

The Argosy eBook

The Argosy

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THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1891.

THE FATE OF THE HARA DIAMOND.

CHAPTER IX.

At "The golden Griffin."

Captain Edmund Ducie was one of the first to emerge from the wreck. He crept out of the broken window of the crushed-up carriage, and shook himself as a dog might have done. "Once more a narrow squeak for life," he said, half aloud. "If I had been worth ten thousand a-year, I should infallibly have been smashed. Not being worth ten brass farthings, here I am. What has become of my little Russian, I wonder?"

No groan or cry emanated from that portion of the broken carriage out of which Captain Ducie had just crept. Could it be possible that Platzoff was killed?

With considerable difficulty Ducie managed to wrench open the smashed door. Then he called the Russian by name; but there was no answer. He could discern nothing inside save a confused heap of rugs and minor articles of luggage. Under these, enough in themselves to smother him, Platzoff must be lying. One by one these articles were fished out of the carriage, and thrown aside by Ducie. Last of all he came to Platzoff, lying in a heap, white and insensible, as one already dead.

Putting forth all his great strength, Ducie lifted the senseless body out of the carriage as carefully and tenderly as though it were that of a new-born child. He then saw that the Russian was bleeding from an ugly jagged wound at the back of his head. There was no trace of any other outward hurt. A faint pulsation of the heart told that he was still alive.

On looking round, Ducie saw that there was a large country tavern only a few hundred yards from the scene of the accident. Towards this house, which announced itself to the world under the title of "The Golden Griffin," he now hastened with long measured strides, carrying the still insensible Russian in his arms. In all, some half-dozen carriages had come over the embankment. The shrieks and cries of the wounded passengers were something appalling. Already the passengers in the fore part of the train, who had escaped unhurt, together with the officials and a few villagers who happened to be on the spot, were doing their best to rescue these unfortunates from the terrible wreckage in which they were entangled.



Captain Ducie was the first man from the accident to cross the threshold of “The Golden Griffin.” He demanded to be shown the best spare room in the house. On the bed in this room he laid the body of the still insensible Platzoff. His next act was to despatch a mounted messenger for the nearest doctor. Then, having secured the services of a brisk, steady-nerved chambermaid, he proceeded to dress the wound as well as the means at his command would allow of—washing it, and cutting away the hair, and, by means of some ice, which he was fortunate

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enough to procure, succeeding in all but stopping the bleeding, which, to a man so frail of body, so reduced in strength as Platzoff, would soon have been fatal. A teaspoonful of brandy administered at brief intervals did its part as a restorative, and some minutes before the doctor's arrival Ducie had the satisfaction of seeing his patient's eyes open, and of hearing him murmur faintly a few soft guttural words in some language which the Captain judged to be his native Russ.

Platzoff had quite recovered his senses by the time the doctor arrived, but was still too feeble to do more than whisper a few unconnected words. There were many claimants this forenoon on the doctor's attention, and the services required by Platzoff at his hands had to be performed as expeditiously as possible.

"You must make up your mind to be a guest of 'The Golden Griffin' for at least a week to come," he said, as he took up his hat preparatory to going. "With quiet, and care, and a strict adherence to my instructions, I daresay that by the end of that time you will be sufficiently recovered to leave here for your own home. Humanly speaking, sir, you owe your life to this gentleman," indicating Ducie. "But for his skill and promptitude you would have been a dead man before I reached you."

Platzoff's thin white hand was extended feebly. Ducie took it in his sinewy palms and pressed it gently. "You have this day done for me what I can never forget," whispered the Russian, brokenly. Then he closed his eyes, and seemed to sink off into a sleep of exhaustion.

Leaving strict injunctions with the chambermaid not to quit the room till he should come back, Captain Ducie went downstairs with the intention of revisiting the scene of the disaster. He called in at the bar to obtain his favourite "thimbleful" of cognac, and there he found a very agreeable landlady, with whom he got into conversation respecting the accident. Some five minutes had passed thus when the chambermaid came up to him. "If you please, sir, the foreign gentleman has woke up, and is anxiously asking to see you."

With a shrug of the shoulders and a slight lowering of his black eyebrows, Captain Ducie went back upstairs. Platzoff's eager eyes fixed him as he entered the room. Ducie sat down close by the bed and said in a kindly tone: "What is it? What can I do for you? Command me in any way."

"My servant—where is he? And—and my despatch box. Valuable papers. Try to find it."

Ducie nodded and left the room. The inquiries he made soon elicited the fact that Platzoff's servant had been even more severely injured than his master, and was at that

moment lying, more dead than alive, in a little room upstairs. Slowly and musingly, with hands in pocket, Captain Ducie then took his way towards the scene of the accident. "It may suit my book very well to make friends with this Russian," he thought as he went along. "He is no doubt very rich; and I am very poor. In us the two extremes meet and form the perfect whole. He might serve my purposes in more ways than one, and it is just as likely that his purposes might be served by me: for a man like that must have purposes that want serving. Nous verrons. Meanwhile, I am his obedient servant to command."

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Captain Ducie, hunting about among the debris of the train, was not long in finding the fragments of M. Platzoff's despatch box. Its contents were scattered about. Ducie spent ten minutes in gathering together the various letters and documents which it had contained. Then, with the broken box under his arm and the papers in his hands, he went back to the Russian.

He showed the papers one by one to Platzoff, who was strangely eager in the matter. When Ducie held up the last of them, Platzoff groaned and shut his eyes. "They are all there as far as I can judge," he murmured, "except the most important one of all—a paper covered with figures, of no use to anyone but myself. Oh, dear Captain Ducie! do please go once more and try to find the one that is still missing. If I only knew that it was burnt, or torn into fragments, I should not mind so much. But if it were to fall into the hands of a scoundrel skilful enough to master the secret which it contains, then I—"

He stopped with a scared look on his face, as though he had unwittingly said more than he had intended.

"Pray don't trouble yourself with any explanations just now," said Ducie. "You want the paper: that is enough. I will go and have a thorough hunt for it."

Back went Ducie to the broken carriages and began to search more carefully than before. "What can be the nature of the great secret, I wonder, that is hidden between the Sibylline leaves I am in search of? If what Platzoff's words implied be true, he who learns it is master of the situation. Would that it were known to me!"

Slowly and carefully, inside and out of the carriage in which he and Platzoff had travelled, Captain Ducie conducted his search. One by one he again turned over the wraps and different articles of personal luggage belonging to both of them, which had not yet been removed. The first object that rewarded his search was a splendid diamond pin which he remembered having seen in Platzoff's scarf. Ducie picked it up and looked cautiously around. No one was regarding him. "Of the first water and worth a hundred guineas at the very least," he muttered. Then he put it in his waistcoat pocket and went on with his search.

A minute or two later, hidden away under one of the cushions of the carriage, he found what he was looking for: a folded sheet of thick blue paper covered with a complicated array of figures—that and nothing more.

Captain Ducie regarded the recovered treasure with a strange mixture of feelings. His hands trembled slightly; his heart was beating more quickly than usual; his eyes seemed to see and yet not to see the paper in his hands. As one mazed and in deep doubt he stood.

His reverie was broken by the approach of some of the railway officials. The cloud vanished from before his eyes, and he was his cool, imperturbable self in a moment. Heading the long array of figures on the parchment were a few lines of ordinary writing, written, however, not in English, but Italian. These few lines Ducie now proceeded to read over more attentively than he had done at the first glance. He was sufficiently master of Italian to be able to translate them without much difficulty. Translated they ran as under:—

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“Bon Repos,

“Windermere.

“*Carlo Mio*,—In the Amsterdam edition of 1698 of *The Confessions of Parthenio the Mystic* occur the passages given below. To your serious consideration, O friend of my heart, I recommend these words. To read them much patience is required. But they are freighted with wisdom, as you will discover long before you reach the end of them, and have a deep significance for that great cause to which the souls of both of us are knit by bonds which in this life can never be severed. When you read these lines, the hand that writes them will be cold in the grave. But Nature allows nothing to be lost, and somewhere in the wide universe the better part of me (the mystic *Ego*) will still exist; and if there be any truth in the doctrine of the affinity of souls, then shall you and I meet again elsewhere. Till that time shall come—Adieu!

“Thine,

“*Paul Platzoff*.”

Having carefully read these lines twice over, Captain Ducie refolded the paper, put it away in an inner pocket, and buttoned his coat over it. Then he took his way, deep in thought, back to “The Golden Griffin.”

The Russian’s eager eyes asked him: “What success?” before he could say a word.

“I am sorry to say that I have not been able to find the paper,” said Captain Ducie in slow, deliberate tones. “I have found something else—your diamond pin, which you appear to have lost out of your scarf.”

Platzoff gazed at him with a sort of blank despair on his saffron face, but a low moan was his only reply. Then he turned his face to the wall and shut his eyes.

Captain Ducie was a patient man, and he waited without speaking for a full hour. At the end of that time Platzoff turned, and held out a feeble hand.

“Forgive me, my friend—if you will allow me to call you so,” he said. “I must seem horribly ungrateful after all the trouble I have put you to, but I do not feel so. The loss of my *Ms.* affected me so deeply for a little while that I could think of nothing else. I shall get over it by degrees.”

“If I remember rightly,” remarked Ducie, “you said that the lost *Ms.* was merely a complicated array of figures. Of what possible value can it be to anyone who may chance to find it?”

“Of no value whatever,” answered Platzoff, “unless they who find it should also be skilful enough to discover the key by which alone it can be read; for, as I may now tell you, there is a hidden meaning in the figures. The finders may or may not make that discovery, but how am I to ascertain what is the fact either one way or the other? For want of such knowledge my sense of security will be gone. I would almost prefer to know for certain that the *Ms.* had been read than be left in utter doubt on the point. In the one case I should know what I had to contend against, and could take proper precautionary measures; in the other, I am left to do battle with a shadow that may or may not be able to work me harm.”

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"Would possession of the information that is contained in the *Ms.* enable anyone to work you harm?"

"It would to this extent, that it would put them in possession of a cherished secret, which—But why talk of these things? What is done cannot be undone. I can only prepare myself for the worst."

"One moment," said Ducie. "I think that after the thorough search made by me the chances are twenty to one against the *Ms.* ever being found. But granting that it does turn up, the finder of it will probably be some ignorant navvie or incurious official, without either inclination or ability to master the secret of the cipher."

* * * * *

Ten days later M. Platzoff was sufficiently recovered to set out for Bon Repos. At his earnest request Ducie had put off his own journey to stay with him. At another time the ex-Captain might not have cared to spend ten days at a forlorn country tavern, even with a rich Russian; but as he often told himself he had "his book to make," and he probably looked upon this as a necessary part of the process. Before they parted, it was arranged that as soon as Ducie should return from Scotland he should go and spend a month at Bon Repos. Then the two shook hands, and each went his own way. As one day passed after another without bringing any tidings of the lost *Ms.*, Platzoff's anxiety respecting it seemed to lessen, and by the time he left "The Golden Griffin" he had apparently ceased to trouble his mind any further in the matter.

CHAPTER X.

The stolen manuscript.

Captain Edmund Ducie came of a good family. His people were people of mark among the landed gentry of their county, and were well-to-do even for their position. Although only a fourth son, his allowance had been a very handsome one, both while at Cambridge and afterwards during the early years of his life in the army. When of age, he had come into the very nice little fortune, for a fourth son, of nine thousand pounds; and it was known that there would be "something handsome" for him at his father's death. He had a more than ordinary share of good looks; his mind was tolerably cultivated, and afterwards enlarged by travel and service in various parts of the world; in manners and address he was a finished gentleman of the modern school. Yet all these advantages of nature and fortune were in a great measure nullified and rendered of no avail by reason of one fatal defect, of one black speck at the core. In a word, Captain Ducie was a born gambler.

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He had gambled when a child in the nursery, or had tried to gamble, for cakes and toys. He had gambled when at school for coppers, pocket-knives, and marbles. He had gambled when at the University, and had felt the claws of the Children of Usury. He gambled away his nine thousand pounds, or such remainder of it as had not been forestalled, when he came of age. Later on, when in the army, and on home allowance again, for his father would not let him starve, he had kept on gambling; so that when, some five years later, his father died, and he dropped in for the "something handsome," two-thirds of it had to be paid down on the nail to make a free man of him again. On the remaining one-third he contrived to keep afloat for a couple of years longer; then, after a season of heavy losses, came the final crash, and Captain Ducie found himself under the necessity of selling his commission, and of retiring into private life.

From this date Captain Ducie was compelled to live by "bleeding" his friends and connections. He was a great favourite among them, and they rallied gallantly to his rescue. But Ducie still gambled; and the best of friends, and the most indulgent of relatives, grew tired after a time of seeing their cherished gold pieces slip heedlessly through the fingers of the man whom it was intended that they should substantially help, and be lost in the foul atmosphere of a gaming-house. One by one, friend and relative dropped away from the doomed man, till none were left. Little by little the tide of fortune ebbed away from his feet, leaving him stranded high and dry on the cruel shore of impecuniosity, hemmed in by a thousand debts, with the gaunt wolf of beggary staring him in the face.

There was one point about Captain Ducie's gambling that redounded to his credit. No one ever suspected him of cheating. His "run of luck" was so uniformly bad, despite a brief fickle gleam of fortune now and again, which seemed sent only to lure him on to deeper destruction; it was so well known that he had spent two fortunes and alienated all his friends through his passion for the green cloth, that it would have been the height of absurdity to even suspect him of roguery. Indeed, "Ducie's luck" was a proverbial phrase at the whist-tables of his club. He was not a "turf" man, and had no knowledge of horses beyond that legitimate knowledge which every soldier ought to have. His money had all been lost either at cards or roulette. He was one of the most imperturbable of gamblers. Whatever the varying chances of the game might be, no man ever saw him either elated or depressed: he fought with his vizor down.

No man could be more aware of his one besetting weakness, nor of his inability to conquer it, than was Captain Ducie. When he could no longer muster five pounds to gamble with, he would gamble with five shillings. There was a public-house in Southwark to which, poorly dressed, he sometimes went when his funds were low. Here, unknown to the police, a little quiet gambling for small stakes went on from night to night. But however small might be the amount involved, there was the passion, the excitement, the gambling contagion, precisely as at Homburg or Baden; and these it was that made the very salt of Captain Ducie's life.

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About six months before we made his acquaintance he had been compelled to leave his pleasant suite of apartments in New Bond Street, and had, since that time, been the tenant of a shabby bed-room in a shabby little out-of-the-way street. When in town he took his meals at his club, and to that address all letters and papers for him were sent. But of late even the purlieus of his club had become dangerous ground. Round the palatial portal duns seemed to hover and flit mysteriously, so that the task of reaching the secure haven of the smoking-room was one of danger and difficulty; while the return voyage to the shabby little bed-room in the shabby little street could be accomplished in safety only by frequent tacking and much skilful pilotage, to avoid running foul of various rocks and quicksands by the way.

But now, after a six weeks' absence in Scotland, Captain Ducie felt that for a day or two at least he was tolerably safe. He felt like an old fox venturing into the open after the noise of the hunt has died away in the distance, who knows that for a little while he is safe from molestation. How delightful town looked, he thought, after the dull life he had been leading at Stapleton. He had managed to screw another fifty pounds out of Barnstake, and this very evening, the first of his return, he would go to Tom Dawson's rooms and there refresh himself with a little quiet faro or chicken-hazard: very quiet it must of necessity be, unless he saw that it was going to turn out one of his lucky evenings, in which case he would try to "put up" the table and finish with a fortunate coup. But there was one little task that he had set himself to do before going out for the evening, and he proceeded to consider it over while discussing his cup of strong green tea and his strip of dry toast.

To aid him in considering the matter he brought out of an inner pocket the stolen manuscript of M. Platzoff.

While in Scotland, when shut up in his own room of a night, he had often exhumed the *Ms.*, and had set himself seriously to the task of deciphering it, only to acknowledge at the end of a terrible half-hour that he was ignominiously beaten. Whereupon he would console himself by saying that such a task was "not in his line," that his brains were not of that pettifogging order which would allow of his sitting down with the patience requisite to master the secret of the figures. To-night, for the twentieth time, he brought out the *Ms.* He again read the prefatory note carefully over, although he could almost have said it by heart, and once more his puzzled eyes ran over the complicated array of figures, till at last, with an impatient "Pish!" he flung the *Ms.* to the other side of the table, and poured out for himself another cup of tea.

"I must send it to Bexell," he said to himself. "If anyone can make it out, he can. And yet I don't like making another man as wise as myself in such a matter. However, there is no help for it in the present case. If I keep the *Ms.* by me till doomsday I shall never succeed in making out the meaning of those confounded figures."

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When he had finished his tea he took out his writing desk and wrote as under:

"My dear Bexell,—I have only just got back from Scotland after an absence of six weeks. I have brought with me a severe catarrh, a new plaid, a case of Mountain Dew, and a *Ms.* written in cipher. The first and second of these articles I retain for my own use. Of the third I send you half-a-dozen bottles by way of sample: a judicious imbibition of the contents will be found to be a sovereign remedy for the Pip and other kindred disorders that owe their origin to a melancholy frame of mind. The fourth article on my list I send you bodily. It has been lent to me by a friend of mine who states that he found it in his muniment chest among a lot of old title deeds, leases, *etc.*, the first time he waded through them after coming into possession of his property. Neither he nor any friend to whom he has shown it can make out its meaning, and I must confess to being myself one of the puzzled. My friend is very anxious to have it deciphered, as he thinks it may in some way relate to his property, or to some secret bit of family history with which it would be advisable that he should become acquainted. Anyhow, he gave it to me to bring to town, with a request that I should seek out someone clever in such things, and try to get it interpreted for him. Now I know of no one except yourself who is at all expert in such matters. You, I remember, used to take a delight that to me was inexplicable in deciphering those strange advertisements which now and again appear in the newspapers. Let me therefore ask of you to bring your old skill to bear in the present case, and if you can make me anything like a presentable translation to send back to my friend the laird, you will greatly oblige

"Your friend,

"E. *Ducie.*"

The *Ms.* consisted of three or four sheets of deed-paper fastened together at one corner with silk. The prefatory note was on the first sheet. This first sheet Ducie cut away with his penknife and locked up in his desk. The remaining sheets he sent to his friend Bexell, together with the note which he had written.

Three days later Mr. Bexell returned the sheets with his reply. In order properly to understand this reply it will be necessary to offer to the reader's notice a specimen of the *Ms.* The conclusion arrived at by Mr. Bexell, and the mode by which he reached them, will then be more clearly comprehensible.

The following is a counterpart of the first few lines of the *Ms.*:

253.12 59.25 14.5 96.14 158.49 1.29 465.1 28.53

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4	1	6	10	4	12	9	1		

16.36	151.18	58.7	14.29	368.1	209.18	43.11	1.31	1.1	

11	3				9	8			
29.6	186.9	204.11	86.19	43.16	348.14		196.29	203.5	
4	5	10	6	1	5	6	2		
186.9	1.31	21.10	143.18	200.6	29.40		408.9	61.5	
5	9	4	8	3	12	11	4		
209.11	496.1	24.24	28.59	69.39	391.10		60.13	200.1	
2	6	4	1	10	11	5	3		

The following is Mr. Bexell's reply to his friend Captain Ducie:

"*My dear Ducie*,—With this note you will receive back your confounded *Ms.*, but without a translation. I have spent a good deal of time and labour in trying to decipher it, and the conclusions at which I have arrived may be briefly laid before you.

1. Each group of three sets of figures represents a word.
2. Each group of two sets of figures—those with a line above and a line below—represents a letter only.
3. Those letters put together from the point where the double line begins to the point where it ceases, make up a word.
4. In the composition of this cryptogram a *book* has been used as the basis on which to work.
5. In every group of three sets of figures the first set represents the page of the book; the second, the number of the line on that page, probably counting from the top; the third the position in ordinary rotation of the word on that line. Thus you have the number of the page, the number of the line, and the number of the word.
6. In the case of the interlined groups of two sets of figures, the first set represents the number of the page; the second set the number of the line, probably counting from the top, of which line the required letter will prove to be the initial one.
7. The words thus spelled out by the interlined groups of double figures are, in all probability, proper names, or other uncommon words not to be found in their entirety in the book on which the cryptogram is based, and consequently requiring to be worked out letter by letter.
8. The book in question is not a dictionary, nor any other work the words of which come in alphabetical

rotation. It is probably some ordinary book, which the writer of the cryptogram and the person for whom it is written have agreed upon beforehand to make use of as a key. I have no means of judging whether the book in question is an English or a foreign one, but by it alone, whatever it may be, can the cryptogram be read. "Now, my dear Ducie, it would

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be wearisome for me to describe, and equally wearisome for you to read, the processes of reasoning by means of which the above deductions have been arrived at. But in order to satisfy you that my assumptions are not entirely fanciful or destitute of sober sense, I will describe to you, as briefly as may be, the process by means of which I have come to the conclusion that the book used as the basis of the cryptogram was not a dictionary or other work in which the words come in alphabetical rotation; and such a conclusion is very easy of proof. "In a document so lengthy as the *Ms.* of your friend the Scotch laird there must of necessity be many repetitions of what may be called 'indispensable words'—words one or more of which are used in the composition of almost every long sentence. I allude to such words as *a, an, and, as, of, by, the, their, them, these, they, you, I, it, etc.* The first thing to do was to analyse the *MS.* and classify the different groups of figures for the purpose of ascertaining the number of repetitions of any one group. My analysis showed me that these repetitions were surprisingly few. Forty groups were repeated twice, fifteen three times, and nine groups four times. Now, according to my calculation, the *MS.* contains one thousand two hundred and eighty-three words. Out of those one thousand two hundred and eighty-three words there must have been more than the number of repetitions shown by my analysis, and not of one only, but of several of what I have called 'indispensable words.' Had a dictionary been made use of by the writer of the *MS.* all such repetitions would have been referred to one particular page, and to one particular line of that page: that is to say, in every case where a word repeated itself in the *MS.* the same group of numbers would in every case have been its *valeur*. As the repetitions were so few I could only conclude that some book of an ordinary kind had been made use of, and that the writer of the cryptogram had been sufficiently ingenious not to repeat his numbers very frequently in the case of 'indispensable words,' but had in the majority of cases given a fresh group of numbers at each repetition of such a word. I might, perhaps, go further and say that in the majority of cases where a group of figures is repeated such group refers to some word less frequently used than any of those specified above, and that one group was obliged to do duty on two or more occasions, simply because the writer was unable to find the word more than once in the book on which his cryptogram was based." Having once arrived at the conclusion that some book had been used as the basis of the cryptogram, my next supposition that each group of three sets of numbers showed the page of the book, the number of the line from the top, and the position of the required word in that line,

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seemed at once borne out by an analysis of the figures themselves. Thus, taking the first set of figures in each group, I found that in no case did they run to a higher number than 500, which would seem to indicate that the basis-book was limited to that number of pages. The second set of figures ran to no higher number than 60, which would seem to limit the lines on each page to that number. The third set of figures in no case yielded a higher number than 12, which numerals, according to my theory, would indicate the maximum number of words in each line. Thus you have at once (if such information is of any use to you) a sort of a key to the size of the required volume. "I think I have now written enough, my dear Ducie, to afford you some idea of the method by means of which my conclusions have been arrived at. If you wish for further details I will supply them—but by word of mouth, and it be all the same to your honour; for this child detests letter-writing, and has taken a vow that if he reach the end of his present pen-and-ink venture in safety, he will never in time to come devote more than two pages of cream note to even the most exacting of friends: the sequitur of which is, that if you want to know more than is here set down you must give the writer a call, when you shall be talked to to your heart's content.

"Your exhausted friend,

"GEO. BEXELL."

Captain Ducie had too great a respect for the knowledge of his friend Bexell in matters like the one under review to dream for one moment of testing the validity of any of his conclusions. He accepted the whole of them as final. Having got the conclusions themselves, he cared nothing as to the processes by which they had been deduced: the details interested him not at all. Consequently he kept out of the way of his friend, being in truth considerably disgusted to find that, so far as he was himself concerned, the affair had ended in a fiasco. He could not look upon it in any other light. It was utterly out of the range of probability that he should ever succeed in ascertaining on what particular book the cryptogram was based, and no other knowledge was now of the slightest avail. He was half inclined to send back the MS. anonymously to Platzoff, as being of no further use to himself; but he was restrained by the thought that there was just a faint chance that the much-desired volume might turn up during his forthcoming visit to Bon Repos—that even at the eleventh hour the key might be found.

He was terribly chagrined to think that the act of genteel petty larceny, by which he had lowered himself more in his own eyes than he would have cared to acknowledge, had been so absolutely barren of results. That portion of his moral anatomy which he would have called his conscience pricked him shrewdly now and again, but such pricks had their origin in the fact of his knavery having been unsuccessful. Had his wrong-doing won for him such a prize as he had fondly hoped to gain by its means, Conscience would have let her rusted spear hang unheeded on the wall, and beyond giving

utterance now and then to a faint whisper in the dead of night, would have troubled him not at all.

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It was some time in the middle of the night, about a week after Bexell had sent him back the papers, that he awoke suddenly and completely, and there before him, as clearly as though it had been written in letters of fire on the black wall, he saw the title of the wished-for book. It was the book mentioned by Platzoff in his prefatory note: *The Confessions of Parthenio the Mystic*. The knowledge had come to him like a revelation. How stupid he must have been never to have thought of it before! That night he slept no more.

Next morning he went to one of the most famous bookdealers in the metropolis. The book inquired for by Ducie was not known to the man. But that did not say that there was no such work in existence. Through his agents at home and abroad inquiry should be made, and the result communicated to Captain Ducie. Therewith the latter was obliged to content himself. Three days later came a pressing note of invitation from Platzoff.

CHAPTER XI

BON REPOS.

On a certain fine morning towards the end of May, Captain Ducie took train at Euston Square, and late the same afternoon was set down at Windermere. A fly conveyed himself and his portmanteau to the edge of the lake. Singling out one from the tiny fleet of pleasure boats always to be found at the Bowness landing-stage, Captain Ducie seated himself in the stern and lighted his cigar. The boatman's sinewy arms soon pulled him out into the middle of the lake, when the head of the little craft was set for Bon Repos.

The sun was dipping to the western hills. In his wake he had left a rack of torn and fiery cloud, as though he had rent his garments in wrath and cast them from him. Soft, grey mists and purple shadows were beginning to strike upward from the vales, but on the great shoulders of Fairfield, and on the scarred fronts of other giants further away, the sunshine lingered lovingly. It was like the hand of Childhood caressing the rugged brows of Age.

With that glorious panorama which crowns the head of the lake before his eyes, with the rhythmic beat of the oars and the soft pulsing of the water in his ears, with the blue smoke-rings of his cigar rising like visible aspirations through the evening air, an unwonted peace, a soft brooding quietude, began to settle down upon the Captain's world-worn spirit; and through the stillness came a faint whisper, like his mother's voice speaking from the far-off years of childhood, recalling to his memory things once known, but too long forgotten; lessons too long despised, but with a vital truth underlying them which he seemed never to have realised till now. Suddenly the boat's keel grazed the

shingly strand, and there before him, half shrouded in the shadows of evening, was Bon Repos.

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A genuine north-country house, strong, rugged and homely-looking, despite its Gallic cognomen. It was built of the rough grey stone of the district, and roofed with large blue slates. It stood at the head of a small lawn that sloped gently up from the lake. Immediately behind the house a precipitous hill, covered with a thick growth of underwood and young trees, swept upward to a considerable height. A narrow, winding lane, the only carriage approach to the house, wound round the base of this hill, and joined the high road a quarter of a mile away. The house was only two stories high, but was large enough to have accommodated a numerous and well-to-do family. The windows were all set in a framework of plain stone, but on the lower floor some of them had been modernised, the small, square, bluish panes having given place to polished plate glass, of which two panes only were needed for each window. But this was an innovation that had not spread far. The lawn was bordered with a tasteful diversity of shrubs and flowers, while here and there the tender fingers of some climbing plant seemed trying to smoothe away a wrinkle in the rugged front of the old house.

Captain Ducie walked up the gravelled pathway that led from the lake to the house, the boatman with his portmanteau bringing up the rear. Before he could touch either bell or knocker, the door was noiselessly opened, and a coloured servant, in a suit of plain black, greeted him with a respectful bow.

“Captain Ducie, sir, if I am not misinformed?”

“I am Captain Ducie.”

“Sir, you are expected. Your rooms are ready. Dinner will be served in half-an-hour from now. My master will meet you when you come downstairs.”

The portmanteau having been brought in, and the boatman paid and dismissed, said the coloured servant: “I will show you to your rooms, if you will allow me to do so. The man appointed to wait upon you will follow with your luggage in a minute or two.”

He led the way, and Ducie followed in silence.

The tired Captain gave a sigh of relief and gratitude, and flung himself into an easy-chair as the door closed behind his conductor. His two rooms were *en suite*, and while as replete with comfort as the most thorough-going Englishman need desire, had yet about them a touch of lightness and elegance that smacked of a taste that had been educated on the Continent, and was unfettered by insular prejudices.

“At Stapleton I had a loft that was hardly fit for a groom to sleep in; here I have two rooms that a cardinal might feel proud to occupy. *Vive la Russie!*”

M. Platzoff was waiting at the foot of the staircase when Ducie went down. A cordial greeting passed between the two, and the host at once led the way to the dining-room.

Platzoff in his suit of black and white cravat, with his cadaverous face, blue-black hair and chin-tuft, and the elaborate curl on the top of his forehead, looked, at the first glance, more like a ghastly undertaker's man than the host of an English country house.

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But a second glance would have shown you his embroidered linen and the flashing gems on his fingers; and you could not be long with him without being made aware that you were in the company of a thorough man of the world—of one who had travelled much and observed much; of one whose correspondents kept him au courant with all the chief topics of the day. He knew, and could tell you, the secret history of the last new opera; how much had been paid for it, what it had cost to produce, and all about the great green-room cabal against the new prima donna. He knew what amount of originality could be safely claimed for the last new drama that was taking the town by storm, and how many times the same story had been hashed up before. He had read the last French novel of any note, and could favour you with a few personal reminiscences of its author not generally known. As regarded political knowledge—if all his statements were to be trusted—he was informed as to much that was going on behind the great drop-scene. He knew how the wires were pulled that moved the puppets who danced in public, especially those wires which were pulled in Paris, Vienna and St. Petersburg. Before Ducie had been six hours at Bon Repos he knew more about political intrigues at home and abroad than he had ever dreamt of in the whole course of his previous life.

The dining-room at Bon Repos was a long low-ceilinged apartment, panelled with black oak, and fitted up in a rich and sombre style that was yet very different from the dull, heavy formality that obtains among three-fourths of the dining-rooms in English country houses. Indeed, throughout the appointments and fittings of Bon Repos there was a touch of something Oriental grafted on to French taste, combined with a thorough knowledge and appreciation of insular comfort. From the dining-room windows a lovely stretch of the lake could be seen glimmering in the starlight, and our two friends sat this evening over their wine by the wide open sash, gazing out into the delicious night. Behind them, in the room, two or three candles were burning in silver sconces; but at the window they were sitting in that sort of half light which seems exactly suited for confidential talk. Captain Ducie took advantage of it after a time to ask his host a question which he would perhaps have scarcely cared to put by broad daylight.

“Have you heard any news of your lost manuscript?”

“None whatever,” answered Platzoff. “Neither do I expect, after this lapse of time, to hear anything further concerning it. It has probably never been found, or if found, has (as you suggested at ‘The Golden Griffin’) fallen into the hands of someone too ignorant, or too incurious, to master the secret of the cipher.”

“It has been much in my thoughts since I saw you last,” said Ducie. “Was the MS. in your own writing, may I ask?”

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"It was in my own writing," answered the Russian. "It was a confidential communication intended for the eye of my dearest friend, and for his eye only. It was unfinished when I lost it. I had been staying a few days at one of your English spas when I joined you in the train on the day of the accident. The MS., as far as it went, had all been written before I left home; but I took it with me in my despatch-box, together with other private papers, although I knew that I could not add a single line to it while I should be from home. I have wished a thousand times since that I had left it behind me."

"I have heard of people to whom cryptography is a favourite study," said the Captain; "people who pride themselves on their ability to master the most difficult cipher ever invented. Let us hope that your MS. has not fallen into the hands of one of these clever individuals."

Platzoff shrugged his shoulders. "Let us hope so, indeed," he said. "But I will not believe in any such untoward event. Too long a time has elapsed since the loss for me not to have heard something respecting the MS., had it been found by anyone who knew how to make use of it. Besides, I would defy the most clever reader of cryptography to master my MS. without—Ah, Bah! where's the use of talking about it? Should not you like some tobacco? Daylight's last tint has vanished, and there is a chill air sweeping down from the hills."

As they left the window, Platzoff added: "One of the most annoying features connected with my loss arises from the fact that all my labour will have to be gone through again—and very tedious work it is. I am now engaged on a second MS., which is, as nearly as I can make it, a copy of the first one; and it is a task which must be done by myself alone. To have even one confidant would be to stultify the whole affair. Another glass of claret, and then I will introduce you to my sanctum."

The coloured man who had opened the door for Captain Ducie had been in and out of the dining-room several times. He was evidently a favourite servant. Platzoff had addressed him as Cleon, and Ducie had now a question or two to ask concerning him.

Cleon was a mulatto, tall, agile and strong. Not bad-looking by any means, but carrying with him unmistakable traces of the negro blood in his veins. His hair was that of a genuine African—crisp and black, and was one mass of short curls; but except for a certain fulness of the lips his features were of the ordinary Caucasian type. He wore no beard, but a thin, straight line of black moustache. His complexion was yellow, but a different yellow from that of his master—dusky, passionate, lava-like; suggestive of fiery depths below. His eyes, too, glowed with a smothered fire that seemed as if it might blaze out at any moment, and there was in them an expression of snake-like treachery that made Captain Ducie shudder involuntarily, as though he had seen some loathsome reptile, the first time he looked steadily into their half-veiled depths. One look into each other's eyes was sufficient for both these men.

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"Monsieur Cleon and I are born enemies, and he knows it as well as I do," murmured Ducie to himself, after the first secret signal of defiance had passed between the two. "Well, I never was afraid of any man in my life, and I'm not going to begin by being afraid of a valet." With that he shrugged his shoulders, and turned his back contemptuously on the mulatto.

Cleon, in his suit of black and white tie, with his quiet, stealthy movements and unobtrusive attentions, would have been pronounced good style as a gentleman's gentleman in the grandest of Belgravian mansions. Had he suddenly come into a fortune, and gone into society where his antecedents were unknown, five-sixths of his male associates would have pronounced him "a deuced gentlemanly fellow." The remaining one-sixth might have held a somewhat different opinion.

"That coloured fellow seems to be a great favourite with you," remarked Ducie, as Cleon left the room.

"And well he may be," answered Platzoff. "On two separate occasions I owed my life to him. Once in South America, when a couple of brigands had me at their mercy and were about to try the temper of their knives on my throat. He potted them both one after the other. On the second occasion he rescued me from a tiger in the jungle, who was desirous of dining *a la Russe*. I have not made a favourite of Cleon without having my reasons for so doing."

"He seems to me a shrewd fellow, and one who understands his business."

"Cleon is not destitute of ability. When I settled at Bon Repos I made him major-domo of my small establishment, but he still retains his old position as my body-servant. I offered long ago to release him; but he will not allow any third person to come between himself and me, and I should not feel comfortable under the attentions of anyone else."

Platzoff opened the door as he ceased speaking and led the way to the smoking room.

As you lifted the curtain and went in, it was like passing at one step from Europe to the East—from the banks of Windermere to the shores of the Bosphorus. It was a circular apartment with a low cushioned divan running completely round it, except where broken by the two doorways, curtained with hangings of dark brown. The floor was an arabesque of different-coloured tiles, covered here and there with a tiny square of bright-hued Persian carpet. The walls were panelled with stamped leather to the height of six feet from the ground; above the panelling they were painted of a delicate cream colour with here and there a maxim or apophthegm from the Koran, in the Arabic character, picked out in different colours. From the ceiling a silver lamp swung on chains of silver. In the centre of the room was a marble table on which were pipes and hookahs, cigars and tobaccos of various kinds. Smaller tables were placed here and there close to the divan for the convenience of smokers.

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Platzoff having asked Ducie to excuse him for five minutes, passed through the second doorway, and left the Captain to an undisturbed survey of the room. He came back in a few minutes, but so transformed in outward appearance that Ducie scarcely knew him. He had left the room in the full evening costume of an English gentleman: he came back in the turban and flowing robes of a follower of the Prophet. But however comfortable his Eastern habit might be, M. Platzoff lacked the quiet dignity and grave repose of your genuine Turkish gentleman.

"I am going to smoke one of these hookahs; let me recommend you to try another," said Platzoff as he squatted himself cross-legged on the divan.

He touched a tiny gong, and Cleon entered.

"Select a hookah for Monsieur Ducie, and prepare it."

So Cleon, having chosen a pipe, tipped it with a new amber mouthpiece, charged the bowl with fragrant Turkish tobacco, handed the stem to Ducie, and then applied the light. The same service was next performed for his master. Then he withdrew, but only to reappear a minute or two later with coffee served up in the Oriental fashion—black and strong, without sugar or cream.

"This is one of my little smoke-nights," said Platzoff as soon as they were alone. "Last night was one of my big smoke-nights."

"You speak a language I do not understand."

"I call those occasions on which I smoke opium my big smoke-nights."

"Can it be true that you are an opium smoker?" said Ducie.

"It can be and is quite true that I am addicted to that so-called pernicious habit. To me it is one of the few good things this world has to offer. Opium is the key that unlocks the golden gates of Dreamland. To its disciples alone is revealed the true secret of subjective happiness. But we will talk more of this at some future time."

CHAPTER XII.

THE AMSTERDAM EDITION OF 1698.

Captain Ducie soon fell into the quiet routine of life at Bon Repos. It was not distasteful to him. To a younger man it might have seemed to lack variety, to have impinged too closely on the verge of dullness; but Captain Ducie had reached that time of life when quiet pleasures please the most, and when much can be forgiven the man who sets before you a dinner worth eating. Not that Ducie had anything to forgive. Platzoff had

contracted a great liking for his guest, and his hospitality was of that cordial quality which makes the object of it feel himself thoroughly at home. Besides this, the Captain knew when he was well off, and had no wish to exchange his present pleasant quarters, his rambles across the hills, and his sailings on the lake, for his dingy bed-room in town with the harassing, hunted down life of a man upon whom a dozen writs are waiting to be served, and who can never feel certain that his next day's dinner may not be eaten behind the locks and bars of a prison.

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Sometimes on horseback, sometimes on foot, sometimes accompanied by his host, sometimes alone, Ducie explored the lovely country round Bon Repos to his heart's content. Another source of pleasure and healthful exercise he found in long solitary pulls up and down the lake in a tiny skiff which had been set apart for his service. In the evening came dinner and conversation with his host, with perhaps a game or two of billiards to finish up the day.

Captain Ducie found no scope for the exercise of his gambling proclivities at Bon Repos. Platzoff never touched card or dice. He could handle a cue tolerably well, but beyond a half-crown game, Ducie giving him ten points out of fifty, he could never be persuaded to venture. If the Captain, when he went down to Bon Repos, had any expectation of replenishing his pockets by means of faro and unlimited loo, he was wretchedly mistaken. But whatever secret annoyance he might feel, he was too much a man of the world to allow his host even to suspect its existence.

Of society in the ordinary meaning of that word there was absolutely none at Bon Repos. None of the neighbouring families by any chance ever called on Platzoff. By no chance did Platzoff ever call on any of the neighbouring families.

"They are too good for me, too orthodox, too strait-laced," exclaimed the Russian one day in his quiet, jeering way. "Or it may be that I am not good enough for them. Any way, we do not coalesce. Rather are we like flint and steel, and eliminate a spark whenever we come in contact. They look upon me as a pagan, and hold me in horror. I look upon three-fourths of them as Pharisees, and hold them in contempt. Good people there are among them no doubt; people whom it would be a pleasure to know, but I have neither time, health, nor inclination for conventional English visiting—for your ponderous style of hospitality. I am quite sure that my ideas of men and manners would not coincide with those of the quiet country ladies and gentlemen of these parts; while theirs would seem to me terribly wearisome and jejune. Therefore, as I take it, we are better apart."

By and by Ducie discovered that his host was not so entirely isolated from the world as at first sight he appeared to be.

Occasional society there was of a certain kind, intermittent, coming and going like birds of passage. One, or sometimes two visitors, of whose arrival Ducie had heard no previous mention, would now and again put in an appearance at the dinner-table, would pass one, or at the most two nights at Bon Repos, and would then be seen no more, having gone as mysteriously as they had come.

These visitors were always foreigners, now of one nationality, now of another: and were always closeted privately with Platzoff for several hours. In appearance some of them were strangely shabby and unkempt, in a wild, un-English sort of fashion, while others among them seemed like men to whom the good things of this world were no

strangers. But whatever their appearance, they were all treated by Platzoff as honoured guests for whom nothing at his command was too good.

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As a matter of course, they were all introduced to Captain Ducie, but none of their names had been heard by him before—indeed, he had a dim suspicion, gathered, he could not have told how, that the names by which they were made known to him were in some cases fictitious ones, and appropriated for that occasion only. But to the Captain that fact mattered nothing. They were people whom he should never meet after leaving Bon Repos, or if he did chance to meet them, whom he should never recognise.

One other noticeable feature there was about these birds of passage. They were all men of considerable intelligence—men who could talk tersely and well on almost any topic that might chance to come uppermost at table, or during the after-dinner smoke. Literature, art, science, travel—on any or all of these subjects they had opinions to offer; but one subject there was that seemed tabooed among them as by common consent: that subject was politics. Captain Ducie saw and recognised the fact, but as he himself was a man who cared nothing for politics of any kind, and would have voted them a bore in general conversation, he was by no means disposed to resent their extrusion from the table talk at Bon Repos.

As to whom and what these strangers might be, no direct information was vouchsafed by the Russian. Captain Ducie was left in a great measure to draw his own conclusions. A certain conversation which he had one day with his host seemed to throw some light on the matter. Ducie had been asking Platzoff whether he did not sometimes regret having secluded himself so entirely from the world; whether he did not long sometimes to be in the great centres of humanity, in London or Paris, where alone life's full flavour can be tasted.

“Whenever Bon Repos becomes Mal Repos,” answered Platzoff—“whenever a longing such as you speak of comes over me—and it does come sometimes—then I flee away for a few weeks, to London oftener than anywhere else—certainly not to Paris: that to me is forbidden ground. By-and-by I come back to my nest among the hills, vowing there is no place like it in the world's wide round. But even when I am here, I am not so shut out from the world and its great interests as you seem to imagine. I see History enacting itself before my eyes, and I cannot sit by with averted face. I hear the grand chant of Liberty as the beautiful goddess comes nearer and nearer and smites down one Oppressor after another with her red right hand; and I cannot shut my ears. I have been an actor in the great drama of Revolution ever since a lad of twelve. I saw my father borne off in chains to Siberia, and heard my mother with her dying breath curse the tyrant who had sent him there. Since that day Conspiracy has been the very salt of my life. For it I have fought and bled; for it I have suffered hunger, thirst, imprisonment, and dangers unnumbered. Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg, are all places that I can never hope to see again. For me to set foot in

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any one of the three would be to run the risk of almost certain detection, and in my case detection would mean hopeless incarceration for the poor remainder of my days. To the world at large I may seem nothing but a simple country gentleman, living a dull life in a spot remote from all stirring interests. But I may tell you, sir (in strictest confidence, mind), that although I stand a little aside from the noise and heat of the battle, I work for it with heart and brain as busily, and to better purpose, let us hope, than when I was a much younger man. I am still a conspirator, and a conspirator I shall remain till Death taps me on the shoulder and serves me with his last great writ of *habeas corpus*."

These words recurred to Ducie's memory a day or two later when he found at the dinner-table two foreigners whom he had never seen before.

"Is it possible that these bearded gentlemen are also conspirators?" asked the Captain of himself. "If so, their mode of life must be a very uncomfortable one. It never seems to include the use of a razor, and very sparingly that of comb and brush. I am glad that I have nothing to do with what Platzoff calls *The Great Cause*."

But Captain Ducie was not a man to trouble himself with the affairs of other people unless his own interests were in some way affected thereby. M. Paul Platzoff might have been mixed up with all the plots in Europe for anything the Captain cared: it was a mere question of taste, and he never interfered with another man's tastes when they did not clash with his own. Besides, in the present case, his attention was claimed by what to him was a matter of far more serious interest. From day to day he was anxiously waiting for news from the London bookseller who was making inquiries on his behalf as to the possibility of obtaining a copy of *The Confessions of Parthenio the Mystic*. Day passed after day till a fortnight had gone, and still there came no line from the bookseller.

Ducie's impatience could no longer be restrained: he wrote, asking for news. The third day brought a reply. The bookseller had at last heard of a copy. It was in the library of a monastery in the Low Countries. The coffers of the monastery needed replenishing; the abbot was willing to part with the book, but the price of it would be a sum equivalent to fifty guineas of English money. Such was the purport of the letter.

To Captain Ducie, just then, fifty guineas were a matter of serious moment. For a full hour he debated with himself whether or no he should order the book to be bought.

Supposing it duly purchased; supposing that it really proved to be the key by which the secret of the Russian's MS. could be mastered; might not the secret itself prove utterly worthless as far as he, Ducie, was concerned? Might it not be merely a secret bearing on one of those confounded political plots in which Platzoff was implicated—a matter of

moment no doubt to the writer, but of no earthly utility to anyone not inoculated with such March-hare madness?

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These were the questions that it behoved him to consider. At the end of an hour he decided that the game was worth the candle: he would risk his fifty guineas.

Taking one of Platzoff's horses, he rode without delay to the nearest telegraph station. His message to the bookseller was as under:

"Buy the book, and send it down to me here by confidential messenger."

The next few day were days of suspense, of burning impatience. The messenger arrived almost sooner than Ducie expected, bringing the book with him. Ducie sighed as he signed the cheque for fifty guineas, with ten pounds for expenses. That shabby calf-bound worm-eaten volume seemed such a poor exchange for the precious slip of paper that had just left his fingers. But what was done could not be undone, so he locked the book away carefully in his desk and locked up his impatience with it till nightfall.

He could not get away from Platzoff till close upon midnight. When he got to his own room he bolted the door, and drew the curtains across the windows, although he knew that it was impossible for anyone to spy on him from without. Then he opened his desk, spread out the MS. before him, and took up the volume. A calf-bound volume, with red edges, and numbering five hundred pages. It was in English, and the title-page stated it to be "*The Confessions of Parthenio the Mystic: A Romance*. Translated from the Latin. With Annotations, and a Key to Sundrie Dark Meanings. Imprinted at Amsterdam in the Year of Grace 1698." It was in excellent condition.

Captain Ducie's eagerness to test his prize would not allow of more than a very cursory inspection of the general contents of the volume. So far as he could make out, it seemed to be a political satire veiled under the transparent garb of an Eastern story. Parthenio was represented as a holy man—a Spiritualist or Mystic—who had lived for many years in a cave in one of the Arabian deserts. Commanded at length by what he calls the "inner voice," he sets out on his travels to visit sundry courts and kingdoms of the East. He returns after five years, and writes, for the benefit of his disciples, an account of the chief things he has seen and learned while on his travels. The courts of England, France and Spain, under fictitious names, are the chief marks for his ponderous satire, and some of the greatest men in the three kingdoms are lashed with his most scurrilous abuse. Under any circumstances the book was not one that Captain Ducie would have cared to wade through, and in the present case, after dipping into a page here and there, and finding that it contained nothing likely to interest him, he proceeded at once to the more serious business of the evening.

The clocks of Bon Repos were striking midnight as Captain Ducie proceeded to test the value of the first group of figures on the MS., according to the formula laid down for him by his friend Bexell.

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The first group of figures was 253.12/4. Turning to page two hundred and fifty-three of the Confessions, and counting from the top of that page, he found that the fourth word of the twelfth line gave him *you*. The second clump of figures was 59.25/1. The first word of the twenty-fifth line of page fifty-nine gave him *will*. The third clump of figures gave him *have*, and the fourth *gathered*. These four words, ranged in order, read: *You will have gathered*. Such a sequence of words could not arise from mere accident. When he had got thus far Ducie knew that Platzoff's secret would soon be a secret no longer, that in a very little while the heart of the mystery would be laid bare.

Encouraged by his success, Ducie went to work with renewed vigour, and before the clock struck one he had completed the first sentence of the MS., which ran as under:—

*You will have gathered from the foregoing note, my dear Carlo,
that I have something of importance to relate to you—something
that I am desirous of keeping a secret from everyone but yourself.*

As his friend Bexell surmised, Ducie found that the groups of figures distinguished from the rest by two horizontal lines, one above and one below, as thus 58.7 14.29 368.1 209.18 43.11, were the *valeurs* of some proper name or other word for which there was no equivalent in the book. Such words had to be spelt out letter by letter in the same way that complete words were picked out in other cases. Thus the marked figures as above, when taken letter by letter, made up the word *Carlo*—a name to which there was nothing similar in the Confessions.

It had been broad daylight for two hours before Captain Ducie grew tired of his task and went to bed. He went on with it next night, and every night till it was finished. It was a task that deepened in interest as he proceeded with it. It grew upon him to such a degree that when near the close he feigned illness, and kept his room for a whole day, so that he might the sooner get it done.

If Captain Ducie had ever amused himself with trying to imagine the nature of the secret which he had now succeeded in unravelling, the reality must have been very different from his expectations. One gigantic thought, whose coming made him breathless for a moment, took possession of him, as a demon might have done, almost before he had finished his task, dwarfing all other thoughts by its magnitude. It was a thought that found relief in six words only:

"It must and shall be mine!"

CHAPTER XIII.

M. PLATZOFF'S SECRET—CAPTAIN DUCIE'S TRANSLATION OF M. PAUL PLATZOFF'S MS.

“You will have gathered from the foregoing note, my dear Carlo, that I have something of importance to relate to you; something that I am desirous of keeping a secret from everyone but yourself. From the same source you will have learned where to find the key by which alone the lock of my secret can be opened.

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“I was induced by two reasons to make use of *The Confessions of Parthenio the Mystic* as the basis of my cryptographic communication. In the first place, each of us has in his possession a copy of the same edition of that rare book, viz., the Amsterdam edition of 1698. In the second place, there are not more than half-a-dozen copies of the same work in England; so that if this document were by mischance to fall into the hands of some person other than him for whom it is intended, such person, even if sufficiently acute to guess at the means by which alone the cryptogram can be read, would still find it a matter of some difficulty to obtain possession of the requisite key.

“I address these lines to you, my dear Lampini, not because you and I have been friends from youth, not because we have shared many dangers and hardship together, not because we have both kept the same great object in view throughout life; in fine, I do not address them to you as a private individual, but in your official capacity as Secretary of the Secret Society of San Marco.

“You know how deeply I have had the objects of the Society at heart ever since, twenty-five years ago, I was deemed worthy of being made one of the initiated. You know how earnestly I have striven to forward its views both in England and abroad; that through my connection with it I am *suspect* at nearly every capital on the Continent—that I could not enter some of them except at the risk of my life; that health, time, money—all have been ungrudgingly given for the furtherance of the same great end.

“Heaven knows I am not penning these lines in any self-gratulatory frame of mind—I who write from this happy haven among the hills. Self-gratulation would ill-become such as me. Where I have given gold, others have given their blood. Where I have given time and labour, others have undergone long and cruel imprisonments, have been separated from all they loved on earth, and have seen the best years of their life fade hopelessly out between the four walls of a living tomb. What are my petty sacrifices to such as these?

“But not to everyone is granted the happiness of cementing a great cause with his heart’s blood. We must each work in the appointed way—some of us in the full light of day; others in obscure corners, at work that can never be seen, putting in the stones of the foundation painfully one by one, but never destined to share in the glory of building the roof of the edifice.

“Sometimes, in your letters to me, especially when those letters contained any disheartening news, I have detected a tone of despondency, a latent doubt as to whether the cause to which both of us are so firmly bound was really progressing; whether it was not fighting against hope to continue the battle any longer; whether it would not be wiser to retreat to the few caves and fastnesses that were left us, and leaving Liberty still languishing in chains, and Tyranny still rampant in the high places of the world, to wage no longer a useless war against the irresistible Fates. Happily, with

you such moods were of the rarest: you would have been more than mortal had not your soul at times sat in sackcloth and ashes.

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“Such seasons of doubt and gloom have come to me also; but I know that in our secret hearts we both of us have felt that there was a self-sustaining power, a latent vitality in our cause that nothing could crush out utterly; that the more it was trampled on the more dangerous it would become, and the faster it would spread. Certain great events that have happened during the last twelve months have done more towards the propagation of the ideas we have so much at heart than in our wildest dreams we dare have hoped only three short years ago. Gravely considering these things, it seems to me that the time cannot be far distant when the contingent plan of operations as agreed upon by the Central Committee two years ago, to which I gave in my adhesion on the occasion of your last visit to Bon Repos, will have to replace the scheme at present in operation, and will become the great lever in carrying out the Society’s policy in time to come.

“When the time shall be ripe, but one difficulty will stand in the way of carrying out the proposed contingent plan. That difficulty will arise from the fact that the Society’s present expenses will then be trebled or quadrupled, and that a vast accession to the funds at command of the Committee for the time being will thus be imperatively necessitated. As a step, as a something towards obviating whatever difficulty may arise from lack of funds, I have devised to you, as Secretary of the Society, the whole of my personal estate, amounting in the aggregate to close upon fifteen thousand pounds. This property will not accrue to you till my decease; but that event will happen no very long time hence. My will, duly signed and witnessed, will be found in the hands of my lawyer.

“But it was not merely to advise you of this bequest that I have sought such a roundabout mode of communication. I have a greater and a much more important bequest to make to the Society, through you, its accredited agent. I have in my possession a green DIAMOND, the estimated value of which is a hundred and fifty thousand pounds. This precious gem I shall leave to you, by you to be sold after my death, the proceeds of the sale to be added to the other funded property of the Society of San Marco.

“The Diamond in question became mine during my travels in India many years ago. I believe my estimate of its value to be a correct one. Except my confidential servant, Cleon (whom you will remember), no one is aware that I have in my possession a stone of such immense value. I have never trusted it out of my own keeping, but have always retained it by me, in a safe place, where I could lay my hands upon it at a moment’s notice. But not even to Cleon have I entrusted the secret of the hiding-place, incorruptibly faithful as I believe him to be. It is a secret locked in my own bosom alone.

“You will now understand why I have resorted to cryptography in bringing these facts under your notice. It is intended that these lines shall not be read by you till after my decease. Had I adopted the ordinary mode of communicating with you, it seemed to me not impossible that some other eye than the one for which it was intended might peruse

this statement before it reached you, and that through some foul play or underhand deed the Diamond might never come into your possession.

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"It only remains for me now to point out where and by what means the Diamond may be found. It is hidden away in—"

* * * * *

Here the MS., never completed, ended abruptly.

(To be continued.)

RONDEAU.

In vain we call to youth, "Return!"
In vain to fires, "Waste not, yet burn!"
In vain to all life's happy things,
"Give the days song—give the hours wings!
Let us lose naught—yet always learn!"

The tongue must lose youth, as it sings—
New knowledge still new sorrow brings:
Oh, sweet lost youth, for which we yearn
In vain!
But even this hour from which ye turn—
Impatient—o'er its funeral urn
Your soul with mad importunings
Will cry, "Come back, lost hour!" So rings
Ever the cry of those who yearn
In vain.

E. NESBIT.

SAPPHO.

When the Akropolis at Athens bore its beautiful burden entire and perfect, one miniature temple stood dedicated to wingless Victory, in token that the city which had defied and driven back the barbarian should never know defeat.

But only a few decades had passed away when that temple stood as a mute and piteous witness that Athens had been laid low in the dust, and that Victory, though she could never weave a garland for Hellenes who had conquered Hellenes, was no longer a living power upon her chosen citadel. By the eighteenth century the shrine had altogether disappeared: the site only could be traced, and four slabs from its frieze were discovered close at hand, built into the walls of a Turkish powder magazine; but not another fragment could be found.

The descriptions of Pausanias and of one or two later travellers were all that remained to tell us of the whole; of its details we might form some faint conception from those frieze marbles, rescued by Lord Elgin and now in the British museum.

But we are not left to restore the temple of wingless Victory in our imagination merely, aided by description and by fragment. It stands to-day almost complete except for its shattered sculptures, placed upon its original site, and looking, among the ruins of the grander buildings around it, like a beautiful child who gazes for the first time on sorrow which it feels but cannot share. The blocks of marble taken from its walls and columns had been embedded in a mass of masonry, and when Greece was once more free, and all traces of Turkish occupation were being cleared from the Akropolis, these were carefully put together with the result that we have described.

Like this in part, but unhappily only in part, is the story of the poems of Sappho. She wrote, as the architect planned, for all time. We have one brief fragment, proud, but pathetic in its pride, that tells us she knew she was meant not altogether to die:

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"I say that there will be remembrance of us hereafter,"

and again with lofty scorn she addresses some other woman:

"But thou shalt lie dead, nor shall there ever be remembrance of thee then or in the time to come, for thou hast no share in the roses of Pieria; but thou shalt wander unseen even in the halls of Hades, flitting forth amid the shades of the dead."

The words sound in our ears with a melancholy close as we remember how hopelessly lost is almost every one of those poems that all Hellas loved and praised as long as the love and praise of Hellas was of any worth. Remembrance among men was, to her, the Muses' crowning gift; that which should distinguish her from ordinary mortals, even beyond the grave, and grant her new life in death. But it was only for her songs' sake that she cared to live; she looked for immortality only because she felt that they were too fair to die.

It was almost by accident that the name of Sappho was first associated with the slanders that have ever since clung round it.

By the close of the fourth century, B.C., Athenian comedy had degenerated into brilliant and witty and scandalous farce, in many essentials resembling the new Comedy of the Restoration in England. But the vitiated Athenian palate required a seasoning which did not commend itself to English taste; it was necessary that the shafts of the writer's wit should strike some real and well-known personage.

Politics, which had furnished so many subjects and so many characters to Aristophanes, were now a barren field, and public life at Athens in those days was nothing if not political. Hence arose the practice of introducing great names of bygone days into these comedies, in all kinds of ridiculous and disgraceful surroundings.

There was a piquancy about these libels on the dead which we cannot understand, but which we may contrast with the less dishonourable process known to modern historians as "whitewashing." Just as Tiberius and Henry VIII. have been rescued from the infamy of ages, and placed among us upon pedestals of honour from which it will be difficult hereafter wholly to dislodge them, many honoured names were taken by these iconoclasts of the Middle Comedy and hurled down to such infamy as they alone could bestow.

Sappho stood out prominently as the one supreme poetess of Hellas, and the poets, if so they must be called, of the decline of Greek dramatic art were never weary of loading her name with every most disgraceful reproach they could invent. It is hardly worth while to discuss a subject so often discussed with so little profit, or it would be easy to show that these gentlemen, Ameipsias, Antiphanes, Diphilus, and the rest, were indebted solely to their imagination for their facts.

It would be as fair to take the picture of Sokrates in the “Clouds” of Aristophanes for a faithful representation of the philosopher as it would be to take the Sappho of the comic stage for the true Sappho. Indeed, it would be fairer; for the Sokrates of the “Clouds” is an absurd caricature, but, like every good caricature, it bore some resemblance to the original.

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Aristophanes and his audience were familiar with the figure of Sokrates as he went in and out amongst them; they knew his character and his manner of life; and, though the poet ventured to pervert the teaching and to ridicule the habits of a well-known citizen, he would not venture to put before the people a representation in which there was not a grain of truth.

But Sappho had been dead for two hundred years: the Athenian populace knew little of her except that she had been great and that she had been unhappy; and the descendants of the men who had thronged the theatre to see the Oedipus of Sophokles, sickening with that strange disease which makes the soul crave to batten on the fruits that are its poison, found a rare feast furnished forth in the imaginary history of the one great woman of their race.

The centuries went on, and Sappho came before the tribunal of the early Christian Church.

The chief witnesses against her were these same comic poets, who were themselves prisoners at the bar; and her judges, with the ruthless impartiality of indiscriminating zeal, condemned the whole of her works, as well as those of her accusers, to be destroyed in the flames.

Thus her works have almost totally perished: the fragments that are extant give us only the faintest hints of the grace and sweetness that we have for ever lost.

The mode of the preservation of these remains is half-pathetic, half-grotesque. We have one complete poem and a considerable portion of another; the rest are the merest fragments—now two or three lines, now two or three words, often unintelligible without their context. We have imitations and translations by Catullus and by Horace; but even Catullus has conspicuously failed to reproduce her. As Mr. Swinburne has candidly and very truly said: “No man can come close to her.”

No; all that we possess of Sappho is gleaned from the dictionary, the geography, the grammar and the archaeological treatise; from a host of worthy authors who are valued now chiefly for these quotations which they have enshrined. Here a painful scholar of Alexandria has preserved the phrase—

“The golden sandalled dawn but now has (waked) me,”

to show how Sappho employed the adverb. Apollonius, to prove that the AEolic dialect had a particular form for the genitive case of the first personal pronoun, has treasured up two sad and significant utterances,

“But thou forgettest me!”

and

“Or else thou lovest another than me,”

The AEolic genitive has saved for us another of these sorrow-laden sentences which Mr. Swinburne has amplified in some beautiful but too wordy lines. Sappho only says

“I am full weary of Gorgo.”

—A few of these fragments tell us of the poet herself.

“I have a daughter like golden flowers, Kleis my beloved, for whom
(I would take) not all Sydia....”

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and one beautiful line which we can recognise in the translation by Catullus,

“Like a child after its mother, I—”

The touches by which she has painted nature are so fine and delicate that the only poet of our time who has a right to attempt to translate them has declared it to be “the one impossible task.” Our English does, indeed, sound harsh and unmusical as we try to represent her words; yet what a picture is here—

“And round about the cold (stream) murmurs through the
apple-orchards, and slumber is shed down from trembling leaves.”

She makes us hear the wind upon the mountains falling on the oaks; she makes us feel the sun’s radiance and beauty, as it glows through her verses; she makes us love with her the birds and the flowers that she loved. She has a womanly pity not only for the dying doves when—

“Their hearts grew cold and they dropped their wings,”

but for the hyacinth which the shepherds trample under foot upon the hillside. The golden pulse growing on the shore, the roses, the garlands of dill, are yet fragrant for us; we can even now catch the sweet tones of the “Spring’s angel,” as she calls it, the nightingale that sang in Lesbos ages and ages ago. One beautiful fragment has been woven with another into a few perfect lines by Dante Gabriel Rossetti; but it shall be given here as it stands. It describes a young, unwedded maiden:

“As the sweet apple blushes on the end of the bough, the very end
of the bough which the gatherers overlooked—nay, overlooked not,
but could not reach.”

The Ode to Aphrodite and the fragment to Anaktoria are too often found in translations to be quoted here. Indeed, it is of but little use to quote; for Sappho can be known only in her own language and by those who will devote time to these inestimable fragments. Their beauty grows upon us as we read; we catch in one the echo of a single tone, so sweet that it needs no harmony; and again a few stray chords that haunt the ear and fill us with an exquisite dissatisfaction; and yet again a grave and stately measure such as her rebuke to Alkæus—

“Had thy desire been for what was good or noble and had not thy
tongue framed some evil speech, shame had not filled thine eyes—”

MARY GREY.

THE SILENT CHIMES.

RINGING AT MIDDAY.

It was an animated scene; and one you only find in England. The stubble of the cornfields looked pale and bleak in the departing autumn, the wind was shaking down the withered leaves from the trees, whose thinning branches told unmistakably of the rapidly-advancing winter. But the day was bright after the night's frost, and the sun shone on the glowing scarlet coats of the hunting men, and the hounds barked in every variety of note and leaped with delight in the morning air. It was the first run of the season, and the sportsmen were fast gathering at the appointed spot—a field flanked by a grove of trees called Poachers' Copse.

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Ten o'clock, the hour fixed for the throw-off, came and went, and still Poachers' Copse was not relieved of its busy intruders. Many a gentleman foxhunter glanced at his hunting-watch as the minutes passed, many a burly farmer jerked his horse impatiently; while the grey-headed huntsman cracked his long whip amongst his canine favourites and promised them they should soon be on the scent. The delay was caused by the non-arrival of the Master of the Hounds.

But now all eyes were directed to a certain quarter, and by the brightened looks and renewed stir, it might be thought that he was appearing. A stranger, sitting his horse well and quietly at the edge of Poachers' Copse, watched the newcomers as they came into view. Foremost of them rode an elderly gentleman in scarlet, and by his side a young lady who might be a few years past twenty.

"Father and daughter, I'll vow," commented the stranger, noting that both had the same well-carved features, the same defiant, haughty expression, the same proud bearing. "What a grandly-handsome girl! And he, I suppose, is the man we are waiting for. Is that the Master of the Hounds?" he asked aloud of the horseman next him, who chanced to be young Mr. Threpp.

"No, sir, that is Captain Monk," was the answer. "They are saying yonder that he has brought word the Master is taken ill and cannot hunt to-day"—which proved to be correct. The Master had been taken with giddiness when about to mount his horse.

The stranger rode up to Captain Monk; judging him to be regarded—by the way he was welcomed and the respect paid him—as the chief personage at the meet, representing in a manner the Master. Lifting his hat, he begged grace for having, being a stranger, come out, uninvited, to join the field; adding that his name was Hamlyn and he was staying with Mr. Peveril at Peacock's Range.

Captain Monk wheeled round at the address; his head had been turned away. He saw a tall, dark man of about five-and-thirty years, so dark and sunburnt as to suggest ideas of his having recently come from a warmer climate. His hair was black, his eyes were dark brown, his features and manner prepossessing, and he spoke as a man accustomed to good society.

Captain Monk, lifting his hat in return, met him with cordiality. The field was open to all, he said, but any friend of Peveril's would be doubly welcome. Peveril himself was a muff, in so far as that he never hunted.

"Hearing there was to be a meet to-day, I could not resist the temptation of joining it; it is many years since I had the opportunity," remarked the stranger.

There was not time for more, the hounds were throwing off. Away dashed the Captain's steed, away dashed the stranger's, away dashed Miss Monk's, the three keeping side by side.

Presently came a fence. Captain Monk leaped it and galloped onwards after the other red-coats. Miss Eliza Monk would have leaped it next, but her horse refused it; yet he was an old hunter and she a fearless rider. The stranger was waiting to follow her. A touch of the angry Monk temper assailed her and she forced her horse to the leap. He had a temper also; he did not clear it, and horse and rider came down together.

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In a trice Mr. Hamlyn was off his own steed and raising her. She was not hurt, she said, when she could speak; a little shaken, a little giddy—and she leaned against the fence. The refractory horse, unnoticed for the moment, got upon his legs, took the fence of his own accord and tore away after the field. Young Mr. Threpp, who had been in some difficulty with his own steed, rode up now.

“Shall I ride back to the Hall and get the pony-carriage for you, Miss Eliza?” asked the young man.

“Oh, dear, no,” she replied, “thank you all the same. I would prefer to walk home.”

“Are you equal to the walk?” interposed the stranger.

“Quite. The walk will do away with this faintness. It is not the first fall I have had.”

The stranger whispered to young Mr. Threpp—who was as good-natured a young fellow as ever lived. Would he consent to forego the sport that day and lead his horse to Mr. Peveril’s? If so, he would accompany the young lady and give her the support of his arm.

So William Threpp rode off, leading Mr. Hamlyn’s horse, and Miss Monk accepted the stranger’s arm. He told her a little about himself as they walked along. It might not have been an ominous commencement, but intimacies have grown sometimes out of a slighter introduction. Their nearest way led past the Vicarage. Mr. Grame saw them from its windows and came running out.

“Has any accident taken place?” he asked hurriedly. “I hope not.”

Eliza Monk’s face flushed. He had been Lucy’s husband several months now, but she could not yet suddenly meet him without a thrill of emotion. Lucy ran out next; the pretty young wife for whom she had been despised. Eliza answered Mr. Grame curtly, nodded to Lucy, and passed on.

“And, as I was telling you,” continued Mr. Hamlyn, “when this property was left to me in England, I made it a plea for throwing up my post in India, and came home. I landed about six weeks ago, and have been since busy in London with lawyers. Peveril, whom I knew in the days gone by, wrote to invite me to come to him here on a week’s visit, before he and his wife leave for the South of France.”

“They are going to winter there for Mrs. Peveril’s health,” observed Eliza. “Peacock’s Range, the place they live at, belongs to my cousin, Harry Carradyne. Did I understand you to say that you were not an Englishman?”

“I was born in the West Indies. My family were English and had settled there.”

“What a coincidence!” exclaimed Eliza Monk with a smile. “My mother was a West Indian, and I was born there.—There’s my home, Leet Hall!”

“A fine old place,” cried Mr. Hamlyn, regarding the mansion before him.

“You may well say ‘old,’” remarked the young lady. “It has been the abode of the Monk family from generation to generation. For my part, I sometimes half wish it would fall down that we might get away to a more lively locality. Church Leet is a dead-alive place at best.”

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"We always want what we have not," laughed Mr. Hamlyn. "I would give all I am worth to possess an ancestral home, no matter if it were grim and gloomy. We who can boast of only modern wealth look upon these family castles with an envy you have little idea of."

"If you possess modern wealth, you possess a very good and substantial thing," she answered, echoing his laugh.—"Here comes my aunt, full of wonder."

Full of alarm also. Mrs. Carradyne stood on the terrace steps, asking if there had been an accident.

"Not much of one, Aunt Emma. Saladin refused the fence at Ring Gap, and we both came down together. This gentleman was so obliging as to forego his day's sport and escort me home. Mr.—Mr. Hamlyn, I believe?" she added. "My aunt, Mrs. Carradyne."

The stranger confirmed it. "Philip Hamlyn," he said to Mrs. Carradyne, lifting his hat.

Gaining the hall-door with slow and gentle steps came a young man, whose beautiful features were wasting more perceptibly day by day, and their hectic growing of a deeper crimson. "What is amiss, Eliza?" he cried. "Have you come to grief? Where's Saladin?"

"My brother," she said to Mr. Hamlyn.

Yes, it was indeed Hubert Monk. For he did not die of that run to the church the past New Year's Eve. The death-like faint proved to be a faint, nothing more. Nothing more *then*. But something else was advancing with gradual steps: steps that seemed to be growing almost perceptible now.

Now and again Hubert fainted in the same manner; his face taking a death-like hue, the blue tinge surrounding his mouth. Captain Monk, unable longer to shut his eyes to what might be impending, called in the best medical advice that Worcestershire could afford; and the doctors told him the truth—that Hubert's days were numbered.

To say that Captain Monk began at once to "set his house in order" would not be quite the right expression, since it was not he himself who was going to die. But he set his affairs straight as to the future, and appointed another heir in his son's place—his nephew, Harry Carradyne.

Harry Carradyne, a brave young lieutenant, was then with his regiment in some almost inaccessible fastness of the Indian Empire. Captain Monk (not concealing his lamentation and the cruel grief it was to himself personally) wrote word to him of the fiat concerning poor Hubert, together with a peremptory order to sell out and return home as the future heir. This was being accomplished, and Harry might now be expected almost any day.

But it may as well be mentioned that Captain Monk, never given to be confidential about himself or his affairs, told no one what he had done, with one exception. Even Mrs. Carradyne was ignorant of the change in her son's prospects and of his expected return. The one exception was Hubert. Soon to lose him, Captain Monk made more of his son than he had ever done, and seemed to like to talk with him.

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“Harry will make a better master to succeed you than I should have made, father,” said Hubert, as they were slowly pacing home from the parsonage, arm-in-arm, one dull November day, some little time after the meet of the hounds, as recorded. It was surprising how often Captain Monk would now encounter his son abroad, as if by accident, and give him his arm home.

“What d’ye mean?” wrathfully responded the Captain, who never liked to hear his own children disparaged, by themselves or by anyone else.

Hubert laughed a little. “Harry will look after things better than I ever should. I was always given to laziness. Don’t you remember, father, when a little boy in the West Indies, you used to tell me I was good for nothing but to bask in the heat?”

“I remember one thing, Hubert; and, strange to say, have remembered it only lately. Things lie dormant in the memory for years, and then crop up again. Upon getting home from one of my long voyages, your mother greeted me with the news that your heart was weak; the doctor had told her so. I gave the fellow a trimming for putting so ridiculous a notion into her head—and it passed clean out of mine. I suppose he was right, though.”

“Little doubt of that, father. I wonder I have lived so long.”

“Nonsense!” exploded the Captain; “you may live on yet for years. I don’t know that I did not act foolishly in sending post-haste for Harry Carradyne.”

Hubert smiled a sad smile. “You have done quite right, father; right in all ways; be sure of that. Harry is one of the truest and best fellows that ever lived: he will be a comfort to you when I am gone, and the best of all successors later. Just—a—moment—father!”

“Why, what’s the matter?” cried Captain Monk—for his son had suddenly halted and stood with a rapidly-paling face and shortened breath, pressing his hands to his side. “Here, lean on me, lad; lean on me.”

It was a sudden faintness. Nothing very much, and it passed off in a minute or two. Hubert made a brave attempt at smiling, and resumed his way. But Captain Monk did not like it at all; he knew all these things were but the beginning of the end. And that end, though not with actual irreverence, he was resenting bitterly in his heart.

“Who’s that coming out?” he asked, crossly, alluding to some figure descending the steps of his house—for his sight was not what it used to be.

“It is Mr. Hamlyn,” said Hubert.

“Oh—Hamlyn! He seems to be always coming in. I don’t like that man somehow, Hubert. Wonder what he’s lagging in the neighbourhood for?”

Hubert Monk had an idea that he could have told. But he did not want to draw down an explosion on his own head. Mr. Hamlyn came to meet them with friendly smiles and hand-shakes. Hubert liked him; liked him very much.

Not only had Mr. Hamlyn prolonged his stay beyond the “day or two” he had originally come for, but he evinced no intention of leaving. When Mr. Peveril and his wife departed for the south, he made a proposal to remain at Peacock’s Range for a time as their tenant. And when the astonished couple asked his reasons, he answered that he should like to get a few runs with the hounds.

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II.

The November days glided by. The end of the month was approaching, and still Philip Hamlyn stayed on, and was a very frequent visitor at Leet Hall. Little doubt that Miss Monk was his attraction, and the parish began to say so without reticence.

The parish was right. One fine, frosty morning Mr. Hamlyn sought an interview with Captain Monk and laid before him his proposals for Eliza.

One might have thought by the tempestuous words showered down upon him in answer that he had proposed to smother her. Reproaches, hot and fast, were poured forth upon the suitor's unlucky head.

"Why, you are a stranger!" stormed the Captain; "you have not known her a month! How dare you? It's not commonly decent."

Mr. Hamlyn quietly answered that he had known her long enough to love her, and went on to say that he came of a good family, had plenty of money, and could make a liberal settlement upon her.

"That you never will," said Captain Monk. "I should not like you for my son-in-law," he continued candidly, calming down from his burst of passion to the bounds of reason. "But there can be no question of it in any way. Eliza is to become Lady Rivers."

Mr. Hamlyn opened his eyes in astonishment. "Lady Rivers!" he echoed. "Do you speak of Sir Thomas Rivers?—that old man!"

"No, I do not, sir. Sir Thomas Rivers has one foot in the grave. I speak of his eldest son. He wants her, and he shall have her."

"Pardon me, Captain, I—I do not think Miss Monk can know anything of this. I am sure she did not last night. I come to you with her full consent and approbation."

"I care nothing about that. My daughter is aware that any attempt to oppose her will to mine would be utterly futile. Young Tom Rivers has written to me to ask for her; I have accepted him, and I choose that she shall accept him. She'll like it herself, too; it will be a good match."

"Young Tom Rivers is next door to a simpleton: he is not half-baked," retorted Mr. Hamlyn, his own temper getting up: "if I may judge by what I've seen of him in the field."

"Tom Rivers is a favourite everywhere, let me tell you, sir. Eliza would not refuse him for you."

“Perhaps, Captain Monk, you will converse with her upon this point?”

“I intend to give her my orders—if that’s what you mean,” returned the Captain. “And now, sir, I think our discussion may terminate.”

Mr. Hamlyn saw no use in prolonging it for the present. Captain Monk bowed him out of the house and called his daughter into the room.

“Eliza,” he began, scorning to beat about the bush, “I have received an offer of marriage for you.”

Miss Eliza blushed a little, not much: few things could make her do that now. Once our blushes have been wasted, as hers were on Robert Grame, their vivid freshness has faded for ever and aye. “The song has left the bird.”

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"And I have accepted it," continued Captain Monk. "He would like the wedding to be early in the year, so you may get your rattletaps in order for it. Tell your aunt I will give her a blank cheque for the cost, and she may fill it in."

"Thank you, papa."

"There's the letter; you can read it"—pushing one across the table to her. "It came by special messenger last night, and I have sent my answer this morning."

Eliza Monk glanced at the contents, which were written on rose-coloured paper. For a moment she looked puzzled.

"Why, papa, this is from Tom Rivers! You cannot suppose I would marry *him*! A silly boy, younger than I am! Tom Rivers is the greatest goose I know."

"How dare you say so, Eliza?"

"Well, he is. Look at his note! Pink paper and a fancy edge!"

"Stuff! Rivers is young and inexperienced, but he'll grow older—he is a very nice young fellow, and a capital fox-hunter. You'd be master and mistress too—and that would suit your book, I take it. I want to have you settled near me, see, Eliza—you are all I have left, or soon will be."

"But, papa—"

Captain Monk raised his hand for silence.

"You sent that man Hamlyn to me with a proposal for you. Eliza; you *know* that would not do. Hamlyn's property lies in the West Indies, his home too, for all I know. He attempted to tell me that he would not take you out there against my consent; but I know better, and what such ante-nuptial promises are worth. It might end in your living there."

"No, no."

"What do you say 'no, no' for, like a parrot? Circumstances might compel you. I do not like the man, besides."

"But why, papa?"

"I don't know; I have never liked him from the first. There! that's enough. You must be my Lady Rivers. Poor old Tom is on his last legs."

"Papa, I never will."

“Listen, Eliza. I had one trouble with Katherine; I will not have another with you. She defied me; she left my home rebelliously to enter upon one of her own setting-up: what came of it? Did luck attend her? Do you be more wise.”

“Father,” she said, moving a step forward with head uplifted; and the resolute, haughty look which rendered their faces so much alike was very conspicuous on hers, “do not let us oppose each other. Perhaps we can each give way a little? I have promised to be the wife of Philip Hamlyn, and that promise I will fulfil. You wish me to live near you: well, he can take a place in this neighbourhood and settle down in it; and on my part, I will promise you not to leave this country. He may have to go from time to time to the West Indies; I will remain at home.”

Captain Monk looked steadily at her before he answered. He marked the stern, uncompromising expression, the strong will in the dark eyes and in every feature, which no power, not even his, might unbend. He thought of his elder daughter, now lying in her grave; he thought of his son, so soon to be lying beside her; he did not care to be bereft of *all* his children, and for once in his hard life he attempted to conciliate.

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"Hark to me, Eliza. Give up Hamlyn—I have said I don't like the man; give up Tom Rivers also, an' you will. Remain at home with me until a better suitor shall present himself, and Leet Hall and its broad lands shall be yours."

She looked up in surprise. Leet Hall had always hitherto gone in the male line; and, failing Hubert, it would be, or ought to be, Harry Carradyne's. Though she knew not that any steps had already been taken in that direction.

"Leet Hall?" she exclaimed.

"Leet Hall and its broad lands," repeated the Captain impatiently. "Give up Mr. Hamlyn and it shall all be yours."

She remained for some moments in deep thought, her head bent, revolving the offer. She was fond of pomp and power, as her father had ever been, and the temptation to rule as sole domineering mistress in her girlhood's home was great. But at that very instant the tall fine form of Philip Hamlyn passed across a pathway in the distance, and she turned from the temptation for ever. What little capability of loving had been left to her after the advent of Robert Grame was given to Mr. Hamlyn.

"I cannot give him up," she said in low tones.

"What moonshine, Eliza! You are not a love-sick girl now."

The colour dyed her face painfully. Did her father suspect aught of the past; of where her love *had* been given—and rejected? The suspicion only added fuel to the fire.

"I cannot give up Mr. Hamlyn," she reiterated.

"Then you will never inherit Leet Hall. No, nor aught else of mine."

"As you please, sir, about that."

"You set me at defiance, then!"

"I don't wish to do so, father; but I shall marry Mr. Hamlyn."

"At defiance," repeated the Captain, as she moved to escape from his presence; "Katherine secretly, you openly. Better that I had never had children. Look here, Eliza: let this matter remain in abeyance for six or twelve months, things resting as they are. By that time you may have come to your senses; or I (yes, I see you are ready to retort it) to mine. If not—well, we shall only then be where we are."

"And that we should be," returned Eliza, doggedly. "Time will never change either of us."

“But events may. Let it be so, child. Stay where you are for the present, in your maiden home.”

She shook her head in denial; not a line of her proud face giving way, nor a curve of her decisive lips: and Captain Monk knew that he had pleaded in vain. She would neither give up her marriage nor prolong the period of its celebration.

What could be the secret of her obstinacy? Chiefly the impossibility of tolerating opposition to her own indomitable will. It was her father’s will over again; his might be a very little softening with years and trouble; not much. Had she been in desperate love with Hamlyn one could have understood it, but she was not; at most it was but a passing fancy. What says the poet? I daresay you all know the lines, and I know I have quoted them times and again, they are so true:

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"Few hearts have never loved, but fewer still
Have felt a second passion. *None* a third.
The first was living fire; the next a thrill;
The weary heart can never more be stirred:
Rely on it the song has left the bird."

Very, very true. Her passion for Robert Grame had been as living fire in its wild intensity; it was but the shadow of a thrill that warmed her heart for Philip Hamlyn. Possibly she mistook it in a degree; thought more of it than it was. The feeling of gratification which arises from flattered vanity deceives a woman's heart sometimes: and Mr. Hamlyn did not conceal his rapturous admiration of her.

She held to her defiant course, and her father held to his. He did not continue to say she should not marry; he had no power for that—and perhaps he did not want her to make a moonlight escapade of it, as Katherine had made. So the preparation for the wedding went on, Eliza herself paying for the rattletaps, as they had been called; Captain Monk avowed that he "washed his hands of it," and then held his peace.

Whether Mr. Hamlyn and his intended bride considered it best to get the wedding over and done with, lest adverse fate, set afoot by the Captain, should, after all, circumvent them, it is impossible to say, but the day fixed was a speedy one. And if Captain Monk had deemed it "not decent" in Mr. Hamlyn to propose for a young lady after only a month's knowledge, what did he think of this? They were to be married on the last day of the year.

Was it fixed upon in defiant mockery?—for, as the reader knows, it had proved an ominous day more than once in the Monk family. But no, defiance had no hand in that, simply adverse fate. The day originally fixed by the happy couple was Christmas Eve: but Mr. Hamlyn, who had to go to London about that time on business connected with his property, found it impossible to get back for the day, or for some days after it. He wrote to Eliza, asking that the day should be put off for a week, if it made no essential difference, and fixed the last day in the year. Eliza wrote word back that she would prefer that day; it gave more time for preparation.

They were to be married in her own church, and by its Vicar. Great marvel existed at the Captain's permitting this, but he said nothing. Having washed his hands of the affair, he washed them for good: had the bride been one of the laundry-maids in his household he could not have taken less notice. A Miss Wilson was coming from a little distance to be bridesmaid; and the bride and bridegroom would go off from the church door. The question of a breakfast was never mooted: Captain Monk's equable indifference might not have stood that.



“I shall wish them good-luck with all my heart—but I don’t feel altogether sure they’ll have it!” bewailed poor Mrs. Carradyne in private. “Eliza should have agreed to the delay proposed by her father.”

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III.

Ring, ring, ring, broke forth the chimes on the frosty midday air. Not midnight, you perceive, but midday, for the church clock had just given forth its twelve strokes. Another round of the dial, and the old year would have departed into the womb of the past.

Bowling along the smooth turnpike road which skirted the churchyard on one side came a gig containing a gentleman; a tall, slender, frank-looking young man, with a fair face and the pleasantest blue eyes ever seen. He wore a white top-coat, the fashion then, and was driving rapidly in the direction of Leet Hall; but when the chimes burst forth he pulled up abruptly.

"Why, what in the world?—" he began—and then sat still listening to the sweet strains of "The Bay of Biscay." The day, though in mid-winter, was bright and beautiful, and the golden sunlight, shining from the dark-blue sky, played on the young man's golden hair.

"Have they mistaken midday for midnight?" he continued, as the chimes played out their tune and died away on the air. "What's the meaning of it?"

He, Harry Carradyne, was not the only one to ask this. No human being in and about Church Leet, save Captain Monk and they who executed his orders, knew that he had decreed that the chimes should play that day at midday. Why did he do it? What could his motive be? Surely not that they should, by playing (according to Mrs. Carradyne's theory), inaugurate ill-luck for Eliza! At the moment they began to play she was coming out of church on Mr. Hamlyn's arm, having left her maiden name behind her.

A few paces more, for he was driving gently on now, and Harry pulled up again, in surprise, as before, for the front of the church was now in view. Lots of spectators, gentle and simple, stood about, and a handsome chariot, with four post horses and a great coat-of-arms emblazoned on its panels, waited at the church gate.

"It must be a wedding!" decided Harry.

The next moment the chariot was in motion; was soon about to pass him, the bride and bridegroom inside it. A very dark but good-looking man, with an air of command in his face, he, but a stranger to Harry; she, Eliza. She wore a grey silk dress, a white bonnet, with orange blossoms and a veil, which was quite the fashionable wedding attire of the day. Her head was turned, nodding its farewells yet to the crowd, and she did not see her cousin as the chariot swept by.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, mentally. "I wonder who she has married?"

Staying quietly where he was until the spectators should have dispersed, whose way led them mostly in opposite directions, Harry next saw the clerk come out of the church by the small vestry door, lock it and cross over to the stile; which brought him out close to the gig.

“Why, my heart alive!” he exclaimed. “Is it Captain Carradyne?”

“That’s near enough,” said Harry, who knew the title was accorded him by the rustic natives of Church Leet, as he bent down with his sunny smile to shake the old clerk’s hand. “You are hearty as ever, I see, John. And so you have had a wedding here?”

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"Ay, sir, there have been one in the church. I was not in my place, though. The Captain, he ordered me to let the church go for once, and to be ready up aloft in the belfry to set the chimes going at midday. As chance had it, the party came out just at the same time; Miss Eliza was a bit late in coming, ye see; so it may be said the chimes rang 'em out. I guess the sound astonished the people above a bit, for nobody knew they were going to play."

"But how was it all, Cale? Why should the Captain order them to chime at midday?"

John Cale shook his head. "I can't tell ye that rightly, Mr. Harry; the Captain, as ye know, sir, never says why he does this or why he does t'other. Young William Threpp, who had to be up there with me, thought he must have ordered 'em to play in mockery—for he hates the marriage like poison."

"Who is the bridegroom?"

"It's a Mr. Hamlyn, sir. A gentleman who is pretty nigh as haughty as the Captain himself; but a pleasant-spoken, kindly man, as far as I've seen: and a rich one, too."

"Why did Captain Monk object to him?"

"It's thought 'twas because he was a stranger to the place and has lived over in the Indies; and he wanted Miss Eliza, so it's said, to have young Tom Rivers. That's about it, I b'lieve, Mr. Harry."

Harry Carradyne drove away thoughtfully. At the foot of the slight ascent leading to Leet Hall, one of the grooms happened to be standing. Harry handed over to him the horse and gig, and went forward on foot.

"Bertie!" he called out. For he had seen Hubert before him, walking at a snail's pace: the very slightest hill tried him now. The only one left of the wedding-party, for the bridesmaid drove off from the church door. Hubert turned at the call.

"Harry! Why, Harry!"

Hand locked in hand, they sat down on a bench beside the path; face gazing into face. There had always been a likeness between them: in the bright-coloured, waving hair, the blue eyes and the well-favoured features. But Harry's face was redolent of youth and health; in the other's might be read approaching death.

"You are very thin, Bertie; thinner even than I expected to see, you," broke from the traveller involuntarily.

"*You* are looking well, at any rate," was Hubert's answer. "And I am so glad you are come: I thought you might have been here a month ago."



“The voyage was unreasonably long; we had contrary winds almost from port to port. I got on to Worcester yesterday, slept there, and hired a horse and gig to bring me over this morning. What about Eliza’s wedding, Hubert? I was just in time to see her drive away. Cale, with whom I had a word down yonder, says the master does not like it.”

“He does not like it and would not countenance it: washed his hands of it (as he told us) altogether.”

“Any good reason for that?”

“Not particularly good, that I see. Somehow he disliked Hamlyn; and Tom Rivers wanted Eliza, which would have pleased him greatly. But Eliza was not without blame. My father gave way so far as to ask her to delay things for a few months, not to marry in a hurry, and she would not. She might have conceded as much as that.”

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"Did you ever know Eliza concede anything, Bertie?"

"Well, not often."

"Who gave her away?"

"I did: look at my gala toggery"—opening his overcoat. "He wanted to forbid it. 'Don't hinder me, father,' I pleaded; 'it is the last brotherly service I can ever render her.' And so," his tone changing to lightness, "I have been and gone and done it."

Harry Carradyne understood. "Not the last, Hubert; don't say that. I hope you will live to render her many another yet."

Hubert smiled faintly. "Look at me," he said in answer.

"Yes, I know; I see how you look. But you may take a turn yet."

"Ah, miracles are no longer wrought for us. Shall I surprise you very much, cousin mine, if I say that were the offer made me of prolonged life, I am not sure that I should accept it?"

"Not unless health were renewed with it; I can understand that. You have had to endure suffering, Bertie."

"Ay. Pain, discomfort, fears, weariness. After working out their torment upon me, they—why then they took a turn and opened out the vista of a refuge."

"A refuge?"

"The one sure Refuge offered by God to the sick and sorrowful, the weary and heavy-laden—Himself. I found it. I found *Him*, and all His wonderful mercy. It will not be long now, Harry, before I see Him face to face. And here comes His true minister but for whom I might have missed the way."

Harry turned his head, and saw, advancing up the drive, a good-looking young clergyman. "Who is it?" he involuntarily cried.

"Your brother-in-law, Robert Grame. Lucy's husband."

It was not the fashion in those days for a bride's mother (or one acting as her mother) to attend the bride to church; therefore Mrs. Carradyne, following it, was spared risk of conflict with Captain Monk on that score. She was in Eliza's room, assisting at the putting on of the bridal robes (for we have to go back an hour or so) when a servant came up to say that Mr. Hamlyn waited below. Rather wondering—for he was to have driven straight to the church—Mrs. Carradyne went downstairs.



“Pardon me, dear Mrs. Carradyne,” he said, as he shook hands, and she had never seen him look so handsome, “I could not pass the house without making one more effort to disarm Captain Monk’s prejudices, and asking for his blessing on us. Do you think he will consent to see me?”

Mrs. Carradyne felt sure he would not, and said so. But she sent Rimmer to the library to ask the question. Mr. Hamlyn pencilled down a few anxious words on paper, folded it, and put it into the man’s hand.

No; it proved useless. Captain Monk was harder than adamant; he sent Rimmer back with a flea in his ear, and the petition torn in two.

“I feared so,” sighed Mrs. Carradyne. “He will not this morning see even Eliza.”

Mr. Hamlyn did not sigh in return; he spoke a cross, impatient word: he had never been able to see reason in the Captain’s dislike to him, and, with a brief good-morning, went out to his carriage. But, remembering something when crossing the hall, he came back.

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"Forgive me, Mrs. Carradyne; I quite forgot that I have a note for you. It is from Mrs. Peveril, I believe; it came to me this morning, enclosed in a letter of her husband's."

"You have heard at last, then!"

"At last—as you observe. Though Peveril had nothing particular to write about; I daresay he does not care for letter writing."

Slipping the note into her pocket, to be opened at leisure, Mrs. Carradyne returned to the adorning of Eliza. Somehow, it was rather a prolonged business—which made it late when the bride with her bridesmaid and Hubert drove from the door.

Mrs. Carradyne remained in the room—to which Eliza was not to return—putting this up, and that. The time slipped on, and it was close upon twelve o'clock when she got back to the drawing-room. Captain Monk was in it then, standing at the window; which he had thrown wide open. To see more clearly the bridal party come out of the church, was the thought that crossed Mrs. Carradyne's mind in her simplicity.

"I very much feared they would be late," she observed, sitting down near her brother: and at that moment the church clock began to strike twelve.

"A good thing if they were *too* late!" he answered. "Listen."

She supposed he wanted to count the strokes—what else could he be listening to? And now, by the stir at the distant gates, she saw that the bridal party had come out.

"Good heavens, what's that?" shrieked Mrs. Carradyne, starting from her chair.

"The chimes," stoically replied the Captain. And he proceeded to hum through the tune of "The Bay of Biscay," and beat a noiseless accompaniment with his foot.

"*The Chimes*, Emma," he repeated, when the melody had finished itself out. "I ordered them to be played. It's the last day of the old year, you know."

Laughing slightly at her consternation, Captain Monk closed the window and quitted the room. As Mrs. Carradyne took her handkerchief from her pocket to pass it over her face, grown white with startled terror, the note she had put there came out also, and fell on the carpet.

Picking it up, she stood at the window, gazing forth. Her sight was not what it used to be; but she discerned the bride and bridegroom enter their carriage and drive away; next she saw the bridesmaid get into the carriage from the Hall, assisted by Hubert, and that drive off in its turn. She saw the crowd disperse, this way and that; she even saw the gig there, its occupant talking with John Cale. But she did not look at him particularly; and she had not the slightest idea but that Harry was in India.

And all that time an undercurrent of depression was running riot in her heart. None knew with what a strange terror she had grown to dread the chimes.

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She sat down now and opened Mrs. Peveril's note. It treated chiefly of the utterly astounding ways that untravelled old lady was meeting with in foreign parts. "If you will believe me," wrote she, "the girl that waits on us wears carpet slippers down at heel, and a short cotton jacket for best, and she puts the tea-tray before me with the handle of the teapot turned to me and the spout standing outwards, and she comes right into the bed-room of a morning with Charles's shaving-water without knocking." But the one sentence that arrested Mrs. Carradyne's attention above any other was the following: "I reckon that by this time you have grown well acquainted with our esteemed young friend. He is a good, kindly gentleman, and I'm sure never could have done anything to deserve his wife's treatment of him."

"Can she mean Mr. Hamlyn?" debated Mrs. Carradyne, all sorts of ideas leaping into her mind with a rush. "If not—what other 'esteemed friend' can she allude to?—*she*, old herself, would call *him* young. But Mr. Hamlyn has not any wife. At least, had not until to-day."

She read the note over again. She sat with it open, buried in a reverie, thinking no end of things, good and bad: and the conclusion she at last came to was, that, with the unwonted exercise of letter-writing, poor old Mrs. Peveril's head had grown confused.

"Well, Hubert, did it all go off well?" she questioned, as her nephew entered the room, some sort of excitement on his wasted face. "I saw them drive away."

"Yes, it went off well; there was no hitch anywhere," replied Hubert. "But, Aunt Emma, I have brought a friend home with me. Guess who it is."

"Some lady or other who came to see the wedding," she returned. "I can't guess."

"You never would, though I were to give you ten guesses; no, though *je vous donne en mille*, as the French have it. What should you say to a young man come all the way over seas from India? There, that's as good as telling you, Aunt Emma. Guess now."

"Oh, Hubert!" clasping her trembling hands. "It cannot be Harry! What is wrong?"

Harry brought his bright face into the room and was clasped in his mother's arms. She could not understand it one bit, and fears assailed her. Come home in *this* unexpected manner! Had he left the army? What had he done? *What* had he done? Hubert laughed and told her then.

"He has done nothing wrong; everything that's good. He has sold out at my father's request and left with honours—and is come home, the heir of Leet Hall. I said all along it was a shame to keep you out of the plot, Aunt Emma."

Well, it was glorious news for her. But, as if to tarnish its delight, like an envious sprite of evil, deep down in her mind lay that other news, just read—the ambiguous remark of old Mrs. Peveril's.

IV.

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The walk on the old pier was pleasant enough in the morning sun. Though yet but the first month in the year, the days were bright, the blue skies without a cloud. Mr. and Mrs. Hamlyn had enjoyed the fine weather at Cheltenham for a week or two; from that pretty place they had now come to Brighton, reaching it the previous night.

“Oh, it is delightful!” exclaimed Eliza, gazing at the waves. She had not seen the sea since she crossed it, a little girl, from the West Indies. Those were not yet the days when all people, gentle and simple, told one another that an autumn tour was essential to existence. “Look at the sunbeams sparkling on the ripples and on the white sails of the little boats! Philip, I should like to spend a month here.”

“All right,” replied Mr. Hamlyn.

They were staying at the Old Ship, a fashionable hotel then for ladies as well as gentlemen, and had come out after breakfast; and they had the pier nearly to themselves at that early hour. A yellow, gouty gentleman, who looked as if he had quarrelled with his liver in some clime all fire and cayenne, stood at the end leaning on his stick, alternately looking at the sea and listlessly watching any advancing stragglers.

There came a sailor, swaying along, a rope in his hand; following him, walked demurely three little girls in frocks and trousers, with their French governess; then came two eye-glassed young men, dandyfied and supercilious, who appeared to have more money than brains—and the jaundiced man went into a gaping fit of lassitude.

Anyone else coming? Yes; a lady and gentleman arm-in-arm: quiet, well-dressed, good-looking. As the invalid watched their approach, a puzzled look of doubt and surprise rose to his countenance. Moving forward a step or two on his gouty legs, he spoke.

“Can it be possible, Hamlyn, that we meet here?”

Even through his dark skin a red flush coursed into Mr. Hamlyn’s face. He was evidently very much surprised in his turn, if not startled.

“Captain Pratt!” he exclaimed.

“Major Pratt now,” was the answer, as they shook hands. “That wretched climate played the deuce with me, and they graciously gave me a step and allowed me to retire upon it. The very deuce, I assure you, Philip. Beg pardon, ma’am,” he added seeing the lady look at him.

“My wife, Mrs. Hamlyn,” spoke her husband.

Major Pratt contrived to lift his hat, and bow: which feat, what with his gouty hands and his helpless legs and his great invalid stick, was a work of time. “I saw your marriage in

The Times, Hamlyn, and wondered whether it could be you, or not: I didn't know, you see, that you were over here. Wish you luck; and you also, ma'am. Hope it will turn out more fortunate for you, Philip, than—"

"Where are you staying?" broke in Mr. Hamlyn, as if something were frightening him.

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"At some lodgings over yonder, where they fleece me," replied the Major. "You should see the bill they've brought me in for last week. They've made me eat four pounds of butter and five joints of meat, besides poultry and pickles and a fruit pie! Why, I live mostly upon dry toast; hardly dare touch an ounce of meat in a day. When I had 'em up before me, the harpies, they laid it upon my servant's appetite—old Saul, you know. *He* answered them."

Mrs. Hamlyn laughed. "There are two articles that are very convenient, as I have heard, to some of the lodging-house keepers: their lodgers' servant, and their own cat."

"By Jove, ma'am, yes!" said the Major. "But I've given warning to this lot where I am."

Saying au revoir to Major Pratt, Mr. Hamlyn walked down the pier again with his wife. "Who is he, Philip?" she asked. "You seem to know him well."

"Very well. He is a sort of connection of mine, I believe," laughed Mr. Hamlyn, "and I saw a good deal of him in India a few years back. He is greatly changed. I hardly think I should have known him had he not spoken. It's his liver, I suppose."

Leaving his wife at the hotel, Mr. Hamlyn went back again to Major Pratt, much to the lonely Major's satisfaction, who was still leaning on his substantial stick as he gazed at the water.

"The sight of you has brought back to my mind all that unhappy business, Hamlyn," was his salutation. "I shall have a fit of the jaundice now, I suppose! Here—let's sit down a bit."

"And the sight of you has brought it to mine," said Mr. Hamlyn, as he complied. "I have been striving to drive it out of my remembrance."

"I know little about it," observed the Major. "She never wrote to me at all afterwards, and you wrote me but two letters: the one announcing the fact of her disgrace; the other, the calamity and the deaths."

"That is quite enough to know; don't ask me to go over the details to you personally," said Mr. Hamlyn in a tone of passionate discomfort. "So utterly repugnant to me is the remembrance altogether, that I have never spoken of it—even to my present wife."

"Do you mean you've not told her you were once a married man?" cried Major Pratt.

"No, I have not."

"Then you've shown a lack of judgment which I wouldn't have given you credit for, my friend," declared the Major. "A man may whisper to his girl any untoward news he pleases of his past life, and she'll forgive and forget; aye, and worship him all the more

for it, though it were the having set fire to a church: but if he keeps it as a bonne bouchee to drop out after marriage, when she has him fast and tight, she'll curry-comb his hair for him in style. Believe that."

Mr. Hamlyn laughed.

"There never was a hidden skeleton between man and wife yet but it came to light sooner or later," went on the Major. "If you are wise, you will tell her at once, before somebody else does."

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“What ‘somebody?’ Who is there here that knows it?”

“Why, as to ‘here,’ I know it, and nearly spoke of it before her, as you must have heard; and my servant knows it. That’s nothing, you’ll say; we can be quiet, now I have the cue: but you are always liable to meet with people who knew you in those days, and who knew *her*. Take my advice, Philip Hamlyn, and tell your wife. Go and do it now.”

“I daresay you are right,” said the younger man, awaking out of a reverie. “Of the two evils it may be the lesser.” And with lagging steps, and eyes that seemed to have weights to them, he set out to walk back to the Old Ship Hotel.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE BRETONS AT HOME.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF “THROUGH HOLLAND,” “LETTERS FROM MAJORCA,” ETC. ETC.

The English courage and constitution, for which Madame Hellard of the Hotel d’Europe professed so much admiration, carried us through the ordeal of a sound drenching. Perhaps our escape was partly due to firmness of will, which goes for much; perhaps in part to the dose of strong waters added to the black coffee our loquacious but interesting hostess at the little auberge by the river-side had brewed for us.

[Illustration: ST. POL DE LEON.]

“Had we been to Roscoff?” she had asked us on that memorable afternoon, when the clouds opened all their waterspouts and threatened the world with a second deluge. And we had replied that we had not seen Roscoff, but hoped to do so the following day, wind and weather permitting. Not that we had to reach Roscoff by water; but the elements can make themselves quite as disagreeable on land as at sea: and like the Marines might take for their motto, PER MARE, PER TERRAM.

The next day wind and weather were not permitting. Madame Hellard clasped her hands with a favourite and pathetic gesture that would melt the hardest heart and dispose it to grant the most outrageous request. She bemoaned our fate and the uncertainty of the Breton climate.

“Enfin!” she concluded, “the climate of la Petite Bretagne is very much the same as that of la Grande Bretagne, from all I have heard. You must be accustomed to these variations. When the Saxons came over and settled here centuries and centuries ago, and peopled our little country, they brought their weather with them. It has never changed. Like the Breton temperament, it is founded upon a rock—though I often wish it were a little more pliable and responsive. Changes are good sometimes. I am not of

those who think what is must always be best. If I were in your Parliament—but you don't have ladies in your Parliament, though they seem to have a footing everywhere else—I should be a Liberal; without going too far, bien-intendu; I am all for progress, but with moderation.”

To-day there seemed no prospect of even moderately fine weather, and we could only improve our time by cultivating the beauties of Morlaix under weeping skies.

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Its quaint old streets certainly have an unmistakable, an undying charm, which seems to be in touch with all seasons. Blue skies will light them up and cause them to stand out with almost a joyous air; the declining sun will illumine their latticed panes with a fire and flame mysterious with the weight of generations; strong lights and shadows will be thrown by gables and deep recesses, and sculptured porches; by the “aprons” that protect the carved beams, and the eaves that stand out so strongly in outline against the background of the far-off sky. And if those skies are sad and sorrowful, immediately the quaint houses put on all the dignity of age: from every gable end, from every lattice, every niche and grotesque, the rain trickles and falls, and they, too, you would say, are weeping for their lost youth.

But they are too old to do that. It is not the very aged who weep for their early days; they have forgotten what is now too far off to be realised. They weep who stand upon the boundary line separating youth from age; who at once look behind and beyond: look back with longing upon the glow and romance which have not yet died out of the heart, and forward into the future where romance can have no place, and nothing is visible excepting what has been called the calmness and repose of old age.

“There’s not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,
When the glow of early thought declines in feeling’s dull decay;
’Tis not on youth’s smooth cheek the blush alone which fades so fast,
But the bloom of early youth is gone ere youth itself be past.”

The reader will probably quote the remainder for himself; Byron never wrote truer or sadder lines. And we all know of a great man in history who, at eighty years old, turned to his friend and, pointing to a young chimney-sweeper, exclaimed: “I would give my wealth, fame, coronet—all, to be once more that boy’s age, even if I must take his place!” One of the saddest sentences, perhaps, that one of eighty could utter.

To-day every house was weeping. Even the women who kept the stalls in the covered market-place dispensed their butter and poultry, their fruit and flowers, with a melancholy air, and looked as if they had not the courage to keep up the prices. Ladies and housekeepers wandered from stall to stall followed by their maids, a few of whom wore picturesque caps, conspicuous in their rarity: for even Breton stubbornness has yielded very much, where, for once, it should have been firm as a rock, and it is only in the remoter districts that costume is still general. We were invited to many purchases as we looked around, and had we yielded to all might have stocked Madame Hellard’s larder to overflowing: a very unnecessary attention, for the table is kept on the most liberal principles.

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It was really alarming to see the quantity that some of the Bretons managed to appropriate in an incredibly short space of time at the table d'hôte. H.C., who was accustomed to the aesthetic table of his aunt, Lady Maria, more than once had to retire to his room, and recover his composure, and wonder whether his own appetite would ever return to him. And once or twice when I unfeelingly drew attention to an opposite neighbour and wondered what Lady Maria would say to it, he could only reply by a dismal groan which caused the opposite neighbour for a moment to arrest his mission of destruction and stare.

On the second occasion that it happened he called up the head waitress—they were all women who served in the room—and asked her if the “Monsieur Anglais vis-a-vis” was not ill.

“He looks pale and thin,” he added, feelingly, and might well think so, placed in juxtaposition with himself, for he was large and round, with cheeks, as Tony Lumpkin would have said, broad and red as a pulpit cushion. It was simply cause and effect.

In his case, too, the cause was not confined to eating. Two bottles of the white wine, supplied gratis in unlimited quantities at the table d'hôte disappeared during the repast; and we began to think of Mr. Weller senior, the tea-party, and the effect of the unlimited cups upon Mr. Stiggins. “I come from Quimper,” we heard the Breton say on one occasion to his next-door neighbour, “and I think it the best town in France, not excepting Paris. Where do you come from?”

“From Rouen,” replied the neighbour, a far more refined specimen of humanity, who spoke in quiet tones. “I am not a Breton.”

“So much the worse for you,” returned our modern Daniel Lambert unceremoniously. “The French would beat the world, and the Bretons would beat the French. Then I suppose you don’t deal in horses?”

“No,” with an amused smile. “I am only a humble architect.” But we discovered afterwards that he was celebrated all over France. Travelling, no less than adversity, makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows.

The head waitress was a very interesting character, much older than the other waitresses, whom she took under her wing with a species of hen-like protection, keeping them well up to their duties, and rating them soundly where they failed. She was a Bretonne, but of the better type, with sharp, clearly-cut features, and eyes full of vivacity, that seemed in all places at once. She wore list shoes, and would flit like a phantom from one end of the room to the other, her cap-strings flying behind her, directing, surveying all. Very independent, too, was she, and evidently held certain of her guests in sovereign contempt.



"This terrible fair!" she would say, "which lasts three days, and gives us no rest and no peace; and one or two of those terrible dealers, who have a greater appetite than their own cattle, and would eat from six o'clock until midnight, if one only let them! Monsieur Hellard loses pretty well by some of them; I am sure of it!"

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The lift which brought things up from the kitchen was at the end of the room, and every now and then she would go to it, and in a shrill voice, which seemed to penetrate to very far-off regions—Halls of Eblis or caverns measureless to man—cry out “LA SUITE!” the a very much *circumflexed* with true Breton pronunciation.

It was amusing, occasionally, when a certain dish was sent up that in some way or other did not please her, to hear it sent down again in the return lift accompanied by a reprimand that was very much to the point, and was audible to the assembled room. The whole table on those occasions would break into laughter, for her reprimand was always spiced with inimitable humour, which penetrated even the impervious Breton intellect.

Then she would fly down the room with the dish returned to her satisfaction, a suppressed smile lurking about the corners of her mouth, and, addressing the table at large with a freedom that only the French can assume without familiarity, exclaim: “It is not because some of you give the chef too much to do, with your enormous capacities, that I am going to allow him to neglect his work.” And the table would laugh again and applaud Catherine, the head waitress. For she was very capable and therefore very popular, as ministering well to their wants. And the Breton temperament is seldom sensitive.

She had her favourites, to whom she was devoted, making no secret of her preference. We were amongst the fortunate, and soon fell into her good graces. Woe betide anyone who attempted to appropriate our seats before we entered; or a waitress who brought us the last remnants of a dish—for nothing seemed to escape her observation. She was most concerned about H.C.’s want of appetite and ethereal appearance—certainly a startling contrast to some of her experiences.

[Illustration: CREISKER, ST. POL DE LEON.]

“Monsieur hasn’t the appetite of a lark,” she complained to me one morning. “Tell him that the Breton climate is as difficult to fight as the Breton soldier; and if he does not eat, he will be washed away by the rains. WHAT EYES!” she exclaimed; “quite the eyes of a poet. I am sure monsieur is a poet. Have I not reason?”

Thus proving herself even more that an excellent waitress—a woman of penetration.

We have said that the day after our aquatic adventure at the little inn by the river-side, “Au retour de la Pêche,” the rain came down with vengeance. There was no doubt about its energy; and this, at least, was consoling. Nothing is more annoying than your uncertain morning, when you don’t know whether to start or stay at home. On these occasions, whichever you do turns out a mistake.



But the following day our patience was rewarded by bright sunshine and blue skies. "The very day for Roscoff," said Madame Hellard; "though I cannot think why you are determined to pay it a visit. There is absolutely nothing to see. It is a sad town, and its streets are given over to melancholy. Of course, you will take St. Pol de Leon on your way. It is equally quiet, and even less picturesque."

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This was not very encouraging, but we have learned to beware of other people's opinions: they often praise what is worthless, and pass over delights and treasures in absolute silence.

So, remembering this, we entered the hotel omnibus with our sketching materials and small cameras, and struggled up the hill to the railway station and the level of the huge viaduct.

On our way we passed the abode of our refined and interesting antiquarian. He was standing at his door, the same patient look upon his beautiful face, the same resigned attitude. He caught sight of us and woke up out of a reverie. His spirit always seemed taking some far-off flight.

"Ces messieurs are not leaving?" he cried, for we passed slowly and close to him. There was evidence of slight anxiety or disappointment in his tone; the crucifix yet hung on his walls, and H.C.'s mind still hovered in the balance.

"No," we replied. "We are going to Roscoff, and shall be back to-night."

"Roscoff? It is lovely," he said. "I know you will like it. But it is very quiet, and only appeals to the artistic temperament. You will see few shops there; no antiquarians; and the people are stupid. Still, the place is remarkable."

The omnibus passed on and we were soon steaming away from Morlaix.

It was a desperately slow train. The surrounding country was not very interesting, but the journey, fortunately, was short. As we passed the celebrated St. Pol de Leon on the way, we decided to take it first. Roscoff was the terminus, and appeared like the ends of the earth at the very extreme point of land, jutting into the sea and looking out upon the English Channel. If vision could have reached so far, we might have seen the opposite English coast, and peered right into Plymouth Sound; where, the last time that we climbed its heights straight from the hospitality of a delightful cruise in a man-of-war, the band of the Marine Artillery was ravishing all ears and discoursing sweet music in a manner that few bands could rival.

We approached St. Pol de Leon, which may be described as an ecclesiastical, almost a dead city. But how glorious and interesting some of these dead cities are, with their silent streets and their remnants of the past! The shadow of death seems upon them, and they impress you with a mute eloquence more thrilling and effective than the greatest oration ever listened to.

As we approached St. Pol, which lay half a mile or so from the railway, its churches and towers were so disposed that the place looked like one huge ecclesiastical building. These stood out with wonderful effect and clearness against the background of the sky.

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We left the station, and thought we might as well use the omnibus in waiting. It was small and held about four passengers. As soon as we had taken our seats two fat priests came up and entered. We felt rather crowded, and, like the moping owl, resented the intrusion; but when three stout ladies immediately followed, and looked appealingly at the state of affairs, it was too much. We gave up our seats and walked; and presently the omnibus passed us, one of the ladies having wedged herself in by a miracle between the priests. It would take a yet greater miracle to unpack them again. The driver looked round with a smile—he had admitted us into the omnibus and released us—and, pointing to the roof with his whip, humorously exclaimed: “Comple!”

The towers and steeples of St. Pol de Leon raised themselves mightily in front of us as we walked, beautiful and imposing. The town dates back to the sixth century, and though once important, is now almost deserted. Pol, or Paul, a monk, who, according to one tradition was Welsh, according to another Cornish, went over to a neighbouring island about the year 530 and there established a monastery. He became so famous for his piety that a Breton king founded a bishopric at Leon, and presented him with the mitre. The name of the town was then changed to St. Pol de Leon. His successors were men distinguished for their goodness, and St. Pol became one of the most famous ecclesiastical towns in Brittany. Churches were built, monasteries and convents were founded.

In course of time its reputation for wealth excited the envy of the Counts of Leon, and in 875 the Normans came down upon it, pillaged the town and devastated the cathedral. It was one of those Counts of Leon who so vigorously claimed his rights “de bris et d’epaves”—the laws of flotsam and jetsam—esteeming priceless as diamonds certain rocks upon which vessels were frequently wrecked. This law, rigorously enforced through long ages, has now almost died out.

In the fourteenth century du Guesclin took possession of the town in the name of Charles V., but the French garrison was put to the sword by the barbarous Duke John IV. of Brittany in the year 1374. In 1590 the inhabitants of the town joined a plot formed for their emancipation, and the neighbouring villages rose up in insurrection against an army of three hundred thousand men raised by the Convention. The rebels were conquered after two disastrous battles—one within, the other without the town—when an immense number of the peasants were slain.

Seeing it to-day, no one would imagine that it had once passed such stirring times: had once been a place of importance, wealth, and envy. Its streets are deserted, its houses grey and sad-looking. The place seems lifeless. The shadows cast by the sun fall athwart the silent, grass-grown streets, and have it all their own way. During our short visit I do not think we met six people. Yet the

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town has seven thousand inhabitants. Some we saw within their houses; and here and there the sound of the loom broke the deadly silence, and in small cottages pale-faced men bent laboriously over their shuttles. The looms were large and seemed to take up two-thirds of the room, which was evidently the living-room also. Many were furnished with large open cabinets or wardrobes carved in Breton work, rough but genuine.

Passing up the long narrow street leading to the open and deserted market-place, the Chapelle de Creisker rises before you with its wonderful clock-tower that is still the pride of the town. The original chapel, according to tradition, was founded by a young girl whom St. Kirec, Archdeacon of Leon in the sixth century, had miraculously cured of paralysis; but the greater part of the present chapel, including the tower and spire, was built towards the end of the fourteenth century, by John IV., Duke of Brittany. The porches are fifteenth century; the north porch, in the Flamboyant style, being richly decorated with figures and foliage deeply and elaborately carved. On the south side are six magnificent windows, unfortunately not filled in with magnificent glass. The interior possesses nothing remarkable, excepting its fine rose window and the opposite east window, distinguished for their size and tracery.

The tower is its glory. It is richly ornamented, and surmounted by a cornice so projecting that, until the eye becomes accustomed to it, the slender tower beneath seems overweighted: an impression not quite lost at a first visit. The light and graceful tower, two hundred and sixty-three feet high, rises between the nave and the choir, upon four arches sustained by four quadrangular pillars four yards wide, composed of innumerable small columns almost resembling bundles of rods, in which the arms of Jean Pregent, Chancellor of Brittany and Bishop of Leon in 1436, may be seen on the keystone of each arch. The upper tower, like those of the cathedral, is pierced by narrow bays, supported on either side by false bays. From the upper platform, with its four-leaved balustrade, rises the beautiful open-work spire, somewhat resembling that of St. Peter's at Caen, and flanked by four turrets. This tower is said to have been built by an English architect, but there is no authority for the tradition.

Proceeding onwards to the market-place, there rises the cathedral, far better placed than many of the cathedrals abroad. It is one of the remarkable buildings of Brittany, possessing certain distinguishing features peculiar to the Breton churches.

The cathedral dates from three periods. A portion of the north transept is Romanesque; the nave, west front, and towers date from the thirteenth century and the commencement of the fourteenth; the interior, almost entirely Gothic, and very striking, lost much of its beauty when restored in 1866. It is two hundred and sixty feet long and fifty-two feet high to the vaulting, the latter being attributed to William of Rochefort, who was Bishop of Leon in 1349. The towers are very fine, with central storeys pierced by

lancet windows, like those of the Creisker. The south transept has a fine circular window, with tracery cut in granite.

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[Illustration: INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL, ST. POL DE LEON.]

The stalls, the chief beauty of the choir, are magnificently carved, and date from 1512. The choir, completely surrounded by a stone screen, is larger and more ornamented than the nave, and is surrounded by double aisles, ending in a Lady Chapel possessing some good carved woodwork of the sixteenth century.

The towers are almost equal in dimension but somewhat different in design. One of them—the south tower—possesses a small lancet doorway on the west side, called the Lepers' Doorway, where probably lepers entered to attend mass in days gone by, remaining unseen and isolated from the rest of the congregation. The south wall possesses a magnificent rose window, above which is another window, called the *Window of Excommunication*. The rose window is unfortunately filled with modern glass, but one or two of the side windows are good. The basin for holy-water, dating from the twelfth century, is said to have been the tomb of Conan Meriadec, first of the Breton kings.

A small bell, said to have belonged to St. Pol, is kept in the church, and on the day of the *Pardon* of Leon (the chief fete of the year) is carried up and down the nave and rung vigorously over the heads of the faithful to preserve them from headache and ear-ache.

The best view of the interior is obtained by standing in the choir, as near as possible to the tomb of St. Pol—distinguished by a black marble slab immediately in front of the altar—and looking westward. The long-drawn aisle is very fine; the stalls and decoration of the choir stand out well, whilst the Early-Pointed arches on either side are marked by beauty and refinement. The west end of the nave seems quite far off and becomes almost dream-like.

Yet in some way the Cathedral of St. Pol de Leon left upon us a certain feeling of disappointment. The interior did not seem equal to the exterior; and as the church has been much praised at different times by those capable of distinguishing the good in architecture, we attributed this impression to the effect of its comparatively recent restoration.

Behind the cathedral is an old prebendal house, belonging to the sixteenth century and possessing many interesting details. Beyond it again was the small chapel of St. Joseph, attached to the convent of the Ursuline nuns, founded in 1630. For St. Pol de Leon is still essentially a religious and ecclesiastical town, living on its past glory and reputation. Once immensely rich, it now impresses one with a feeling of sadness and poverty.

One wonderful little glimpse we had of an earthly paradise.

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Not far from the cathedral we had strayed into a garden, for the great gates were open and the vision dazzled us. We had rarely seen such a wealth of flowers. Large rose-trees, covered with blooms, outvied each other in scenting the air with delicious perfume. Some of these trees or bushes were many yards round. Immense rhododendrons also flourished. Exquisite and graceful trees rose above them; the laburnum, no longer in bloom, acacias, and the lovely pepper tree. Standing out from a wealth of blossom and verdure was an old well, surmounted by some ancient and picturesque ironwork. Beyond it was a yet more ancient and picturesque house of grey stone, an equally venerable flight of steps leading up to the front entrance. The house was large, and whatever it might be now, must once have fulfilled some ecclesiastical purpose. It occupied the whole length of the large garden, the remainder being closed in by high walls. Opposite, to the right, uprose the Bishop's palace, and beyond it the lovely towers and spires of the cathedral.

It was one of those rare scenes very seldom met with, which plunge one at once out of the world into an Arcadia beautiful as dreamland. We stood and gazed, silent with rapture and admiration; threw conventionality to the winds, forgot that we had no right here, and wandered about, inhaling the scent of the flowers, luxuriating in their rich colours, feasting our eyes and senses on all the old-world beauty of architecture by which we were surrounded; carrying our sight upwards to the blue skies and wondering if we had not been transported to some paradise beyond the veiling. It was a Garden of Eden.

[Illustration: CHAPEL OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS, ROSCOFF.]

Then suddenly at the open doorway of the house appeared a lady with a wealth of white hair and a countenance full of the beauty of sweetness and age. She was dignified, as became the owner of this fair domain, and her rich robe rustled as she quietly descended the steps.

We now remembered ourselves and our intrusion, yet it was impossible to retreat. We advanced bareheaded to make our humble apologies and sue for grace.

The owner of this earthly paradise made us an elaborate curtsey that surely she had learned at the Tuileries or Versailles in the bygone days of an illustrious monarchy.

"Monsieur," she said, in a voice that was still full of melody, "do not apologise; I see that you are strangers and foreigners, and you are welcome. This garden might indeed entice anyone to enter. I have grown old here, and my eyes are never tired of beholding the beauties of Nature. In St. Pol we are favoured, you know, in possessing one of the most fertile soils in France."

And then she bade us enter, with a politeness that yet sounded like a command; and we obeyed and passed up the ancient steps into a richly-panelled hall. Over the doorways



hung boars' heads, shot by her sons, Countess C—— for she told us her name——
informed us, in the forests of Brittany.

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"They are great sportsmen," she added with a smile, "and you know we Bretons do nothing by halves. Our sportsmen are fierce and strong in the chase, and know nothing of the effeminate pastimes of those who live in more southern latitudes."

Then, to do us honour, and because she thought it would interest us, she showed us through some of the reception rooms, magnificent with tapestry and carved oak and dark panelling, and family portraits of bygone generations, when people were taken as shepherds and shepherdesses, and the world was a real Arcadia; and everywhere were trophies of the chase. And, conducting us up an ancient oak staircase to a large recess looking to the back, there our dazzled vision saw another garden stretched out before us, longer, broader, than the paradise in front, full of roses and lilies, and a countless number of fruit trees.

"That is my orchard," she said; "but I must have flowers everywhere, and so, all down the borders my lilies and roses scent the air; and there I walk and try to make my old age beautiful and contented, as every old age ought to be. My young days were passed at Court; my later years in this quiet seclusion, out of the world. Alas! there is no more Court for old or young."

Then again we descended into a salon so polished that you could trace your features on the parquet flooring; a room that would have dignified a monarch; a room where everything was old-fashioned and beautiful, subdued and refined; and our hostess, pointing to lovely old chairs covered with tapestry that had been worked a century-and-a-half ago, touched a bell and insisted upon our refreshing ourselves with some wine of the country and a cake peculiar to St. Pol de Leon. It is probable that H.C.'s poetical eyes and ethereal countenance, whilst captivating her heart, had suggested a dangerous delicacy of constitution. These countenances, however, are deceptive; it is often your robust and florid people who fail to reach more than the stage of early manhood.

In response to the bell there entered a Breton maid with cake and wine on a silver tray. She was youthful and comely, and wore a picturesque Breton cap with mysterious folds, the like of which we had seen neither in Morlaix nor in St. Pol de Leon. As far as the latter town was concerned it was not surprising, since we had met so few of the inhabitants.

[Illustration: HOUSE IN WHICH THE YOUNG PRETENDER TOOK REFUGE AFTER THE BATTLE OF CULLODEN, ROSCOFF.]

The maid curtsied on entering, placed the tray upon the table, curtsied again to her mistress, and withdrew. All was done in absolute silence: the silence of a well-bred domestic and a perfectly organised household. She moved as if her feet had been encased in down.

With her own fair and kindly hands, the Comtesse poured out the red and sparkling liquid, and, breaking the cake, once more bade us welcome.

We would rather have been excused; such hospitality to strangers was so rare, excepting in remote places where the customs of the primitive ages still existed. But hospitality so gracefully and graciously offered had to be met with graciousness and gratitude in return.

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"The cake I offer you," she remarked, "is peculiar to St. Pol de Leon. There is a tradition that it has come to us from the days of St. Pol himself, and that the saintly monk-bishop made his daily meal of it. But I feel very sure," she added with a smile, "that those early days of fasting and penance never rejoiced in anything as refined and civilized and as good as this."

And then for a little while we talked of Brittany and the Bretons; and if we could have stayed longer we should have heard many an anecdote and many an experience. But time and a due regard to politeness forbade a "longer lingering," charming as were the old lady's manners and conversation, delightful the atmosphere in which she lived. With mingled stateliness and grace she accompanied us to the wonderful garden and bade us farewell.

"This is your first visit to St. Pol," she said, as she gave us her hand in the English fashion; "I hope it will not be your last. Remember that if ever you come here again my doors will open to you, and a welcome will await you. Only, let your next visit be a longer one. You see that I speak with the freedom of age; and if you think me impulsive in thus tendering hospitality to one hitherto unknown, I must answer that I have lived in the world, and make no mistakes. I believe also in a certain mental mesmerism, which rarely fails. When I saw you enter, something told me that I might come to you. Fare you well!—Sans adieu!" she added as we expressed our gratitude and bent over her hand with an earnest "Au revoir!"

We went our way, both charmed into silence for a time. I felt that we were thinking the same thoughts—rejoicing in our happy fortune in these occasional meetings which flashed across the horizon of our lives and disappeared, not without leaving behind them an abiding effect; an earnest appreciation of human nature and the amount of heaven that must exist in the world. We thought instinctively of Mdlle. Martin, the little Receveuse des Postes de Retraite at Grace: and of Mdlle. de Pressense at Villeneuve, who had welcomed us even as the Comtesse had now done; and we felt that we were favoured.

Time was up, and we decided to make this our last impression of St. Pol de Leon. We passed down the quiet streets, under the shadow of the Creisker, out into the open country and the railway station. We were just in time for the train to Roscoff, and in a very few minutes had reached that little terminus.

Immediately we felt more out of the world than ever. There was something so primitive about the station and its surroundings and the people who hovered about, that this seemed a true *finis terre*. It was, however, sufficiently civilized to boast of two omnibuses; curiously constructed machines that, remembering our St. Pol experience, we did not enter. The town was only a little way off, and its church steeple served us as beacon.

We passed a few modern houses near the station, which looked like a settlement in the backwoods with the trees cut down, and then a short open road led to the quiet streets.

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Quiet indeed they were, with a look about them yet more old-world, deadly and deserted even than St. Pol de Leon. The houses are nearly all built of that grey *Kersanton* stone, which has a cold and cheerless tone full of melancholy; like some of the far away Scotch or Welsh villages, where nature seems to have died out, no verdure is to be seen, and the very hedges, that in softer climes bud and blossom and put forth the promise of spring to make glad the heart of man, are replaced by dry walls that have no beauty in them.

Yet at once we felt that there was a certain charm about Roscoff, and a very marked individuality. Never yet, in Brittany, had we felt so out of the world and removed from civilization. Its quaint houses are substantial though small, and many of them still possess the old cellars that open by large winged doors into the streets, where the poorer people live an underground life resembling that of the moles. The cellars go far back, and light never penetrates into their recesses.

Again, some of the houses had courtyards of quaint and interesting architecture. One of them especially is worth visiting. A long narrow passage leads you to a quaint yard with seven arches supported by columns, with an upper gallery supported by more columns. It might have formed part of a miniature cloister in days gone by.

On the way towards the church, we passed the chapel dedicated to St. Ninian, of which nothing remains now but the bare enclosure and the ancient and beautiful gateway. This, ruined as it is, is the most interesting relic in Roscoff. It was here that Mary Queen of Scots landed when only five years old, to be married to the Dauphin of France. The form of her foot was cut out in the rock on which she first stepped, but we failed to see it. Perhaps time and the effect of winds and waves have worn it away. Footsteps disappear even on a stronger foundation than the sands of time. The little chapel was built to commemorate her landing, and its ruins are surrounded by a halo of sadness and romance. Four days after her landing she was betrothed. But the happy careless childhood was quickly to pass away; the "fevered life of a throne" was most essentially to be hers; plot and counterplot were to embitter her days; until at last, at the bidding of "great Elizabeth," those wonderful eyes were to close for the last time upon the world, and that lovely head was to be laid upon the block.

The sad history overshadows the little chapel in Roscoff as a halo; for us overshadowed the whole town.

Adjoining the chapel still exists the house in which the child-queen lodged on landing, also with a very interesting courtyard.

Looking down towards the church from this point, the houses wore a grey, sad and deserted aspect. The church tower rises above them, quaint and curious, in the Renaissance style. The interior is only remarkable for some curious alabaster bas-reliefs, representing the Passion and the Resurrection; an old tomb serving as *benitier*,

some ancient fonts, and the clever sculpturing of a boat representing the arms of the town; a device also found on the left front of the tower.

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There is also a large ossuary in the corner of the small churchyard, now disused. These ossuaries, or *reliquaires*, in the graveyards of Brittany were built to carry out a curious and somewhat barbarous custom. It was considered by "those of old time" to be paying deference to the dead to dig up their coffins after a certain number of years, and to place the skulls and bones in the ossuary, arranging them on shelves and labelling them in a British Museum style so that all might gaze upon them as they went by. This custom is still kept up in some places; for, as we have said, the Bretons are a slow moving people in the way of progress, and cling to their habits and customs as tenaciously as the Medes and Persians did to their laws. They are not ambitious, and what sufficed for the sires a generation or two ago suffices for the sons to-day.

But to us, the chief beauty of the town was its little port, with its stone pier. The houses leading down to it are the quaintest in Roscoff, of sixteenth century date, with many angles and gables. In one of them lodged Charles Stuart, the Young Pretender, when he escaped after the battle of Culloden, the quaintest and most interesting of all.

Looking back from the end of the jetty, it lies prominently before you, together with the whole town, forming a group full of wonderful tone and picturesque beauty. In the foreground are the vessels in the harbour, with masts rising like a small forest, and flags gaily flying. The water which splashes against the stone pier is the greenest, purest, most translucent ever seen. It dazzled by its brilliancy and appeared to "hold the light." Before us stretched the great Atlantic, to-day calm and sleeping and reflecting the sun travelling homewards; but often lashed to furious moods, which break madly over the pier, and send their spray far over the houses. Few scenes in Brittany are more characteristic and impressive than this little unknown town.

A narrow channel lies between Roscoff and L'Ile de Batz, which would form a fine harbour of refuge if it were not for the strong currents for ever running there. At high water the island is half submerged. It is here that St. Pol first came from Cornwall, intending to live there the remainder of his life; but, as we have seen, he was made Bishop of Leon, and had to take up his abode in the larger town.

No tree of any height is to be seen here, but the tamarisk grows in great abundance. All the men are sailors and pass their lives upon the water, coming home merely to rest. The women cultivate the ground. The church possesses, and preserves as its greatest treasure, a stole worn by St. Pol. Tradition has it that when St. Pol landed, the island was a prey to a fierce and fiery dragon, whom the monk conquered by throwing his stole round the neck of the monster and commanding it to cast itself into the sea; a command it instantly and amiably obeyed by rushing to the top of a high rock and plunging for ever beneath the waves. The rock is still called in Breton language Toul ar Serpent, signifying Serpent's Hole.

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[Illustration: ROSCOFF.]

Roscoff itself is extremely fertile; the deadly aspect of the little town is not extended to the surrounding plains. The climate is much influenced by the Gulf Stream, and the winters are temperate. Flowers and vegetables grow here all the year round that in less favoured districts are found only in summer. Like Provence in the far South, Roscoff is famous for its primeurs, or early vegetables. If you go to some of the great markets in Paris in the spring and notice certain country people with large round hats, very primitive in appearance, disposing of these vegetables, you may at once know them for Bretons from Roscoff. You will not fall in love with them; they are plain, honest, and stupid. We found the few people we spoke to in Roscoff quite answering to this description, and could make nothing of them.

On our way back to the station we visited the great natural curiosity of the place: a fig tree whose branches cover an area of nearly two hundred square yards, supported by blocks of wood or by solid masonry built up for the purpose. It yields an immense quantity of fruit, and would shield a small army beneath its foliage. Its immense trunk is knotted and twisted about in all directions; but the tree is full of life and vigour, and probably without parallel in the world.

Soon after this, we were once more steaming towards Morlaix, our head-quarters. As we passed St. Pol de Leon, its towers and steeples stood out grandly in the gathering twilight. Before us there rose up the vision of the aged Countess who had received and entertained us with so much kindness and hospitality. It was not too much to say that we longed to renew our experience, to pass not hours but days in that charmed and charming abode, refined by everything that was old-world and artistic; and to number our hostess amongst those friends whom time and chance, silence and distance, riches or poverty, life or death, can never change.

We re-entered Morlaix with the shadows of night. Despising the omnibus, we went down Jacob's Ladder, rejoicing and revelling in all the old-world atmosphere about us, and on our way passed our Antiquarian. He was still at his doorway, evidently watching for our arrival, and might have been motionless as a wooden sentry ever since we had left him in the morning.

The workshop was lighted up, and the old cabinets and the modern wood-carving looked picturesque and beautiful in the lights and shadows thrown by the lamps. The son, handsome as an Adonis, was bending over some delicate carving that he was chiseling, flushed with the success of his work, yet outwardly strangely quiet and gentle. The cherub we had seen a morning or two ago at the doorstep ought now to have been in bed and asleep. Instead of that he was perched upon a table, and with large, wide-opened blue eyes was gazing with all the innocence and inquiry of infancy into his father's face, as if he would there read the mystery of life and creation, which the wondering gaze of early childhood seems for ever asking.

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It was a rare picture. The rift within the lute was out of sight upstairs, and there was nothing to disturb the harmony of perfection. The child saw us, and immediately held out his little arms with a confiding gesture and a crow of delight that would have won over the sternest misanthropist, as if he recognised us for old friends between whom there existed a large amount of affection and an excellent understanding. His father threw down his chisel, and catching him up in his arms perched him upon his shoulder and ran him up and down the room, while the little fellow shrieked with happiness. Then both disappeared up the staircase, the child looking, in all his loveliness, as if he would ask us to follow—a perfect representation of trust and contentment, as he felt himself borne upwards, safe and secure from danger, in the strong arms of his natural protector.

The old man turned to us with a sigh. Was he thinking of his own past youth, when he, too, was once the principal actor in a counterpart scene? Or of a day, which could not be very far off, when such a scene as this and all earthly scenes must for him for ever pass away? Or of the little rift within the lute? Who could tell?

“So, sirs, you are back once more,” was all he remarked. “Have you seen Roscoff? Was I not right in praising it?”

“You were, indeed,” we replied. “It is full of indescribable beauty and interest. Why is it so little known?”

“Because there are so few true artists in the world,” he answered. “It cannot appeal to any other temperament. Those who see things only with the eyes and not with the soul, will never care for it. And so it has made no noise in the world, and few visit it. Of those who do, probably many think more of the wonderful fig tree than of the exquisite tone of the houses, the charm of the little port, the matchless purity of the water.”

We felt he was right. Then he pointed to the marvellous crucifix that hung upon the wall, and seemed by its beauty and sacredness almost to sanctify the room.

“Is it not a wonderful piece of art?” he cried, with quiet enthusiasm. “If Michel Angelo had ever carved in ivory, I should say it was his work. But be that as it may, it is the production of a great master.”

We promised to return. There was something about the old man and his surroundings which compelled one to do so. It was so rare to find three generations of perfection, about whom there clung a charm indescribable as the perfume that clings to the rose. We passed out into the night, and our last look showed him standing in his quaint little territory, thrown out in strong relief by the lamplight, gazing in rapt devotion upon his treasures, all the religious fervour of the true Breton temperament shining out of his spiritual face, thinking perhaps of the “one far-off Divine event” that for him was growing so very near.



A SOCIAL DEBUT.

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It is hoped that the following anecdote of the ways and customs of that rare animal, the modest, diffident youth (soon, naturalists assure us, to become as extinct in these islands as the Dodo), may afford a moment's amusement to the superior young people who rule journalism, politics, and life for us to-day.

Some ten years ago Mr. Edward Everett came up from the wilds of Devonshire to study law with Braggart and Pushem, in Chancery Lane. He was placed to board, by a prudent mother, with a quiet family in Bayswater.

That even quiet Bayswater families are not without their dangers Everett's subsequent career may be taken as proof, but with this, at present, I have nothing to do. I merely intend to give the history of his debut in society, although the title is one of which, after reading the following pages, you may find reason to complain.

Everett had not been many weeks in London when he received, quite unexpectedly, his first invitation to an evening party.

His mother's interest had procured it for him, and it came from Lady Charlton, the wife of Sir Robert, the eminent Q.C. It was with no little elation that he passed the card round the breakfast-table for the benefit of Mrs. Browne and the girls. There stood Lady Charlton's name, engraved in the centre, and his own, "Mr. Edward Everett," written up in the left-hand corner; while the date, a Thursday in February, was as yet too far ahead for him to have any inkling of the trepidation he was presently to feel.

Everett, although nineteen, had never been to a real party before; in the wilds of Devonshire one does not even require dress clothes; therefore, after sending an acceptance in his best handwriting, his first step was to go and get himself measured for an evening suit.

Now, Everett looked even younger than his age, and this is felt to be a misfortune when one is still in one's teens. Later in life people appear to bear it much better. He found himself feeling more than usually young and insignificant on presenting himself to his tailor and stating his requirements. Mr. Lucas condescended to him from the elevation of six inches superior height and thirty years' seniority. He received Everett's orders with toleration, and re-translated them with decision. "Certainly, sir, I understand what you mean precisely. What you require is this, that, or the other;" and the young gentleman found himself meekly gathering views that never had emanated from his own bosom. Nevertheless he took the most profound interest in the building up of his suit, and constantly invented excuses to drop in upon Mr. Lucas and see how the work was getting on.

Meanwhile, at home he, with the Browne girls, especially with Lily, the youngest, often discussed the coming "At Home." Lily wondered what Lady Charlton was like, if she had any daughters, whether there would be dancing. Everett had never seen his

hostess; thought, however, he had heard there were daughters, but sincerely hoped they wouldn't dance; for, although the Browne girls had taught him to waltz, he was conscious he did them small credit as pupil.

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"I'm sure it will be a splendid party!" cried Lily the enthusiastic. "How I wish some good fairy would just transport me there in the middle of the evening, so that I might have a peep at you in all your glory!"

"I wish with all my heart you were going too, Lil," said Everett; "I shan't know a soul, I'm sure." And though he spoke in an airy, matter-of-fact tone, qualms were beginning to shake his bosom as he pictured himself thus launched alone on the tide of London society.

He began to count the days which yet remained to him of happy obscurity; and as Time moves with inexorable footsteps, no matter how earnestly we would hurry or delay him, so at length there remained but a week's slender barrier between Everett and the fatal date. For while he would not acknowledge it even yet to himself, all sense of pleasurable anticipation had gradually given place to the most unmitigated condition of fright.

Thus when he awoke on the actual Monday morning preceding the party, he could not at first imagine to what cause he owed the burden of oppression which immediately descended on his breast; just so used he to feel as a boy when awaking to the consciousness of an impending visit to the dentist. Then all at once he remembered that in four days more Thursday night would have come, and his fate would be sealed.

He carried a sinking spirit to his legal studies all that day and the next, and yet was somewhat cheered on returning home on the Tuesday evening to find a parcel awaiting him from the tailor's. He experienced real pleasure in putting on the new suit after dinner and going down to exhibit himself to the girls in the drawing-room. It was delightful to listen to their exclamations and their praise; to hear Lily declare, "Oh, you do look nice, Ted! Splendacious! Doesn't it suit him well, mammy?"

In that intoxicating moment, Everett felt he could hold his own in any drawing-room in the land; nor could he help inwardly agreeing on catching sight of himself in the chimney-glass that he did look remarkably well in spite of a hairless lip and smooth young cheeks. He mentally decided to get his hair cut, buy lavender gloves and Parma violets, and casually inquire of Leslie, their "swell" man down at old Braggart's, whether coloured silk socks were still considered "good form."

But when he donned those dress clothes for the second time, on the Thursday night itself, he didn't feel half so happy. He suffered from "fright" pains in his inside, and his fingers shook so, he spoilt a dozen cravats in the tying. He got Lily to fix him one at last, and it was she who found him a neat little cardboard box for his flowers, that his overcoat might not crush them. For, as the night was fine, and shillings scarce with him in those days, he intended walking to his destination.



Of course he was ready much too soon, and spent a restless, not to say a miserable hour in the Brownes' drawing-room, afraid of starting, yet unable to settle down to anything. Then, when half-past nine struck, seized with sudden terror lest he should be too late, he made most hasty adieux and rushed from the house. Only to hear Lily's light foot-fall immediately following him, and her little breathless cry of "Oh, Ted! you've forgotten your latch-key."

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"I wish to Heaven I was going to pass the evening quietly with you, Lil!" sighed the poor youth, all his heart in his boots; but she begged him not to be a goose, told him he would meet much nicer girls, and made him promise to notice how they were all dressed, so as to describe the frocks to her next day. Then she tripped back into the house, gave him a final smile, the door closed, and there was nothing for Everett to do but set off.

He has told me since what a dreadful walk that was. He can remember it vividly across all the intervening years, and he declares that no criminal on his way to the gallows could have suffered from more agonising apprehensions. He pictured his reception in a thousand dismal forms. He saw himself knocking at the door; the moment's suspense; the servant facing him. What ought he to say? "Is Lady Charlton at home?" But that was ridiculous, since he knew she was at home; should he then walk straight in without a word? but what would the servant think? Or, supposing—awful thought!—he had made a mistake in the date; supposing this wasn't the night at all? He searched in his pockets for the card with feverish eagerness, and remembered he had left it stuck in the dining-room chimney glass.

His forehead grew damp with sweat, his hands clammy. He slackened his speed. Why was he walking so fast? He would get there too soon: how embarrassing to be the first arrival! Then he saw by the next baker's shop it was on the stroke of ten, and terror lent him wings. How much more embarrassing to arrive the last!

The Charltons lived in Harley Street, which he had no sooner reached than he guessed that must be the house, mid-way down. For a stream of light expanded wedge-wise from the door, which was flung open as a carriage drew up to the kerbstone. Everett calculated he should arrive precisely as the occupants were getting out. Better wait a couple of minutes.

Blessed respite! He crossed the road and loitered along in the shadow of the opposite side. He examined the house from this point of vantage. It was a blaze of light from top to bottom. The balcony on the drawing-room floor had been roofed in with striped canvas. One of the red curtains hanging from it was drawn aside; he caught glimpses of moving forms and bright colours within.

He heard the long-drawn notes of a violin. The ever-opening hall-door exhibited a brilliant interior, with numberless men-servants conspicuous upon a scarlet background. Ladies in light wraps had entered the house from the carriage, and other carriages arriving in quick succession had disgorged other lovely beings. If the door closed for one instant it sprang open the next at the sound of wheels.

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"I'll walk to the top of the street," Everett determined, "cross over, and then present myself." But as he again approached with courage screwed to the sticking-place, a spruce hansom dashed up before him. Two very "masher" young men sprang out. They stood for a moment laughing together while one found the fare. The other glanced at Everett, and, as it seemed to my too sensitive young friend, with a certain amusement. "Is it possible that this little boy is coming to Lady Charlton's too?" This at least is the meaning Everett read in an eye probably devoid of any meaning at all. He felt he could not go in the company of these gentlemen. He must wait now until they were admitted. So assuming as unconscious an air as possible he stepped through the band of gaslight, and was once more swallowed up in the friendly darkness beyond.

"I'll just walk once to the corner and back," said he; but, fresh obstacle! when he returned, a servant with powdered head swaggered on the threshold exchanging witticisms with the commissionaire keeping order outside; and the crimson carpet laid down across the pavement was fringed with loiterers at either edge, some of whom, as he drew near, turned to look at him with an expectant air.

It was a moment of exquisite suffering. Should he go in? Should he pass on? Only those, (and nowadays such are rare) who have themselves gone through the agonies of shyness can appreciate the situation. As he reached the full glare of the house-light, Everett's indecision was visible in his face.

"Lady Charlton's, sir?" queried Jeames.

My poor Everett! His imbecility will scarcely be believed.

"Thanks—no—ah—er!" he stammered feebly; "I am looking for Mr. Browne's!"

Which was the first name that occurred to him, and he heard the men chuckling together as he fled. After this he walked up and down the long, accursed length of Harley Street, on the dark side of the way, no less than seven mortal times; until, twice passing the same policeman, his sapience began to eye the wild-faced youth with disfavour. Then he made a tour, east, south, west, north, round the block in which Lady Charlton's house stands, and so came round to the door once more.

Yet it was clearly impossible to present himself there now, after his folly. It was also too late—or he thought it so. On the other hand, it was too early to go home. Mrs. Browne had said she should not expect to hear he was in before two or three. On this account he dared not return, for never, never would he confess to her the depths of his cowardice! He therefore continued street-walking with treadmill regularity, cold, hungry, and deadly dull.

But when twelve was gone on the church clocks, he could endure it no longer. He turned and slunk home. Delicately did he insert the key in the door; most mouse-like

did he creep in; and yet someone heard him. Lily, with flying locks, looked over the balusters, and then ran noiselessly down to the hall.

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“Oh, Teddy, I couldn’t go to bed for thinking of your party and how much you must be enjoying yourself! But what is the matter? You look so—funny!”

Somehow Everett found himself telling her the whole story, and never perhaps has humiliated mortal found a kinder little comforter. Far from laughing at him, as he may have deserved, tears filled her pretty eyes at the recital of his unfortunate evening, and no amount of petting was deemed too much. She took him to the drawing-room, where she had hitherto been sitting unplaiting her hair; stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, wheeled him up the easiest couch, and, signal proof of feminine heroism, braved the kitchen beetles to get him something to eat.

What a delightful impromptu picnic she spread out upon the sofa! How capital was the cold beef and pickles, the gruyere cheese, the bottled beer! How they laughed and enjoyed themselves, always with due consideration not to disturb the sleepers above. How Everett, with the audacity born of the swing back of the pendulum, seized upon this occasion to—

But no! I did not undertake to give further developments; these must stand over to another time.

LEGEND OF AN ANCIENT MINSTER.

I.

Fairchester Abbey is noted for the mixed character of its architecture. Such a confused blending of styles is very rarely to be met with in any of our English cathedrals. There is no such thing as uniformity and no possibility of tracing out the original architect’s plan; it has been so altered by later builders.

The Norman pillars of the nave still remain, but they are surmounted by a vaulted Gothic roof. The side aisles of the choir are also Norman, but this heavier work is most beautifully screened from view and completely panelled over with the light tracery of the later Perpendicular.

It is almost impossible to adequately describe the beauties of this noble choir. The architect seems to have been inspired, in the face of unusual difficulty, to preserve all that was beautiful in the work of his predecessors, and to blend it in a marvellous manner with his more perfect conceptions. There is nothing sombre or heavy about it. It is a perfect network of tall, slender pillars and gauzy tracery, and at the east end there is the finest window to be seen in this country, harmonising in the colour of its glass with the rest of the building; shedding, in the sun’s rays, no gloomy, heavy colourings, but bright golden, creamy white, and even pink tints, on the receptive freestone, which, unlike marble, is not cold or forbidding, but naturally warm and pleasing to the eye.

To conclude this brief description, we can choose no better words than these: “Gloria soli Deo.”

They occur on the roof of the choir at its junction with the nave, and explain the unity and harmony which exists amidst all this diversity. Each successive architect worked with this one object in view, the glory of God alone, and so he did not ruthlessly destroy, but recognised the same purpose in the work of his predecessors and endeavoured to blend all into one harmonious whole, thus leaving for future ages a lesson written in stone which churchmen of the present day would do well to learn.

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Early in the year 188—, I was appointed Precentor of this cathedral, and in the course of duty was brought much in contact with Dr. F., the organist.

It was my custom frequently, after service, to join him in the organ-loft and to discuss various matters of interest connected with our own church and the outside world. He was a most charming companion; a first-rate organist and master of theory, and a man of large experience and great general culture.

One morning, soon after my appointment, I joined Dr. F. with a special purpose in view.

We had met to discuss the music for the approaching festival of Easter. The Doctor was in his shirt-sleeves, standing in the interior of the organ, covered with cobwebs and dirt, inspecting the woodwork, which was getting into a very ruinous condition, and endeavouring to replace a pipe which had fallen from its proper position so as to interfere with many of its neighbours.

“Here’s a nice state of things,” said he, ruefully regarding his surroundings. “If we don’t have something done soon the whole organ will fall to pieces; and I am so afraid, lest in re-modelling it, the tone of these matchless diapasons will be affected. There is nothing like them anywhere in England. We must have it done soon, however; I only hope we may gain more than we lose.”

It was indeed time something was done. The key-boards of the old organ were yellow and uneven with age. They reminded one of steps hollowed by the knees of pilgrims, they were so scooped out by the fingers of past generations of organists. Its stops were of all shapes and sizes, and their character was indicated by paper labels gummed underneath. It had been built about the year 1670 by Renatus Harris and, although added to on several occasions, the original work still remained. Being placed on a screen between the nave and the choir, it occupied an unrivalled position for sound.

After awhile Dr. F. succeeded in putting matters a little to rights and, seated at the key-boards, proceeded to play upon the diapasons, the tone of which he had so extolled. It would really be impossible to exaggerate the solemnity, the richness, and the indescribable sadness of the sounds which proceeded from them; one never hears anything like it in modern organs. These have their advantages and their peculiar effects, but they lack that mellowed richness of tone which seems an art belonging to the builders of the past.

Presently the Doctor ceased, and producing a roll of music told me it was a Service he was accustomed to have each Easter, and asked me to listen and say what I thought of it.

It would be impossible for me to express in words the admiration I felt on hearing it. It was a most masterly composition, and was moreover entirely original and unlike the

writing of any known composer. It possessed an individuality which distinguished it from every other work of a like nature. All one could say with certainty about it was that it was not modern music. There was a simplicity and a severity about it which stamped it unmistakably as belonging to an age anterior even to Bach or Handel: modern writers employ more ornamentation and are not so restricted in their harmonies; modern art sanctions a greater liberty, a less simplicity of method, and a less rigid conformity to rule.

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The movement which most impressed me was the Credo.

There was a certainty of conviction in its opening phrases pointing to a real earnestness of purpose. It was as if the composer's faith had successfully withstood all the doubts, anxieties, and conflicts of life. It was the song of the victorious Christian who saw before him the prize for which he had long and steadfastly contended. *He believed*; he did more than that; he actually *realised*. It was the joy, not of anticipation, but of actual possession, the consciousness of the Divine life dwelling in the heart, cramped and hindered by its surroundings, but destined to develop in the light of clearer and fuller knowledge.

As the story of the Incarnation and Passion was told, there crept over the listener feelings of mingled sadness and thanksgiving: sadness at the life of suffering and pain endured "For us men and for our salvation," and thanksgiving for the Gift so freely bestowed. And then Heaven and Earth combined to tell the story of the Resurrection morning, and the strains of thankfulness and praise increased until it seemed as if the writer had at length passed from Earth to Heaven, and was face to face with the joys of the "Life Everlasting" which all the resources of his art were powerless fully to express.

The music ceased, and I awoke as from a dream.

"You need not tell me your opinion," said the Doctor; "your face shows it most unmistakably; you can form only a very faint idea of its beauties without the voice parts. When you hear our choir sing it you will say it is the most powerful sermon you have ever heard within these walls."

"Who is the composer?" I asked excitedly, my curiosity thoroughly aroused.

"My dear fellow," replied Dr. F., "before telling its history, you must see the proofs I have in my possession, for I shall have to relate one of the most remarkable stories you have ever heard. So strange indeed are the circumstances connected with that old Service that I have kept them to myself, lest people should think me an eccentric musician. Our late Dean knew part of them and witnessed some of the things I shall tell you. The story will take some little time, but if you will come across to my house you shall hear it and also see the proofs I hold in my possession."

II.

We went direct from the cathedral into the library of Dr. F.'s house, where, without wasting any time, he produced a roll of manuscript and gave it me to read.

It was tied up neatly with tape and enclosed in another sheet of paper, which bore the date January, 1862, and a note in the Doctor's handwriting stating that he had discovered it in an old chest in the cathedral library.

The document itself was yellow with age and was headed:

“Certain remarkable passages relating to the death of the late Ebenezer Jenkins, sometime organist of this cathedral, obiit April 3, 1686; related by John Gibson, lay clerk.”

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Enclosed within it was also a fragment of music. Unrolling the parchment, I proceeded to decipher with difficulty this narrative.

“On the Wednesday evening before Easter, A.D. 1686, I, John Gibson, was called to the bedside of Master Jenkins.

“He had manifested a wish to hold converse with me, and to see me concerning some matters in which we had both been engaged. He had suffered grievously for many days, and it was plain to all his friends that he had not long to tarry with us. A right skilful player upon the organ was Master Jenkins, and a man beloved of all. He had written much music for the Glory of God and the edification of his Church, wherein his life seemed mirrored, for his music appealed to men’s hearts and led them to serve God, as did also the example of his blameless life and conversation among us. He had been busied for some time in the writing of a Service for Easter Day, in the which he designed to express the thoughts of his waning years. I had been privileged to hear some of these sweet strains, and do affirm that finer music hath never been written by any man in this realm of England. The Italians do make much boast of their skill in music, and doubtless in their use of counterpoints, fugues, and divers other devices they have hitherto excelled our nation; but I doubt if Palestrina himself could have written more excellent music, or have devised more cunning harmonies than those of Master Jenkins.” The work had of late been hindered by the pains of sickness, for the master’s eyes were dim with age, and his hands could scarce hold pen; and so I, his most intimate friend, had on sundry occasions transcribed his thoughts as he related them. “On receiving his message I forthwith hastened to the presence of my friend, and was sore troubled to find him in so grievous a plight. It was plain to all beholders that his course was well-nigh run, for a great change had taken place even in the last few hours.” He revived somewhat on seeing me, and begged me at once to fetch paper and ink. ‘I am going,’ said he, ‘to keep Easter in my Lord’s Court; but ere I go, I fain would finish what hath been my life’s work. Then shall I rest in peace.’

“There was but little time, and so I made haste to fetch pen and paper, and waited for his words.

“Never, I trow, hath music been written before at such a season as this. We were finishing the last movement—the Creed, and those words went direct to my heart as they had never done before. I could scarce refrain from weeping, but joy was mingled even with tears, for the light upon the master’s face was not of earth, and there was a sound of triumph in his voice which told of conflict well-nigh ended and rest won.” We had come to the words ‘I believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.’ For the

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moment, strength seemed to have returned and my pen could scarce keep pace with his thoughts, so rapid and so earnest were they. But the end was closer even than I had supposed, for just as we reached the word 'life,' the light suddenly failed from his face and he fell back. He smiled once, and whispered that word Life, and I saw that his soul had departed. "In fulfilment of his last wishes I made diligent search for the remaining portions of this his work, but failed to find them, and can only suppose that they have been heedlessly destroyed. It would scarce have seemed right to imprint so small a fragment, and so I have deemed it wise to place it, with this narrative of its history, in the cathedral library." Ere I close this narrative I must record certain strange passages which came under my notice and which are vouched for by Gregory Jowett, who likewise beheld them. They happened in this wise. On the year after Master Jenkins's death, on the same date and about the same hour, we were passing through the cathedral, having come from a practice of the singers, and Master Jowett remembered some music he had left by the side of the organ. He went up the stair leading to the claviers and I remained below. "Of a sudden he surprised me by rushing down, greatly affrighted, and affirmed that he had seen Master Jenkins sitting at the organ; whereupon I reassured him, and at length prevailed upon him to return with me. Then, indeed, did we both actually behold Master Jenkins, just as he had appeared in life, attired in somewhat sad-coloured raiment, playing upon the keys from which no sound proceeded. I was not one to be easily affrighted, and so advanced as if to greet him, when of a sudden the figure vanished." We do both of us affirm the truth of this marvellous relation, and do here append our joint signatures, having made solemn affirmation upon oath, in the presence of Master Simpson, attorney, of this city:

"(Signed) JOHN GIBSON.

"GREGORY JOWETT.

"Witnessed by me; Nicholas Simpson, Attorney-at-law, the 27th day of April, 1687."

III.

The Doctor smiled at the perplexity which showed itself most unmistakably in my face as I laid down the manuscript.

"Are you a believer in ghosts or apparitions?" said he.

"Theoretically but not practically," I replied. "They resolve themselves, more or less, into a question of evidence; I would never believe one man's word on the subject without further proof, because it is always a fair solution of the difficulty to suppose him the victim of a delusion. There are so many cases of mysterious appearances, however,

vouched for upon overwhelming evidence, that I am compelled to admit their truth, at the same time believing they would be scientifically explainable if we understood all the laws governing this world and could more clearly distinguish between the spiritual and the material. There is one thing usually noticeable about these appearances which, to my mind, is very significant: they never actually do anything, they only appear to do it and vanish away, leaving behind them no sign of their presence.”

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"Are you prepared to accept that narrative as true?" said the Doctor.

"The balance of evidence compels me to accept it," I replied. "There appears to be no motive for fraud; one could, of course, invent theories to account for the apparition, but I am forced to believe, nevertheless, that two highly trustworthy men did actually imagine that they saw the organist's ghost. Whether they actually did so or not is another matter."

"Very good," replied Dr. F. "Now will you believe me if I tell you still more wonderful things which I myself have witnessed; and will you give me credit for being a perfectly reliable witness? I only ask you to believe; I, myself, cannot explain."

"My dear Doctor," I replied, "I shall receive anything you tell me with great respect, for you are a most unlikely subject to ever be the victim of a delusion."

At this the Doctor laughed and said: "Here goes, once and for ever, my reputation for practical common-sense; henceforth, I suppose, you will class me with musicians generally, who I know bear a character for eccentricity. I will tell the tale, however, and you shall see I possess proofs of its being no delusion, and can contradict your assertion that ghosts never leave behind them traces of their presence.

"I put the old manuscript aside, intending, at some future time, to have the Credo sung as a fragment. It would have been presumption on my part to have completed the Service, so I left it, and being much occupied, forgot all about it. Just about this time we decided to do away with manual labour in blowing the organ, and substituted a small hydraulic engine. I mention this because it has a bearing on what follows.

"To be as brief as possible. Just before Easter I was called away suddenly on business for a day, and, on returning, was surprised at receiving a visit from the Dean. He appeared annoyed, and complained that his rest had been broken the previous night by someone playing the organ quite into the small hours. He was surprised beyond measure on my informing him of my absence from home. We tried to discover a solution to the mystery, but failed. One day, however, I showed the Dean the old manuscript in my possession, and was surprised to hear that he knew of a tradition of the appearance, once a year, of the apparition. An old verger, since dead, had declared several times that he had seen it; but, being old and childish, no one took any notice of the story.

"Strange to say, the date when the ghost appeared was always the same—the Wednesday before Easter. That was also the date mentioned in the manuscript, and also the date when the organ was heard by the Dean. We considered these facts of sufficient importance to warrant our making further investigation; and decided, when the time came round again, to go ourselves into the cathedral; meanwhile we kept our own counsel.

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"The time soon passed on and the week before Easter again arrived, and on the Wednesday evening, about 11.45, we entered the cathedral by the transept door. The moon shone brightly and we easily found our way into the nave; and sitting down, awaited the development of events. The shadows cast by the moonlight were very weird and ghostly in their effect; and had we been at all impressionable, we should doubtless have wished ourselves back again. After remaining some time, however, we came to the conclusion that we had come upon a foolish errand, and had just risen to go, when an exquisite strain of very soft music came from the organ. We listened spell-bound, rooted to the spot. The theme was simple, almost Gregorian in its character, but handled in a most masterly way. Such playing I had never before heard; it was the very perfection of style.

"We were listening evidently to what was an opening prelude, for several different subjects were introduced and only partially worked out.

"Several times I fancied a resemblance to the old Credo, and once distinctly caught a well-known phrase; my doubts were soon solved, however, for in a few moments we heard it in its entirety.

"You know how difficult it is to put one's impressions of music into words; language never fully expresses them. Music can be easily described in dry technical language, the language which deals in 'discords and their resolutions,' but that does not express its influence upon ourselves. No language can do that, for it is an attempt to fathom the infinite.

"As the varied harmonies echoed through the vaulted nave, flooding it with a perfect sea of melody, it appeared as if we were listening to the story of a man's life.

"There were the uncertain strains of youth, the shadowing forth of vague possibilities, the expression of hope undimmed by disappointment. A nameless undefined longing for greater liberty. The desire to be free from the restraints of home, and to mingle with the busy world in all the pride of early manhood. Soon the voyager puts off from the shore, and at first all seems smooth and alluring. He drifts along the ocean of life, wafted by favourable winds, delighting in each new pleasure. But storm soon succeeds calm, as night follows day, and the young man is soon encompassed with the sorrows and temptations of this life, battling against evil habits, struggling to keep himself unspotted from the world.

'Bella premunt hostilia
Da robur, fer auxilium.'

"Youth passes on to middle age, there is now an earnestness of purpose which at first was lacking. Material pleasures are losing their hold, there are traces of another holy influence: two lives are joined in happy union, leading and encouraging each other to

high and noble thoughts and actions. A sound of thankfulness and praise is heard, to be followed only too soon by the strain which tells of mourning and heaviness: one was taken, the other left to toil on alone. But still there was a purpose in life, a work to be done, something to live for. And with lamentation is blended hope.

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"The years roll on and the spiritual more and more overshadows the material. The little spark of the Divine life dwelling in the heart has developed and permeated the whole being. The soul seems chained and hampered by its surroundings. Like a bird it beats itself against its prison walls, until at length it wings its way heavenward.

"And then that ancient hymn, which before had wedded itself in my imagination to the music, pealed forth in all its grandeur, and I seemed to hear the songs of men united to the purer strains of angelic music:

'Uni trinoque Domino
Sit sempiterna gloria
Qui vitam sine termino
Nobis donet in patria.'

"The music ceased and we awoke as from a dream, and, remembering why we had come, rushed up to the organ loft, only to find it in perfect darkness."

IV.

In relating his experience in the cathedral, and in attempting to describe the music he had heard, Dr. F. grew excited and even dramatic, and his voice had quite a ring of triumph in it as he recited the "O Salutaris"—to my mind, the grandest of all the old Latin hymns, lost for many years to our Church, but at length restored in our native tongue.

He paused for a few moments to recover himself and then continued.

"On the morrow I resolved, if possible, to write from memory the complete Service as we had heard it. During the day, being much occupied, I was only able to jot down phrases which recurred to my memory. The principal themes were well impressed upon my mind, and, although my treatment of them was sure to differ in many ways from the original, I felt more justified than formerly in attempting what seemed rather a piece of presumption.

"After a fairly early dinner I settled down in my study about 6.30 p.m., determined to work right on until my task was finished.

"My success did not please me. Several times I rose and tried the score over upon the piano. There was no doubt about it, the main ideas were there, but still there was everything lacking. The whole affair was weak, unworthy of my own reputation, and doubly unworthy of the great writer who had written the Credo. Time after time I studied that fragment, and strove to find out what it was that gave it such vigour and force, but it was useless. That was undoubtedly the work of a great genius, and everything I had written was nothing short of a libel upon myself, strung together so as to be quite correct in harmony and counterpoint, but full, nevertheless, of nothing but commonplaces.

"In thorough disgust I gave it up altogether, when suddenly I remembered there was no Kyrie in the Service we had heard.

"A something prompted me to supply the want out of my own mind. All I strove was to make the style blend with the Credo; in every other respect it was perfectly original, and when finished gave me great cause to be pleased with my own work.

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"Looking at my watch I discovered it was fast getting on to midnight, so I drew an arm-chair up to the fire and lighted a cigar. It was only natural that my mind should be full of the music heard the previous evening. I was no believer in the supernatural, and had unsparingly ridiculed all ghost stories heard at various times. Now there was no doubt: I had listened to music played by no earthly fingers. What could it all mean? Why did the old man's ghost return to haunt the scene of his former labours? Was it because he had left a solemn injunction which had never been complied with? Was it because his life's purpose had been left unfulfilled, and his last cherished wish had died with him?

"There was the solution, no doubt. And what a loss it was to the world; only to think of so priceless a work being lost for ever!

"At this stage I was conscious of nodding, and waking up with a start, endeavoured to pursue my train of thought. The fire was comfortable, and my cigar was still alight; only a few moments more, and then bed. The resolution was scarcely formed before my head dropped again and I was fast asleep.

"How long I slept I know not; a sensation of coldness caused me to awake, only to find the fire nearly out, my reading-lamp smouldering, and the moon brightly shining into the room. Imagine, if you can, my surprise, when, turning round, there, full in the light of the moon, was a figure writing at my table. It was an old man dressed in old-fashioned style, just like what was worn two hundred or more years ago. There was the wig, the coat with square flaps, the shoes with silver buckles—everything except the sword. The face could not be clearly defined, but the figure was most distinct.

"My first sensations were, to say the least, peculiar. I was for the moment frightened, and it was several moments before common sense asserted itself. A feeling of intense curiosity soon overpowered all sense of fear. Sitting in my chair I could hear the scratching of his pen upon the paper. He wrote at a very rapid pace and seemed too intent upon his labours to notice my presence. I waited for some time in absolute stillness, but then, becoming weary of the situation, endeavoured to attract his attention with a cough. He took no notice, and so I arose and walked towards him.

"I am telling you the entire truth when I assure you I could find nothing in that chair. I grasped nothing tangible, and the chair appeared quite empty, while still the scratching of the pen continued; and as I walked away from the window the apparition appeared as plain as ever. Every line of the figure was clear as if in life. At last while I watched, the sound of writing ceased, and the figure vanished from my view, leaving the roll of manuscript just as it had been before I fell asleep.

"Rushing up to the mantelpiece I seized a box of matches, hurriedly lighted a candle, and approached the desk, and there found the Service written out in full in a strange handwriting. My own work was obliterated, the pen drawn through it all with the exception of the Kyrie, which was as I left it, save that the word Kyrie was written over it

in the strange handwriting. At the conclusion of the Service were written these words:
'E.I. hoc fecit. R.I.P.'"

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As the Doctor uttered these words, he went to the bookshelf and drew down a book bound carefully in calf, which he opened and passed to me. It was the original copy as he had found it, his own work crossed out just as he had said, and the Service written in an altogether strange hand.

"I took those letters, R.I.P., to impose a solemn obligation upon me," continued the Doctor. "The Service was at length restored, and I felt sure that if it were used his soul would rest in peace. That is why we have it here every Easter Sunday. It has become, in fact, quite a tradition of the cathedral, which I hope no future organist will ever depart from. The apparition has never since appeared, so I take it that was evidently the wish expressed, and the reason why the old man's ghost for so many years haunted the scene of his former labours."

* * * * *

This story is finished. I leave it just as the Doctor related it. Do I believe it? Undoubtedly I do, but all explanation I leave as impossible. Perhaps some day we shall know better the relation existing between the material world and the unknown. At present the subject is best left alone. Facts we must accept, our imperfect knowledge prevents their explanation.

JOHN GRAEME.

THE ONLY SON OF HIS MOTHER.

BY LETITIA MCCLINTOCK.

"Dear Mrs. Archer, be consoled; I promise to stand by Henry as if he were my brother. Indeed, I look upon him quite as my brother, having no near ties of my own."

"God bless you for the promise," said Mrs. Archer. "You are better to Henry than any brother could be. Thy love is wonderful, passing the love of woman."

Mrs. Archer, the widowed mother of an only child, was deeply imbued with sacred lore. No great reader of general literature, she knew her Bible from cover to cover, and was much in the habit of expressing herself in Scriptural language. Her husband had been the Rector of a lonely parish in Donegal, where for twenty-five years he had taught an unsophisticated people, "letting his light shine," as his wife expressed it.

One recreation he had: the writing of a Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. While he was shut up in his study, little Henry, a mischievous, wild urchin, had to be kept quiet. Here was field for the full exercise of Mrs. Archer's ingenuity. As the boy's life went on, she gained an able assistant in this loving labour, namely Malcolm McGregor, Henry's school-friend. Malcolm and Henry were sent to Foyle College at the same

time. Mrs. Archer could hardly read for joy the day she expected her darling home for his first vacation, accompanied by “the jolliest chap in the school,” whom he had begged leave to bring with him.

From the Rectory door the parents could watch the outside car coming down the steep hill; King William, the Rector’s old horse, slipping a little, and two shabby, hair-covered trunks falling on his back, to be recovered by Jack Dunn, the man-of-all-work, who could drive on occasion.

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Which of the little black figures running on in front of the car was the mother's treasure? Henry was up to as many pranks as ever, but now he had a quiet friend to restrain him, and his mother and the parish were very glad of it.

"Dear mistress, thon's a settled wee fellow, thon McGregor: he's the quare wise guide for we'er ain wichel." Thus spoke Jack Dunn when the holidays drew near an end. "Fleech him to come back."

"There is no need to urge him, Jack," replied his mistress, smiling; "he is very anxious to visit us again."

"Weel-a-weel, ma'am, I never tould you how Master Henry blew up the sexton wi' his crackers, twa nights afore he went to school—"

"Never, Jack!"

"Na, na! Jack wadna be for vexin' you an' his reverence. Master Henry an' Mat, the herd, let off fireworks outside the sexton's door, an' him an' the wife, an' the sisters an' the grannie jumpin' out o' their beds, an' runnin' about the house, thinkin' the Judgment Day was come, an' maybe that the Old Enemy was come for them—"

"Oh, Jack, hush; how terrible! Think what you are saying."

"Nae word o' lie, mistress. The sexton was in a quare rage, an' the grannie lay for three weeks wi' the scare. It was hushed up because there isna a soul in the parish wad like to annoy his reverence. But whist—not a word out o' your mouth! Our wean has got thon ither wee comrade to steady him *now*."

McGregor did steady Henry. They fished Gartan Lough; they boated, they shot over the mountains, they skated on the same lovely expanse of lake, and they heard, in the marshes each Easter the whirring bleat of the snipe. This was the history of school and college vacations for many years. Then first love came—society was sought for; the neighbouring clergy and their families came to Gartan Rectory; young couples wandered blissfully in the fairest scenes in all the world. The friends loved the same sweet maiden, and she deceived them both, and married a ponderous rector, possessed of six hundred per annum, the very year they left old Trinity! They were firmer friends than ever, yet that sweet false one was never mentioned between them. In a reverently-veiled corner in each heart, however, still dwelt a dear ideal which the false beloved had not been able to destroy.

Then events crowded upon Mrs. Archer. The Rector died, and she left her old home; and her son and his friend went into the army, Henry as sub., Malcolm as surgeon.

At the commencement of the story, Malcolm was assuring the mother that he would stand by Henry in all dangers—under all circumstances whatever.

“You will hear of the 5th Fusiliers favourably, I am sure,” said he lightly, trying to calm her agitation.

“Henry is so rash and ardent,” she returned.

“And I am a cool, quiet fellow, ma’am. Oh, you may trust me—I’ll have an eye to him.”

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"Will there be wars, Doctor dear, where you ones is goin'?" asked old Jack Dunn, wistfully, as he polished the young gentlemen's boots for the last time before their departure. The friends were smoking a last pipe by the kitchen fire of the cottage where Mrs. Archer lived in her husband's old parish, among the people who had loved him. Jack was polishing the boots close to them, pausing every now and then to exchange a word with his "wichel," whom he had nursed as an infant, petted and scolded as a schoolboy, and shielded from punishment on innumerable occasions. His "wichel" was now a huge young man, taller than Dr. McGregor by four inches.

"Wha'll black them boots now?" said Jack in a sentimental tone. "Wha'll put the richt polish on them? Some scatter-brained youngster, I'm thinkin', that shouldna be trusted to handle boots like these anes." Thus he spoke, making the hissing, purring noise with which he accompanied his rubbing down of King William.

The friends smiled at each other. "That's hard work, Jack," remarked Henry.

"But are ye goin' to the wars, my wean? Doctor dear, tell me, will he be fightin' them savage Indians?"

"We believe so, Jack. We are to join the 5th Fusiliers, and they are to fight the warlike Hill Tribes, fine soldiers—tall, fine men they are, we are told."

"Alase-a-nie! You'll nae be fightin' yoursel, Doctor?"

"No," smiled McGregor, "my duty will be to cure, not to kill."

"Then, man alive, ye'll hae an eye to Henry."

So the young men tore themselves away from the sobbing mother, and, through her blinding tears, she watched them mount the steep road leading to Letterkenny first and then to the outside world, where danger must be faced and glory won. Her husband's loving people collected that evening in her cottage garden to condole with her and offer their roughly-expressed but heartfelt sympathy.

"Dinna be cryin' that way, mistress dear," said old Jack. "Sure thon's a quare steady fellow, thon Doctor, an' he will hae an eye to Henry."

* * * * *

It was November, 1888, when our troops were obliged to retreat from the Black Mountain, and Mrs. Archer's son and his friend were among them. Need it be recorded here how bravely Englishmen had fought, how uncomplainingly they had endured the extremity of cold and fatigue? Their Gourka allies had stood by them well; but the wild Hill Tribes, the "fine soldiers" of whom McGregor had told Jack Dunn, were getting the best of it, and we were forced to retreat. Many months had passed since the two



friends first saw the Black Mountain, compared with which the mightiest highland in wild Donegal, land of mountains, was an anthill. Dear Gartan Lough was as a drop of water in their eyes, their snipe-haunted marshes as a potato garden, when they saw the gigantic scale of Indian scenery. Henry had fought well in many a skirmish and had escaped without a wound. Malcolm had used his surgical skill pretty often, generally with good effect. He was beloved by officers and men for his kindness of heart. Was there a letter to be written for any poor fellow—a last message to be sent home, words of Christian hope to be spoken, Dr. McGregor was called upon.

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On the 4th of November, the first column began the retreat, the enemy “sniping,” as usual, and a party had to be sent out to clear the flank, before the troops left camp. The retiring column then got carefully along the Chaila Ridge as far as the Ghoraphir Point, where some of the 5th Fusiliers were placed with a battery of guns, and ordered to remain until all were passed. The enemy, in force, followed the last regiment and were steadily shelled from the battery. The guns were then sent down and the men, firing volleys, followed the guns, only two companies being left. Of these, Lieutenant Archer and ten men were told to stay as the last band to cover the retreat, and the enemy made a determined attempt to annihilate them. McGregor was with Henry and his ten. All the pluck that ever animated hero inspired those twelve men. Each felt the honour of being chosen for such a post. No time for words; no time for more thoughts than one, namely, “England expects every man to do his duty.”

But of course Malcolm McGregor had a thought underlying the thought of duty to Queen and country; he remembered his promise to the widowed mother: he must “have an eye to Henry!”

The path that led down the hill was a most difficult one, being winding and very rocky. Above the soldiers rose a precipice, manned by parties of the enemy, who harassed them incessantly by throwing fragments of rock down upon their heads. These immense stones were hurled from a height of fifty yards; but the companies wound round the mountain in good order.

Last of all came Henry Archer and his ten men, attended by the Doctor. Theirs was the chief post of honour and of peril. Henry’s foot slipped; he tried to recover himself, but in vain. Down he rolled with the loose stones that had been hurled from above. McGregor stopped, and two of the men with him; the other eight men pushed forward. Henry’s leg was broken; he could not move. Here was, indeed, an anxious dilemma.

“We must carry him, of course,” said the surgeon. “You are the best man of us three, Henderson; we’ll hoist him on your back.”

To stagger along such a path, bearing a heavy burden, was well-nigh impossible, even for the stalwart soldier. Dark faces might have been seen looking over the ridge, had they glanced upwards. They knew of the presence of these foes by the falling of the rocks about their ears. The peril of the situation demoralised the second soldier; he picked up his rifle, which he had laid on the ground while he helped the surgeon to lift Henry upon Henderson’s back, and ran.

“Oh, Doctor dear, he’s too weighty for me,” groaned Henderson. “I canna carry him anither foot o’ the way; sure, sure he’s the biggest man in the regiment.”

“Lay me down, Henderson, and save yourself; why should I sacrifice *you*?” groaned the wounded man.

“I’ll take him from you, man; quick, quick, help me to get him on my back.”

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"Why, Doctor, he's a bigger man nor you," said Henderson in his Ulster dialect.

"No matter. I'll carry him or die! He has fainted. He is a dead weight now—but we leave this road together, or we stay here together." Muttering the last words, Malcolm set out, and he carried him safely over very rough ground, under a heavy shower of bullets and rockets, for one hundred and fifty yards to where the nine men awaited them.

Malcolm's strength was now gone; but Henderson had recovered his powers a little, and joining hands with him, they managed to carry Henry on to the spot where the last company of the Fusiliers and a company of Gourkas were forming, a sharp fire being kept up all the time on both sides.

Neither of them expected to reach the company, as they told one another in after days. Their sole expectation was to drop with their burden on the stony path of Ghoraphir, and leave their bones among the wild hill tribes.

"McGregor, you have carried Archer all the way?—Incredible!" cried his brother officers.

"Not I alone—Henderson helped. Let us improvise some kind of stretcher, and get him on with us, men, for Heaven's sake."

A stretcher was obtained, and he was carried on, while the retreat continued, the two companies alternately firing to keep back the enemy, who pursued for three miles.

* * * * *

Henry lay helpless in a bare room in the fort—a blessed haven of refuge for the sick and wounded. Dr. McGregor had invalids in every room; his whole time was occupied, and his ingenuity was taxed to make the poor fellows somewhat comfortable.

"Another death, Doctor," said the officer in command one morning.

"Indeed, yes; it is that brave chap, Henderson, who helped me to bring Archer in. Bronchitis has carried him off; a man of fine physique; a fine young fellow, and a countryman of my own. The cold of this mountain district is fearful. I can't keep my patients warm enough, all I can do."

"How is Archer? Will he pull through?"

"He is low to-day; but the limb is doing all right. There is more fever than I like to see," and the surgeon, looking very grave, hurried away.

Not to neglect any duty, and yet to nurse his comrade as he ought to be nursed was the problem our Jonathan had to solve.

Henry's fever ran high for several days, leaving him utterly weak. It was midnight. The patient and his surgeon were alone; the latter beginning to cherish a feeble hope, the former believing that he had done with earthly things.

"You carried me on your back down Ghoraphir, old fellow," he said faintly, stretching out a hand and arm that were dried up to skin and bone.

"What of that, Henry? Keep quiet, I'd advise you."

"You took off your tunic and laid it over me on the stretcher. Henderson told me that; and you might have caught your death of cold—"

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"Hush, my good man; you are talking too much."

"You doctors are all tyrants. I *will* speak, for I may not be able again. Reach me that writing-case. Yes. Open it and take out the things. The Bible—her own Bible—is for the mater, with my love. My meerschauum is for Jack Dunn; and please tell them both that you looked after me—you 'had an eye to Henry.'"

This with a smile. Then, as Malcolm took a photograph out of the case—"Ah, you did not know I had it? Emmie gave it me that time when she—well, well, they put a pressure upon her, and I had nothing to marry on—a pauper, eh?"

"She liked you the best of us two, Henry."

"Ay, but she did not like me well enough. I dreamt of her yesterday, and I quite forgive her. If you care to keep that photo., you can, and the case, and gold pen and studs."

"Now, my chap, you just drink this, and hold your tongue. Please God, you and I will *both* see Gartan parish again; and you may tell mother and Jack that I stood by you and looked after you, if you please. You're mad angry with me this minute; but I'm shutting you up for your good."

* * * * *

A time came, through the mercy of God, when the widow received her son back again, with the friend who was now almost as dear to her, and when tar barrels blazed on every hill around Gartan Lough.

Jack polished the boots that had travelled so far, the while tales of adventure delighted his ear.

Henry talked the most, his quiet friend hearing him with pleasure. Surgeon McGregor never realised that he was a hero; yet his deeds were bruited abroad and became the talk of all that countryside.