, joined the party from the Manse.

On Coquette the cruise worked wonders. She recovered her spirits, and her cheeks flushed with happiness.

“You’re a pretty invalid,” said the Whaup to Coquette as they went ashore for a scramble. “Give me your hand if you want climbing, and I’ll give you enough of it.”

“No,” said Coquette, “I will not be pulled by a big, rough boy; but when you are gentle like Lord Earlshope, I like you.” Then, lest Tom should be hurt, she added: “You are a very good boy, Tom, and somebody will get very fond of you some day.”

Page 189

From that moment the Whaup grew more serious, and ceased his boyish tricks.

“I think your cousin is very fond of you,” said the good-natured Lady Drum to Coquette. “Don’t you think that some day or other he will ask you to marry him?”

“It may be,” replied Coquette dubiously. “I do not know, because my uncle has not spoken to me of any such thing; but he may think it a good marriage, and arrange it.” A French view of marriage that greatly astonished Lady Drum.

The new sense of responsibility that had come to the Whaup determined him to return at once to Glasgow, and resume his studies. When Coquette heard this she became sad and wistful.

“I hope,” she said, “I shall be always the same to you, if you come back in one year—-two years—ten years.”

And the Whaup thought that, if she would only wait two years he would work to such purpose as to be able to ask her to marry him.

Before the cruise was ended, Lord Earlshope, who had the lonely man’s habit of playing spectator to his own emotions, informed Coquette, in an impersonal way, that he had fallen in love with her.

“You are not responsible,” said he, shrugging his shoulders and speaking without bitterness. “All I ask is that you give me the benefit of your sympathy. I have been flying my kite too near the thunder-cloud. And what business had a man of my age with a kite?”

“I am very sorry,” she said softly.

After this confession Coquette tried to avoid him as much as possible; but one evening while she was sitting alone on deck, watching the sunset on wild Loch Scavaig, he came to her and told her he was going away. He held out his hand, but she made no response. What was it he heard in the stillness of the night? Moved by a great fear he knelt down, and looked into her drooping face. She was sobbing bitterly. Then there broke on him a revelation more terrible than his own sorrow.

“Why are you distressed? It is nothing to you—my going away? It cannot be anything to you surely?”

“It is very much,” she said, with a calmness of despair that startled him. “I cannot bear it.”

“What have I done! What have I done!” he exclaimed. “Coquette, Coquette, tell me you do not mean this! You do not understand my position. What you say would be to any

other man a joy unspeakable—the beginning of a new life to him; but to me——" And he turned away with a shudder.

It was she who was the comforter in the presence of an impossible love. Taking his hand gently, she said in a quiet voice: "I do not know what you mean; but you must not accuse yourself for me. I have made a confession—it was right to do that for you were going away. Now you will go away knowing I am still your friend, that I shall think of you sometimes: though I shall pray never to see you any more until we are old people, and may meet and laugh at the old stupid folly."

Page 190

“It shall not end thus!” he cried. “Let the past be past, Coquette, and the future ours. Let us seek a new country for ourselves. Let me take you away, and make for you a new world. Why should we two be for ever miserable? Coquette——”

“I am afraid of you now,” she said, drawing back in fear. “What are you? Ah, I do see another face!” And, staggering, she fell insensible on the deck as the minister approached.

That night Lord Earlshope left the yacht, and this was his parting message, written on a slip of paper: “I was mad last night. I do not know what I said. Forgive me, for I cannot forgive myself.”

A winter’s illness followed the strain of these emotional scenes, but with the spring Coquette resumed her morning moorland walks, and drank in new life from the warm, sweet breezes. One morning, she came face to face with Lord Earlshope. With only a second’s pause she stepped forward and offered him her hand.

“Have you really forgiven me?” he asked.

“That is all over,” she said, “and forgotten. It does no good to bring it back.”

“How very good you are! I have wandered all over Europe, feeling as though I had the brand of Cain on my forehead.”

“That is nonsense,” said Coquette. “Your talk of Cain, your going away, your fears—I do not understand it at all.”

“No,” said he. “Nor would you ever understand without a series of explanations I have not the courage to make.”

“I do not understand,” she replied; “why all this secrecy—all this mystery?”

“And I cannot tell you now,” he said.

“I wish not to have any more whys,” she said impatiently. “Explanations, they never do good between friends. I am satisfied if you come to the Manse and become as you were once. That is sufficient.”

She tried hard to keep the conversation on the level of friendship; but when at last she turned to leave him, ere she knew, his arms were around her, and kisses were being showered on her forehead and on her lips.

“Let me go—let me go!” she pleaded piteously. “Oh, what have we done?”

“We have sealed our fate,” said he, with a haggard look. “I have fought against this for many a day; but now, Coquette, won’t you look up and give me one kiss before we part?”

But her downcast face was pale and deathlike, and finally she said: “I cannot speak to you now. To-morrow, or next day—perhaps we shall meet.”

The next day she met him again, and told him she was going to Glasgow with Lady Drum to see her cousin, the Whaup.

“I wonder,” said Earlshope, “if he hopes to win your love, and is working there with the intention of coming back and asking you to be his wife.”

“And if that will make him happy,” she said slowly and with absent eyes, “I will do that if he demands it.”

“You will marry him, and make him fancy that you love him?”

Page 191

“No, I should tell him everything. I should tell him he deserves to marry a woman who has never loved anyone but himself, and yet that I will be his wife if his marrying me will alone make him happy.”

“But, Coquette—don’t you see it cannot end here?” he said almost desperately. “You do not know the chains in which I am bound; and I dare not tell you.”

“No; I do not wish to know. It is enough for me to be beside you now, and if it should all prove bad and sorrowful, I shall remember that once I walked with you here, and we had no thought of ill, and were for a little while happy.”

Talk of Glasgow being a sombre, grey city! To the Whaup it seemed that the empty pavements were made of gold; that the fronts of the houses were shining with a happy light; and the air full of a delicious tingling. For did not the great city hold in it Coquette? And as he sped his boots clattered “Coquette! Coquette! Coquette!” And presently he was taking her out for a walk, and cunningly drawing near to a trysting well.

“Coquette,” he said suddenly, “do you know that lovers used to meet here, and join their hands over the well, and swear they would marry each other some day? Coquette, if you would only give me your hand now! I will wait any time—I have waited already, Coquette.”

“Oh, do not say any more. I will do anything for you, but not that—not that.” And then, a moment afterwards, she added: “Or see; I will promise to marry you, if you like, after many, many years—only not now—not within a few years.”

“What is the matter, Coquette? Does it grieve you to think of what I ask?”

“No, no!” she said, hurriedly, “it is right of you to ask it—and I—I must say Yes. My uncle does expect it, does he not? And you yourself, Tom, you have been very good to me, and if only this will make you happy I will be your wife, but not until after many years.”

“If you only knew how proud and happy you have made me!” exclaimed Tom, gaily. “I call upon the leaves of the trees, and all the drops in the river, and all the light in the air to bear witness that I have won Coquette for my wife.”

“Ah, you foolish boy!” she said sadly. “You have given me a dangerous name. But no matter; if it pleases you to-day to think I shall be your wife, I am glad.”

III.—The Opening of the Gates

Coquette, who loved the sunshine as a drunkard loves drink, was seated in the park in Glasgow, reading a book under her sunshade, when Lord Earlshope walked up to the place where she sat.

“Ah, it is you! I do wish much to see you for a few moments,” she said. “First, I must tell you I have promised to my cousin to be his wife. I did tell you I should do that; now it is done, and he is glad. And so, as I am to be his wife, I do not think it is right I should see you any more.”

“Coquette,” he said, “have you resolved to make your life miserable? What have you done?”

Page 192

“I have done what I ought to do. My cousin is very good; he is very fond of me; he will break his heart if I do not marry him. And I do like him very well, too. Perhaps in some years it will be a pleasure to me to be his wife.”

“Coquette,” he interrupted, “you do not blame me for being unable to help you. I am going to tell you why I cannot. Many a time have I determined to cell you.”

“Ah, I know,” she said. “You will tell me something you have done. I do not wish to hear it. I have often seen you about to tell me a secret, and sometimes I have wondered, too, and wished to know; but then I did think there was enough trouble in the world without adding to it.”

Someone came along the road, came as if to sit on the seat with them—a woman with a coarse, red face and unsteady black eyes, full of mischievous amusement.

Lord Earlshope rose and faced the stranger.

“You had better go home,” he said to her. “I give you fair warning, you had better go home.”

“Why,” said the woman, with a loud laugh. “You have not said as much to me for six years back! My dear,” she added, looking at Coquette, “I am sorry to have disturbed you; but do you know who I am? I am Lady Earlshope!”

“Coquette,” said Earlshope, “that is my wife.”

When the woman had walked away, laughing and kissing her hand in tipsy fashion, Coquette came a step nearer, and held out her hand.

“I know it all now,” she said, “and am very sorry for you. I do now know the reason of many things, and I cannot be angry when we are going away from each other. Good-bye. I will hear of you sometimes through Lady Drum.”

“Good-bye, Coquette,” he said, “and God bless you for your gentleness, and your sweetness, and your forgiveness.”

It was to Lady Drum that Coquette made her confession that day.

“I do love him better than everything in the world—and I cannot help it. And now he is gone, and I shall never see him again, and I would like to see him only once to say I am sorry for him.”

Coquette returned to Airlie, and tried to find peace in homely duties in the village. As time went on the Whaup pressed for the marriage day to be named, but he could not awake in her hopes for the future. Then, one dull morning in March, as she walked by

herself over the Moor, Lord Earlshope was by her side, saying: "Coquette, have you forgotten nothing, as I have forgotten nothing?" And she was saying: "I love you, dearest, more than ever."

"Listen, Coquette, listen!" he said. "A ship passes here in the morning for America; I have taken two berths in it for you and me; to-morrow we shall be sailing away to a new world, and leaving all these troubles behind. You remember that woman—nothing has been heard of her for two years. I have sought her everywhere. She must be dead. And so we shall be married when we get there. The yacht will be waiting off Saltcoats to-night; you must go down by yourself, and the gig shall come for you, and we shall intercept the ship."

Page 193

A little while thereafter Coquette was on her way back to the Manse alone. She had promised to go down to Saltcoats that night, and had sealed her sin with a kiss.

It was a wild, strange night that she stole out of the house, leaving behind her all the sweet consciousness of rectitude and the purity and innocence which had enabled her to meet trials with a courageous heart—leaving behind the crown of womanhood, the treasure of a stainless name. Every moment the storm grew in intensity, till the rain-clouds were blown upon the land in hissing torrents. At last, just as she saw before her the lights of Saltcoats, she sank down by the roadside with a faint cry of "Uncle! Uncle!"

When she came to herself, in a neighbour's house, a letter was given her from Lord Earlshope, saying that he could not exact from her the sacrifice he had proposed, and incur for both the penalty of remorse and misery; so he would leave for America alone.

Even as she was reading the letter, the report reached Saltcoats that the yacht had gone down in the storm, and Lord Earlshope was beyond the reach of accusation and defence.

She married the Whaup, but was never again the old Coquette, and though Tom tried hopefully to charm her back to cheerfulness, she faded month by month. It was not till the end was drawing near that she was told of the death of Lord Earlshope, and her last journey was to Saltcoats to see the wild waste of waters that were his grave.

There came a night when she beckoned her husband to her and asked him in a scarcely audible voice: "Tom, am I going to die?" And when in answer he could only look at her sad eyes, she said: "I am not sorry. It will be better for you and everyone; and you will not blame me because I could not make your life more happy for you—it was all a misfortune, my coming to this country."

"Coquette, Coquette," he said, beside himself with grief, "if you are going to die, I will go with you, too—see, I will hold your hand, and when the gates are open, I will not let you go—I will go with you, Coquette."

Scarce half an hour afterwards the gates opened, and she silently passed through, while a low cry broke from his lips: "So near—so near! And I cannot go with her, too!"

* * * * *

R. D. BLACKMORE

Lorna Doone

Richard Doddridge Blackmore, one of the most famous English novelists of the last generation, was born on June 9, 1825, at Longworth, Berkshire, of which parish his

father was vicar. Like John Ridd, the hero of “Lorna Doone,” he was educated at Blundell’s School, Tiverton. An early marriage with a beautiful Portuguese girl, and a long illness, forced him to live for some years in hard and narrow circumstances. Happily, in 1860, he came, unexpectedly, into a considerable fortune. Settling down at Teddington, he divided his life between the delights

Page 194

of gardening and the pleasures of literature; cultivating his vines, peaches, nectarines, pears, and strawberries, and writing, first, sensational stories, and then historical romances. In 1869, with his third attempt in fiction, “Lorna Doone: A Romance of Exmoor,” he suddenly became famous as a novelist, and acted as the pioneer of the new romantic movement in fiction which R. L. Stevenson and other brilliant writers afterwards carried on. Lorna Doone is the most famous of his heroines, but in “Cradock Nowell,” a fine tale of the New Forest, in “Alice Lorraine,” a story of the South Downs, and in “The Maid of Sker,” he has depicted womanly types equal in charm to Lorna. He died at Teddington on January 20, 1900.

I.—An Adventure in Glen Doone

Two miles below our farm at Oare, the Bagworthy water runs into the Lynn, but though I fished nearly every stream in our part of Exmoor in my boyhood, it was a long time before I dared go those two miles. For the water flowed out of Glen Doone, where the Doones had settled, and I had good reason to be afraid of this wild band of outlaws. It was an unhappy day for everybody on Exmoor when Sir Ensor Doone was outlawed by good King Charles, and came with his tall sons and wild retainers to the Bagworthy water.

This befell in 1640. At first, the newcomers were fairly quiet, and what little sheep-stealing they did was overlooked. But in the troublous times of the Great Rebellion they grew bolder and fiercer; they attacked men and burnt farms and carried off women, and all Exmoor stood in fear and terror of them. None of the Doones was under six feet, and there were forty and more of them, and they were all true marksmen. The worst thing they did was to murder my father, John Ridd, in the year 1673, when I was twelve years of age.

That was why I was afraid to fish the Bagworthy water. But I spent a good deal of time in learning to shoot straight with my father’s gun; I sent pretty well all the lead gutter round our little church into our best barn door, a thing which has often repented me since, especially as churchwarden. When, however, I was turned fourteen years old, and put into small clothes, and worsted hosen knitted by my dear mother, I set out with a loach-fork to explore the Bagworthy water. It was St. Valentine’s day, 1676, as I well remember. After wading along Lynn stream, I turned into the still more icy-cold current of Bagworthy water, where I speared an abundance of loaches. I was stopped at last by a great black whirlpool, into which a slide of water came thundering a hundred yards down a cliff. My bare legs were weak and numbed with cold, and twilight was falling in the wild, narrow glen. So I was inclined to turn back. But then I said to myself: “John Ridd, the place is making a coward of thee.”

With that, I girt up my breeches anew, and slung the fish tighter round my neck, and began to climb up through the water-slide. The green wave came down on me and my

feet gave way, but I held with my loach-fork to a rock, and got my footing. How I got up, I cannot remember, but I fainted on reaching the top of the cliff.

Page 195

When I came to, a little girl was kneeling by me, and rubbing my forehead tenderly with a dock-leaf.

“Oh, I am glad!” she said. “Now you will try to be better, won’t you?”

I had never heard so sweet a sound as came from her red lips; neither had I ever seen anything so beautiful as the large, dark eyes intent upon me, in pity and wonder. Her long black hair fell on the grass, and among it—like an early star—was the first primrose of the year. And since that day, I think of her whenever I see an early primrose.

“How you are looking at me!” I said. “I have never seen anyone like you before. My name is John Ridd. What is your name?”

“My name is Lorna Doone,” she replied, in a low voice, and hanging her head.

Young and harmless as she was, her name made guilt of her. Yet I could not help looking at her tenderly. And when she began to cry, what did I do but kiss her. This made her angry, but we soon became friends again, and fell to talking about ourselves. Suddenly a shout rang through the valley, and Lorna trembled, and put her cheek close to mine.

“Oh, they will find us together and kill us,” she said.

“Come with me,” I whispered. “I can carry you down the waterfall.”

“No, no!” she cried, as I took her up. “You see that hole in the rock there? There is a way out from the top of it.”

I hid myself just in time, and a dozen tall, fierce-looking men found Lorna seemingly lying asleep on the grass. One of them took her tenderly in his arms and carried her away. I then waited until it was full dark, and crept to the hole that Lorna had pointed out.

The fright I had taken that night satisfied me for a long time thereafter; not that I did not think of Lorna and wish very often to see her. But I was only a boy, and inclined, therefore, to despise young girls. Besides, our farm of five hundred acres was the largest in Oare, and I had to work very hard on it. But the work did me good; I grew four inches longer every year, and two inches wider, until there was no man of my size to be seen elsewhere upon Exmoor, and I also won the belt of the championship for wrestling in the West Counties.

II.—John Ridd Goes A-Wooing

Seven years went by before I climbed up Glen Doone again. The occasion was a strange one. My uncle, Ben Huckaback, was robbed by the Doones on his way to our

farm, and he was mighty vexed with their doings. This time the outlaws met their match, for Uncle Ben was one of the richest men in the West Counties, and, moreover, he was well acquainted with the most powerful and terrible man in England. I mean the famous Lord Chief Justice Jeffreys.

“I am going to London, my boy,” he said to me, “to get these scoundrel Doones shot or hanged. I want you, while I am gone, to go to the place where they live, and see how the troops I shall bring can best attack them.”

Page 196

This put other thoughts in my head. I waited till St. Valentine's day, and then I dressed myself in my best clothes, and went up the Bagworthy water. The stream, which once had taken my knees, now came only to my ankles, and with no great difficulty I climbed to the top of the cliff. Here I beheld the loveliest sight, one glimpse of which was enough to make me kneel in the coldest water. Lorna was coming singing towards me! I could not see what her face was, my heart so awoke and trembled; only that her hair was flowing from a wreath of white violets. She turned to fly, frightened, perhaps, at my great size; but I fell on the grass, as I had fallen seven years agone that day, and just said: "Lorna Doone!"

"Master Ridd, are you mad," she said. "The patrol will be here presently."

She led me, with many timid glances, to the hole in the rock which she had shown me before; by the right of this was a crevice, hung with green ivy, which opened into a mossy cave about twenty feet across.

"We shall be safe from interruption here," said Lorna, "for I begged Sir Ensor that this place might be looked on as my bower."

I had much ado, however, to get through the crevice, and, instead of being proud of my size, as it seemed to me she ought to be, Lorna laughed at me. Thereupon it went hard with me not to kiss her, only it smote me that this would be a low advantage of her trust and helplessness. She seemed to know what I would be at, and she liked me for my forbearance, because she was not in love with me yet. As we sat in her bower, she talked about her dear self, and her talk was sad.

"Ah, Master Ridd," she said, "you have a mother who loves you, and sisters, and a quiet home. You do not know what loneliness is. I get so full of anger at the violence and wickedness around me that I dare not give way to speech. It is scarcely a twelvemonth since my cousin, Lord Alan Brandir, came from London and tried to rescue me. Carver Doone killed him before my eyes. Ah, you know Carver!"

Ay, I did. It was he who slew my father. I would not tell Lorna this, but in my slow way I began, to look forward to meeting Carver Doone, not for my father's sake—I had forgiven that—but for Lorna's. I boded some harm to her, and before I left I arranged that if she were ever in need of help she should hang a black mantle on a stone that I could see from a neighbouring hill.

When I got home, I found a king's messenger waiting for me, and, to the alarm of my dear mother and my sisters, I was taken to London to be examined by Chief Justice Jeffreys touching the Doone. He was a fierce-looking man, with a bull-head, but he used me kindly—maybe for Uncle Ben's sake—and I got back to Exmoor, none the worse for my journey to the great city of London. But I lost all delight in my homecoming when I went to the hill overlooking Glen Doone, and saw that the stone

was covered with a mantle. Off I set to climb the cliff above the Bagworthy water, and there I found Lorna in a sad state of mind.

Page 197

“Oh, John,” she said, “Carver Doone is trying to force me to marry him. Where have you been? Tis two months since I gave the signal.”

Thereupon I told her of my travels to London, and when she learnt that my seeming negligence of her was nothing but my wretched absence far away, the tears fell from her eyes, and she came and sat so close beside me that I trembled like a folded sheep at the bleating of her lamb.

“Dearest darling of my life!” I whispered through her clouds of hair, “I love you more than heart can hold in silence! I have waited long and long, and, though I am so far below you, I can wait no longer!”

“You have been very faithful, John,” she murmured to the fern and moss. “You are the bravest and the kindest and the simplest of all men, and I like you very much.”

“That will not do for me!” I said. “I will not have liking! I must have your heart of hearts, even as you have mine, Lorna!”

She glanced up shyly through her fluttering lashes. Then she opened wide upon me all the glorious depth and softness of her eyes, and flung both arms around my neck.

“Darling,” she cried, “you have won it all! I shall never be my own again. I am yours for ever and ever!”

I am sure I know not what I did or said thereafter, being overcome with transport by her words and her eyes.

“Hush!” said Lorna suddenly, drawing me away from the entrance to her bower. “Here is Carver Doone!”

A great man was coming leisurely down the valley, and the light was still good enough for me to descry his features through the ivy screen. Though I am not a good judge of men’s faces, there was something in his which gave me a feeling of horror. Not that it was an ugly face; nay, rather; it seemed a handsome one, full of strength and vigour and resolution; but there was a cruel hankering in his steel-blue eyes. Yet, he did not daunt me. Here, I saw, was a man of strength yet for me to encounter, such as I had never met, but would be glad to meet, having found no man of late who needed not my mercy at wrestling or singlestick. My heart was hot against him. And, though he carried a carbine, I would have been at him, maybe ere he could use it, but for the presence of Lorna. So I crouched down until Carver Doone departed, and then, because she feared for my safety, I returned home.

III.—Love Amid the Snows

I found the king's messenger waiting again for me. He was a small, but keen-witted man called Jeremy Stickler, and I liked his company. He now came upon a graver business than conducting me to London. He held a royal commission to raise the train-bands of Somerset and Devon, and he brought a few troops with him, and made our farm his headquarters. He had been sent in hot haste by Chief Justice Jeffreys to destroy the Doones who were likely now to pay dearly for robbing my Uncle Ben. I was not, however, as pleased with the arrival of Jeremy Stickler as he expected, for I bethought myself how Lorna would fare in the wild fighting.

Page 198

The next evening, I went to her bower to tell her of the matter, but she was not there. Then the snow began to fall, and still I clambered up the cliff, and waited at the end of the valley every hour of the day and far into the night. But no light footstep came to meet me, and no sweet voice was in the air. At last I resolved upon a desperate and difficult enterprise, for I was well-nigh mad with anxiety. I would go to Lorna's house, and find out at all costs what had befallen her. But though I knew fairly well where her house was in Doone village, I was perplexed how to get there. I could not even get to her bower; for in the night a great snow-storm broke over the country—the worst since 1625. Our farm was drifted up, and in some places the snow was thirty and fifty feet deep. Travel of any sort seemed impossible. But my elder sister, Lizzie, whom I looked down on because she was always reading books instead of helping my mother as Annie did, came to my help. She had a wonderful lot of book learning—much more than I ever got, though father had sent me to the famous grammar school at Tiverton founded by Master Blundell. She now showed me how to make some strange contrivances called snowshoes, which men use in very cold countries. Having learnt how to glide about in them, I set off to find Lorna.

By good fortune, when I got to Glen Doone, where the waterfall had frozen into rough steps, easy to climb, the snow came on again, thick enough to blind a man who had not spent his time among it as I had for days and days. The weather drove all the Doones indoors, and I found Lorna's house almost drifted up like our farm, but got at last to the door and knocked. I was not sure but that the answer might not be the mouth of a carbine; but Gwenny Carfax, a little Cornish maid attached to my Lorna, opened it, and said when she saw me:

"Master Ridd! I wish you was good to eat. Us be shut in here and starving."

The look of wolfish hunger in her eyes frightened me, and I strode in and found Lorna fainting for want of food. Happily, I had a good loaf of bread and a large mince pie, which I had brought in case I had to bide out all night. When Lorna and her maid had eaten these, I heard the tale of their sufferings. Sir Ensor Doone was dead, and Carver Doone was now the leader; and he was trying to starve Lorna into agreeing to marry him.

"If I warrant to bring you safe and sound to our farm, Lorna, will you come with me?" I said.

"To be sure I will, dear," said my darling. "I must either starve or go with you, John."

Our plans were soon made. I went home with the utmost speed, and got out our light pony-sled and dragged it to the top of the waterfall near my darling's bower. It was well I returned quickly. When I entered Lorna's house I saw, by the moonlight flowing in, a sight which drove me beyond sense. Lorna was crouching behind a chair in utter terror, and a drunken Doone was trying to draw the chair away. I bore him out of the house as

lightly as I would a baby, but I squeezed his throat a little more than I would an infant's; then I pitched him into a snow-drift, and he did not move.

Page 199

It was no time to linger. I ran with Lorna in my arms to the sled, and Gwenny followed. Then, with my staff from rock to rock, I broke the sled's too rapid way down the frozen waterfall, and brought my darling safely out of Glen Doone by the selfsame path which first led me up to her. In an hour's time she was under my roof, and my dear mother and my sisters were tending her and Gwenny, for they both were utterly worn out by their cruel privations.

IV.—A Night of Fire and Blood

It gave me no little pleasure to think how mad Carver Doone must be with me for robbing him of the lovely bride whom he was trying to starve into marriage. However, I was not pleased with the prospect of the consequences; but set all hands to work to prepare for the attack on the farm which I saw would follow when the paths were practicable. By the time the rain fell and cleared the snow away, I had everything ready. The outlaws waited till the moon was risen, as it was dangerous to cross the flooded valley in the darkness, and then they rode into our farmyard as coolly as if they had been invited. Jeremy Stickler and his troopers were waiting in the shadow of the house, and I stood with a club and a gun in the mow-yard, for I knew the Doones would begin by firing our ricks.

"Two of you go"—it was the deep voice of Carver Doone—"and make us a light to cut their throats by."

As he spoke I set my gun against his breast. Yet—will you believe me?—I could not pull the trigger. Would to God I had done so! But I had never taken human life. I dropped my carbine, and grasped my club, which seemed a more straightforward implement. With this I struck down the first man that put a torch to the rick, and broke the collar-bone of the second. Then a blaze of light came from the house, and two of the Doones fell under the fire of the troopers, and the rest hung back. They were not used to this kind of reception from farmers; they thought it neither kind nor courteous. Unable any longer to contain myself, I came across the yard. But no one shot at me; and I went up to Carver Doone and took him by the beard, and said: "Do you call yourself a man?"

He was so astonished that he could not speak. He saw he had met his equal, or perhaps his master. He held a pistol at me; but I was too quick for him, and I laid him flat upon his back.

"Now, Carver Doone, take warning," I said to him. "You have shown yourself a fool by your contempt of me. I may not be your match in craft; but I am in manhood. Lay low there in your native muck."

Seeing him down, the others broke and ran, but one had a shot at me. And while I was feeling my wound—which was nothing much—Carver arose and strode away with a train of curses.

Page 200

But he had his revenge in a short time. Jeremy Stickler brought up two train-bands to storm Glen Doone, and they were beaten off with considerable loss. Then I took the matter up, just when the Doones were emboldened by their victory to commit fresh crimes; or rather, the leadership was thrust upon me. Carver Doone and one of his men entered the house of Kit Badcock, one of my neighbours, and killed his baby and carried off his wife. Kit wandered about half crazy, and the people came flocking about me, and asked me to lead them against the Doones. I resolved on a night-assault, and divided the men into two parties. The Doone-gate was, I knew, impregnable, and it was there that the train-bands had failed. I pretended to attack it, but led my best fighters up the waterfall. The earliest notice the Doones had of our presence was the blazing of the logwood house where lived that villain Carver.

By the time they came from Doone-gate all the village was burning, and as soon as they got into easy distance we shot them down in the light of the flaming houses. I did not fire. I cared to meet none but Carver, and he did not appear. He was the only Doone that escaped. Every man I had with me had some wrong to avenge; some had lost their wives, others their daughters; the more fortunate had had all their sheep and cattle carried off, and every man avenged his wrong. I was vexed at the escape of Carver. It was no light thing to have a man of such power and resource and desperation left at large and furious. When he saw all the houses in the valley flaming with a handsome blaze, and throwing a fine light around, such as he had often revelled in when he was the attacker, he turned his great black horse, and spurred it through Doone-gate, and he passed into the darkness before the yeomen I had posted there could bring him down.

V.—The Duel at Wizard's Slough

The only thing which pleased me was that Lorna was taken to London before I led the assault on Glen Doone. Jeremy Stickler, a man with much knowledge of the law, discovered that she was a great heiress, and that her true title was Lady Lorna Dugal. She was related to the Doones, and they had carried her off when a little child, and on her all the ambition of Sir Ensor Doone had turned. The marriage he designed between her and Carver would have brought the outlaws the wealth necessary to retrieve their fortunes and recover their position in the world. This strange news explained many things in their conduct towards Lorna, but it made me feel rather sad. For it seemed to me that there was too great a difference between John Ridd, the yeoman farmer, and Lady Lorna, the heiress of the Earl of Lome. Besides, she was now a ward of chancery, under the care of the great Lord Jeffreys, and I much doubted if he would consent to our marriage, even if she still remembered me amid the courtly splendour in which she moved. Judge then of my joy when Lorna returned in the spring to our farm, as glad as a bird to get back to its nest.

Page 201

“Oh, I love it all,” she said. “The scent of the gorse on the moors drove me wild, and the primroses under the hedges. I am sure I was meant to be a farmer’s wife.”

This, with a tender, playful look at me. Then she told the good news. Lord Jeffreys had, for a certain round sum, given his ward permission to marry me. There was a great to-do throughout the country about our wedding on Whit-Monday. People came from more than thirty miles around, upon excuse of seeing Lorna’s beauty and my stature; but in good truth out of curiosity and a love of meddling.

It is impossible for any, who have not loved as I have, to conceive my joy and pride when, after the ring and all was done, and the parson had blessed us, she turned and gazed on me. Her eyes were so full of faith and devotion that I was amazed, thoroughly as I knew them. But when I stooped to kiss her, as the bridegroom is allowed to do, a shot rang through the church. My darling fell across my knees, and her blood flowed out on the altarsteps. She sighed a long sigh to my breast, and grew cold. I laid her in my mother’s arms, and went forth for my revenge.

The men fell back before me. Who showed me the course, I cannot tell. I only know that I leaped upon a horse and took it. Weapon of no sort had I. Unarmed, and wondering at my strange attire, I rode out to discover this: whether in this world there be or be not a God of justice. Putting my horse at a furious speed, I came upon Black Burrow Down, and there, a furlong before me, rode a man on a great black horse. I knew that man was Carver Doone, bearing his child, little Ensie, before him. I knew he was strong. I knew he was armed with gun, pistol, and sword. Nevertheless, I had no more doubt of killing him than a cook has of spitting a headless fowl.

I came up with him at Wizard’s Slough. A bullet struck me somewhere, but I took no heed of that. With an oak stick I felled his horse. Carver Doone lay on the ground, stunned. Leaping from my steed, I waited, and bared my arms as if in the ring for wrestling. Then the boy ran towards me, clasped my leg, and looked up at me.

“Ensie, dear,” I said, “run and try to find a bunch of bluebells for the pretty lady.”

Presently Carver Doone gathered together his mighty limbs, and I closed with him. He caught me round the waist with such a grip as had never been laid upon me. I heard a rib go where the bullet had broken it. But God was with me that day. I grasped Carver Doone’s arm, and tore the muscle out of it; then I had him by the throat, and I left him sinking, joint by joint, into the black bog.

I returned to the farm in a dream, and only the thought of Lorna’s death, like a heavy knell, was tolling in the belfry of my brain. Into the old farmhouse I tottered, like a weakling child, with mother helping me along, yet fearing, except by stealth, to look at me.

“I have killed him,” was all I said, “even as he killed Lorna.”

Page 202

“Lorna is still living, John,” said my mother, very softly.

“Is there any chance for her?” I cried, awaking out of my dream. “For me, I mean; for me?”

Well, my darling is sitting by me now as I write, and I am now Sir John Ridd, if you please. Year by year, Lorna’s beauty grows, with the growth of goodness, kindness, and true happiness—above all, with loving. For change, she makes a joke of this, and plays with it, and laughs at it. Then, when my slow nature marvels, back she comes to the earnest thing. If I wish to pay her out—as may happen once or twice, when we become too galdsome—I bring her to sadness, and to me for the cure of it, by the two words, “Lorna Doone.”

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GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

The Decameron Or Ten Days’ Entertainment

Giovanni Boccaccio, the father of Italian prose literature, was born in 1313, probably at Certaldo, a small town about twenty miles from Florence, where he was brought up. In 1341 he fell in love with the daughter of King Robert of Naples, and the lady, whom he made famous under the name of Fiammetta, seems to have loved him in return. It was for her amusement, and for the amusement of the Queen of Naples, that he composed many of the stories in “The Decameron.” He returned to Florence in 1350, after the great plague, which he has described in so vivid a manner in the opening chapter of his great work, had abated; and three years afterwards he published “The Decameron,” the title being derived from the Greek words signifying “ten days.” This collection of a hundred stories is certainly one of the world’s great books. Many English writers of the first order have gone to it for inspiration. Boccaccio’s friend, Petrarch, was so delighted with the tale of Griselda, with which the work concludes, that he learnt it off by heart. Chaucer developed it into the finest of all his stories. Dryden, Keats, and Tennyson have also been inspired by Boccaccio; while Lessing has made the Italian story-teller’s allegory of “The Three Rings” the jeweled point on which turns his masterly play. “Nathan the Wise” (see Vol. XVII). Boccaccio, after filling many high posts at Florence, retired to Certaldo, where he died on December 21, 1375.

The Seven Beautiful Maidens

In the year of our Lord 1348 a terrible plague broke out in Florence, which, from being the finest city in Italy, became the most desolate. It was a strange malady that no drugs could cure; and it was communicated, not merely by conversing with those strickened by the pestilence, but even by touching their clothes, or anything they had worn. As

soon as the purple spots, which were the sign of the disease, appeared on the body, death was certain to ensue within three days.

Page 203

So great were the terror and disorder and distress, that all laws, human and divine, were disregarded. Everybody in Florence did just as he pleased. The wilder sort broke into the houses of rich persons, and gave themselves over to riotous living, exclaiming that, since it was impossible to avoid dying from the plague, they would at least die merrily. Others shut themselves up from the rest of the world, and lived on spare diet, and many thousands fled from their houses into the open country, leaving behind them all their goods and wealth, and all their relatives and friends. Brother fled from brother, wife from husband, and, what was more cruel, even parents forsook their own children. It was perilous to walk the streets, for they were strewn with the bodies of plague-strickened wretches, and I have seen with my own eyes the very dogs perish that touched their rags.

Between March and July a hundred thousand persons died in Florence, though, before the calamity, the city was not supposed to have contained so many inhabitants. But I am weary of recounting out late miseries, and, passing by everything that I can well omit, I shall only observe that, when the city was almost depopulated, seven beautiful young ladies, in deep mourning, met one Tuesday evening in Saint Mary's Church, where indeed they composed the whole of the congregation. They were all related to each other, either by the ties of birth, or by the more generous bonds of friendship. Pampinea, the eldest, was twenty-eight years of age; Fiammetta was a little younger; Filomena, Emilia, Lauretta, and Neifile were still more youthful; and Elisa was only eighteen years old.

After the service was over, they got into a corner of the church, and began to devise what they should do, for they were now alone in the world.

"I would advise," said Pampinea, "that we should leave Florence, for the city is now dangerous to live in, not merely by reason of the plague, but because of the lawless men that prowl about the streets and break into our houses. Let us retire together into the country, where the air is pleasanter, and the green hills and the waving corn-fields afford a much more agreeable prospect than these desolate walls."

"I doubt," said Filomena, "if we could do this unless we got some man to help us."

"But how can we?" exclaimed Elisa. "Nearly all the men of our circle are dead, and the rest have gone away."

While they were talking, three handsome young cavaliers—Pamfilo, Filostrato, and Dioneo—came into the church, looking for their sweethearts, who by chance were Neifile, Pampinea, and Filomena.

"See," said Pampinea with a smile, "fortune is on our side. She has thrown in our way three worthy gentlemen, who, I am sure, will come with us if we care to invite them."

Page 204

She then acquainted the cavaliers with her design, and begged them to help her to carry it out. At first they took it all for a jest; but when they found that the ladies were in earnest, they made arrangements to accompany them. So the next morning, at the break of day, the ladies and their maids, and the cavaliers and their men-servants, set out from Florence, and after travelling for two miles they came to the appointed place. It was a little wooded hill, remote from the highway, on the top of which was a stately palace with a beautiful court, and fine galleries, and splendid rooms adorned with excellent paintings. And around it were fair green meadows, a delightful garden, fountains of water, and pleasant trees.

Finding that everything in the palace had been set in order for their reception, the ladies and their cavaliers took a walk in the garden, and diverted themselves by singing love-songs, and weaving garlands of flowers. At three o'clock, dinner was laid in the banqueting hall, and when this was over, Dioneo took a lute and Fiammetta a viol, and played a merry air, while the rest of the company danced to the music. When the dance was ended, they began to sing, and so continued dancing and singing until nightfall. The cavaliers then retired to their chambers, and the ladies to theirs, after arranging that Pampinea should be the queen of their company for the following day, and direct all their feasts and amusements.

The next morning Queen Pampinea called them all up at nine o'clock, saying it was unwholesome to sleep in the daytime, and led them into a meadow of deep grass shadowed by tall trees.

"As the sun is high and hot," she continued, "and nothing is to be heard but the chirping of grasshoppers among the olives, it would be folly to think of walking. So let us sit down in a circle and tell stories. By the time the tales have gone round, the heat of the sun will have abated, and we can then divert ourselves as best we like. Now, Pamfilo," she said, turning to the cavalier on her right hand, "pray begin."

Cymon and Iphigenia: A Tale of Love

Of all the stories that have come into my mind, said Pamfilo, there is one which I am sure you will all like, for it shows how strange and wonderful is the power of love. Some time ago, there lived in the island of Cyprus a man of great rank and wealth, called Aristippus, who was very unhappy because his son Cymon, though very tall and handsome, was feeble in intellect. Finding that the most skilful teacher could not beat the least spark of knowledge into the head of his son, Aristippus made Cymon live out of his sight, among the slaves in his country-house.

There Cymon used to drudge like one of the slaves, whom, indeed, he resembled in the harshness of his voice and the uncouthness of his manners. But one day as he was tramping round the farm, with his staff upon his shoulder, he came upon a beautiful maiden sleeping in the deep grass of a meadow, with two women and a manservant

slumbering at her feet. Cymon had never seen the face of a woman before, and, leaning upon his staff, he gazed in blank wonder at the lovely girl, and strange thoughts and feelings began to work within him. After watching her for a long time, he saw her eyes slowly open, and there was a sweetness about them that filled him with joy.

Page 205

“Why are you looking at me like that?” she said. “Please go away. You frighten me!”

“I will not go away,” he answered; “I cannot!”

And though she was afraid of him, he would not leave her until he had led her to her own house. He then went to his father and said he wanted to live like a gentleman, and not like a slave. His father was surprised to find that his voice had grown soft and musical, and his manners winning and courteous. So he dressed him in clothes suitable to his high station, and let him go to school. Four years after he had fallen in love, Cymon became the most accomplished young gentleman in Cyprus. He then went to the father of Iphigenia, for such was her name, and asked for her in marriage. But her father replied that she was already promised to Pasimondas, a young nobleman of Rhodes, and that their nuptials were about to be celebrated.

“O Iphigenia,” said Cymon to himself, on hearing the unhappy news, “it is now time for me to show you how I love you! Love for you has made a man of me, and marriage with you would make me as happy and as glorious as a god! Have you I will, or else I will die!”

He at once prevailed upon some young noblemen, who were his friends, to help him in fitting out a ship of war. With this he waylaid the vessel in which Iphigenia embarked for Rhodes. Throwing a grappling iron upon this ship, Cymon drew it close to his own. Then, without waiting for anyone to second him, he jumped among his enemies, and drove them like sheep before him, till they threw down their arms.

“I have not come to plunder you,” said Cymon, “but to win the noble maiden, Iphigenia, whom I love more than aught else in the world. Resign her to me, and I will do you no harm!”

Iphigenia came to him all in tears.

“Do not weep, my sweet lady,” he said to her tenderly. “I am your Cymon, and my long and constant love is worth more than all Pasimondas’s promises.”

She smiled at him through her tears, and he led her on board his ship, and sailed away to Crete, where he and his friends had relations and acquaintances. But in the night a violent tempest arose, and blotted out all the stars of heaven, and whirled the ship about, and drove it into a little bay upon the island of Rhodes, a bow-shot from the place where the Rhodian ship had just arrived.

Before they could put out to sea again, Pasimondas came with an armed host and took Cymon a prisoner, and led him to the chief magistrate of the Rhodians for that year, Lysimachus, who sentenced him and his friends to perpetual imprisonment, on the charge of piracy and abduction.

While Cymon was languishing in prison, with no hope of ever obtaining his liberty, Pasimondas prepared for his nuptials with Iphigenia. Now Pasimondas had a younger brother called Hormisdas, who wanted to marry a beautiful lady, Cassandra, with whom the chief magistrate Lysimachus was also in love. Pasimondas thought it would save a good deal of trouble and expense if he and his brother were to marry at the same time. So he arranged that this should be done. Thereupon Lysimachus was greatly angered. After a long debate with himself, honour gave way to love, and he resolved at all hazards to carry off Cassandra.

Page 206

But whom should he get as companions in this wild enterprise? He at once thought of Cymon and his friends, and he fetched them out of prison and armed them, and concealed them in his house. On the wedding-day he divided them into three parties. One went down to the shore and secured a ship; one watched at the gate of Pasimondas's house; and the third party, headed by Cymon and Lysimachus, rushed with drawn swords into the bridal chamber and killed the two bridegrooms, and bore the tearful but by no means unwilling brides to the ship, and sailed joyfully away for Crete.

There they espoused their ladies, amidst the congratulations of their relatives and friends; and though, by reason of their actions, a great quarrel ensued between the two islands of Cyprus and Rhodes, everything was at last amicably adjusted. Cymon then returned with Iphigenia to Cyprus, and Lysimachus carried Cassandra back to Rhodes, and all of them lived very happily to the end of their days.

Gisippus and Titus: A Tale of Friendship

As Pamfilo has told us so excellent a tale about the force of love, said Filomena, I will now relate a story showing the great power of friendship.

At the time when Octavius Caesar, who afterwards became the Emperor Augustus, was governing Rome as a triumvir, a young Roman gentleman, Titus Quintius Fulvus, went to Athens to study philosophy. There he became acquainted with a noble young Athenian named Gisippus, and a brotherly affection sprang up between them, and for three years they studied together and lived under the same roof.

In the meantime, Gisippus fell in love with a young and beautiful Athenian maiden named Sophronia, and a marriage was arranged between them. Some days before the marriage, Gisippus took his friend with him on a visit to his lady. It was the first time that Titus had seen Sophronia, and as he looked upon her beauty he grew as much enamoured as ever a man in the world was with a woman. So great was his passion that he could neither eat nor sleep, and he grew so sick that at last he was unable to rise from his bed. Gisippus was extremely grieved at his illness, and knowing that it must have been caused by some secret malady of the mind, he pressed him to reveal the cause of his grief. At length Titus, unable to restrain himself any longer, said, with his face streaming with tears:

"O Gisippus, I am unworthy of the name of friend! I have fallen in love with Sophronia, and it is killing me. How base I am! But pardon me, my dear friend, for I feel that I shall soon be punished for my disloyalty by death!"

Page 207

Gisippus stood for some time in suspense by the bed side of Titus, divided between the claims of love and the claims of friendship. But at last he resolved to save his friend's life at the cost of his own happiness. Some days afterwards, Sophronia was brought to his house for the bridal ceremony to be consummated. Going softly into the bridal chamber where the bride was lying, he put out the candles, and then went silently to Titus, and told him that he might be the bridegroom. Titus was so overcome with shame that he refused to go; but Gisippus so passionately entreated him, that at last he consented. Going into the dark bridal chamber, he softly asked Sophronia if she would be his wife. She, thinking it was Gisippus, replied, "Yes." Then, taking a ring of value, and putting it upon her finger, Titus said: "And I will be your husband."

In the morning, Sophronia discovered the trick that had been put upon her. Stealing out of the house, she went to her father and mother, and told them that Gisippus had deceived her, and married her to Titus. Great was the resentment against Gisippus throughout Athens, for Sophronia came of a very ancient and noble family.

But seeing that what had been done could not be undone, the parents of the bride at last allowed Titus to lead her to Rome, where the scandal would not be known. But when Titus was gone, they resolved to take vengeance upon Gisippus. A powerful party was formed against him, who succeeded in getting him stripped of all his possessions, driven from Athens, and condemned to perpetual exile.

Friendless and beggared, Gisippus slowly travelled on foot to Rome, intending to ask Titus to help him. He found that his friend was now a rich and powerful man, enjoying the favour of the young Prince Octavius, and living in a splendid palace. Gisippus did not dare to enter it, as his clothes were now worn to rags, so he stood humbly by the gate like a beggar, hoping that his friend would recognise him and speak to him. But Titus came out in a hurry, and never even stopped to look at him; and Gisippus, thinking that he was now despised, went away confounded with grief and despair.

Wandering at random about the streets, he came at nightfall to a cavern where thieves were wont to gather, and laid down on the hard ground and wept himself to sleep. While he was sleeping, two thieves entered with their booty and began to quarrel about it, whereupon one killed the other and fled. In the morning some watchmen found Gisippus sleeping beside the dead body, and arrested him.

"Yes, I killed him," said Gisippus, who was now resolved to die, and thought that this would be a better way than taking his own life. Thereupon, the judge sentenced him to be crucified, which was the usual manner of death in these cases. By a strange chance, however, Titus came into the hall to defend a poor client. He instantly recognised Gisippus, and, wondering greatly at the sad change of his fortune, he determined at all costs to save him. But the case had gone so far that there was only one way of doing this. And Titus took it. Stepping resolutely up to the judge, he greatly astonished everyone by exclaiming:

Page 208

“Recall thy sentence. This person is innocent; I killed the man!”

Gisippus turned round in astonishment, and seeing Titus, he concluded that he was trying to save him for friendship’s sake. But he was determined that he would not accept the sacrifice.

“Do not believe him, sir. I was the murderer. Let the punishment fall on me,” he said to the judge.

The judge was amazed to see two men contending for the torture of crucifixion with as much eagerness as if it had been the highest honour in the world; and suddenly a notorious thief, who had been standing in the court, came forward and made this surprising declaration:

“This strange debate has so moved me that I will confess everything,” he said. “You cannot believe, sir, that either of these men committed the murder. What should a man of the rank and wealth of Titus have to do in a thieves’ cavern? He was never there. But this poor, ragged stranger was sleeping in a corner when I and my fellow entered. Thieves, you know, sometimes fall out, especially over their booty. This was what happened last night; and, to put an end to the quarrel, I used a knife.”

The appearance of a third self-accuser so perplexed the judge that he put the case before Octavius Caesar, and Caesar called the three men up before him. Thereupon Titus and Gisippus related to him at length the strange story of their friendship, and he set the two friends at liberty, and even pardoned the thief for their sakes.

Titus then took Gisippus to his house and forced him to accept a half of his great wealth, and married him to his sister Fulvia, a very charming and lovely young noblewoman.

For the rest of their lives Titus and Sophronia, and Gisippus and Fulvia, lived very happily together in the same palace in Rome, and every day added something to their contentment and felicity.

The Three Rings: A Tale of Ingenuity

It was now Neifile’s turn to tell a story, and she said that as there had been much controversy at Florence during the plague concerning religion, this had put her in mind of the tale of Melchizedeck.

This man was a very rich Jew, who lived at Alexandria in the reign of great Sultan Saladin. Saladin, being much impoverished by his wars, had a mind to rob Melchizedeck. In order to get a pretext for plundering the Jew, he sent for him.

“I hear that thou art very wise in religious matters,” said Saladin, “and I wish to know which religion thou judgest to be the true one—the Jewish, the Mohammedan, or the Christian?”

The Jew saw that Saladin wanted to trap him. If he said that the Jewish or the Christian faith was the true one, he would be condemned as an infidel. If, on the other hand, he agreed that the Mohammedan religion was preferable to the others, the sultan would say that a wealthy believer ought to contribute largely to the expenses of the state. After considering how best to avoid the snare, the wise Jew replied:

Page 209

“Some time ago, your majesty, there was a man who had a ring of great beauty and value. And he declared in his will that the son to whom this ring was bequeathed should be the head of the family, and that his descendants should rule over the descendants of the other sons. For many generations his wishes were carried out; but at last the ring came into the possession of a man who had three sons, all virtuous and dutiful to their father, and equally beloved by him.

“Being at a loss which son to prefer above the others, the good man got a skilful craftsman to make two rings, which were so like the first that he himself scarcely knew the true one. On his deathbed he gave one of these rings privately to each of his sons. Each of them afterwards laid claim to the government of the family, and produced the ring which his father had given him. But the rings were so much alike that it was impossible to tell which was the true one, and even to this day no one has been able to decide upon the matter. Thus has it happened, sire, in regard to the three laws of faith derived from God—Jew, Mohammedan, and Christian. Each believes that he is the true heir of the Almighty; but it is just as uncertain which has received the true law as it is which has received the true ring.”

Saladin was mightily pleased at the ingenious way in which Melchizedeck escaped from the snare that had been spread for him. Instead of taking by force the money that he wanted from the Jew, he desired him to advance it on loan. This Melchizedeck did, and Saladin soon afterwards repaid the money and gave him presents, besides maintaining him nobly at court and making him his life-long friend.

For some days the ladies and cavaliers entertained one another with dancing and singing and story-telling. And then, as the plague had abated in Florence, they returned to the city. But before they went Dioneo told them a very strange and moving tale.

Griselda: A Tale of Wifely Patience

Men, said Dioneo, are wont to charge women with fickleness and inconstancy; but there comes into my mind a story of a woman’s constancy and a man’s cruelty which, I think you will agree, is worth the telling. Gualtieri, the young Marquis of Saluzzo, was a man who did not believe that any woman could be true and constant all her life. And for this reason he would not marry, but spent his whole time in hawking and hunting. His subjects, however, did not want him to die without an heir, and leave them without a lord, and they were always pressing him to marry. They went so far at last as to offer to provide a lady for him. This made him very angry.

“If I want a wife, my friends,” he said, “I will choose one myself. And, look you, whatever her birth and upbringing are, pay her the respect due to her as my lady, or you shall know to your cost how grievous it is to me to have taken a wife when I did not want one.”

A few days afterwards he was riding through a village, not far from his palace, when he saw a comely shepherd girl carrying water from a well to her father's house.

Page 210

“What is your name?” said the young marquis.

“Griselda,” said the shepherd girl.

“Well, Griselda,” said the Marquis of Saluzzo, “I am looking for a wife. If I marry you, will you study to please me and carry out all my demands, whatever they are, without a murmur or a sullen look?”

“Yes, my lord,” said Griselda.

Thereupon, the marquis sent his servants to fetch some rich and costly robes, and, leading Griselda out by the hand, he clothed her in gorgeous apparel, and set a coronet upon her head, and putting her on a palfrey, he led her to his palace. And there he celebrated his nuptials with as much pomp and grandeur as if he had been marrying the daughter of the King of France.

Griselda proved to be a good wife. She was so sweet-natured, and so gentle and kind in her manners, that her husband thought himself the happiest man in the world; and her subjects honoured her and loved her very dearly. In a very short time, her winning behaviour and her good works were the common subject of talk throughout the country, and great were the rejoicings when a daughter was born to her.

Unfortunately, her husband got a strange fancy into his head. He imagined she was good and gentle merely because everything went well with her; and, with great harshness, he resolved to try her patience by suffering. So he told her that the people were greatly displeased with her by reason of her mean parentage, and murmured because she had given birth to a daughter.

“My lord,” said Griselda, “I know I am meaner than the meanest of my subjects, and that I am unworthy of the dignity to which you have advanced me. Deal with me, I pray, as you think best for your honour and happiness, and waste no thought upon me.”

Soon afterwards one of his servants came to Griselda, and said: “Madam, I must either lose my own life, or obey my lord’s commands. He has ordered me to take your daughter, and—”

He would not say anything more, and Griselda thought that he had orders to kill the child. Taking it out of the cradle, she kissed it, and tenderly laid it in the servant’s arms. The marquis sent the little girl to one of his relatives at Bologna, to be brought up and educated. Some years afterwards Griselda gave birth to a boy. The marquis, naturally enough, was mightily pleased to have an heir; but he took also this child away from his wife.

“I am not able to live any longer with my people,” he said. “They say they will not have a grandson of a poor shepherd as their future lord. I must dispose of this child as I did the other.”

“My lord,” replied Griselda, “study your own ease and happiness without the least care for me. Nothing is pleasing to me that is not pleasing to you.”

The next day the marquis sent for his son in the same way as he had sent for his daughter, and had him brought up with her at Bologna. His people thought that the children had been put to death, and blamed him for his cruelty, and showed great pity for his wife. But Griselda would not allow them to attack her husband, but found excuses for him.

Page 211

In spite of this, the marquis did not yet believe in the constancy and fidelity of his wife, and about sixteen years after their marriage he resolved to put her to a test.

“Woman,” he said, “I am going to take another wife. I shall send you back to your father’s cottage in the same state as I brought you from it, and choose a young lady of my own rank in life.”

With the utmost difficulty Griselda kept back her tears, and humbly consented to be divorced. The marquis stripped her of her fine raiment, and sent her back to her father’s hut dressed in a smock. Her husband then gave it out that he was about to espouse the daughter of the Count of Panago; and, sending for Griselda, he said:

“I am about to bring home my new bride, but I have no woman with me to set out the rooms and order the ceremony. As you are well acquainted with the government of my palace, I wish you to act as mistress for a day or two. Get everything in order, and invite what ladies you will to the festival. When the marriage is over, you must return to your father’s hut.”

These words pierced like daggers to the heart of Griselda. She was unable to part with her love for her husband as easily as she had parted with her high rank and great fortune.

“My lord,” said Griselda, “I swore that I would be obedient to you, and I am ready to fulfil all your commands.”

She went into the palace in her coarse attire and worked with the servants, sweeping the rooms and cleaning the furniture. After this was done, she invited all the ladies in the country to come to the festival. And on the day appointed for the marriage she received them, still clad in her coarse attire, but with smiling and gentle looks. At dinner-time the marquis arrived with his new lady—who was indeed a very beautiful girl. After presenting her to all the guests, many of whom congratulated him on making so good an exchange, he said, with a smile, to Griselda:

“What do you think of my bride?”

“My lord,” she replied, “I like her extremely well. If she is as wise as she is fair, you may be the happiest man in the world with her. But I very humbly beg that you will not take with this lady the same heart-breaking measures you took with your last wife, because she is young and tenderly educated, while the other was from a child used to hardship.

“Pardon me! Pardon me! Pardon me!” said the marquis. “I know I have tried you harshly, Griselda. But I did not believe in the goodness and constancy of woman, and I would not believe in them until you proved me in the wrong. Let me restore, in one sweet minute, all the happiness that I have spent years in taking away from you. This

young lady, my dear Griselda, is your daughter and mine! And look! Here is our son waiting behind her."

He led Griselda, weeping for joy, to her children. Then all the ladies in the hall rose up from the tables, and taking Griselda into a chamber, they clothed her in fine and noble raiment, and stayed with her many days, feasting and rejoicing. And the marquis sent for Griselda's father, the poor shepherd, and gave him a suite of rooms in the palace, where he lived in great happiness with his daughter and his grandchildren and his noble son-in-law.