

Ordeal of Richard Feverel — Volume 3 eBook

Ordeal of Richard Feverel — Volume 3 by George Meredith

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CHAPTER XXI

By twelve o'clock at noon next day the inhabitants of Raynham Abbey knew that Berry, the baronet's man, had arrived post-haste from town, with orders to conduct Mr. Richard thither, and that Mr. Richard had refused to go, had sworn he would not, defied his father, and despatched Berry to the Shades. Berry was all that Benson was not. Whereas Benson hated woman, Berry admired her warmly. Second to his own stately person, woman occupied his reflections, and commanded his homage. Berry was of majestic port, and used dictionary words. Among the maids of Raynham his conscious calves produced all the discord and the frenzy those adornments seem destined to create in tender bosoms. He had, moreover, the reputation of having suffered for the sex; which assisted his object in inducing the sex to suffer for him. What with his calves, and his dictionary words, and the attractive halo of the mysterious vindictiveness of Venus surrounding him, this Adonis of the lower household was a mighty man below, and he moved as one.

On hearing the tumult that followed Berry's arrival, Adrian sent for him, and was informed of the nature of his mission, and its result.

"You should come to me first," said Adrian. "I should have imagined you were shrewd enough for that, Berry?"

"Pardon me, Mr. Adrian," Berry doubled his elbow to explain. "Pardon me, sir. Acting recipient of special injunctions I was not a free agent."

"Go to Mr. Richard again, Berry. There will be a little confusion if he holds back. Perhaps you had better throw out a hint or so of apoplexy. A slight hint will do. And here—Berry! when you return to town, you had better not mention anything—to quote Johnson—of Benson's spiflication."

"Certainly not, sir."

The wise youth's hint had the desired effect on Richard.

He dashed off a hasty letter by Tom to Belthorpe, and, mounting his horse, galloped to the Bellingham station.

Sir Austin was sitting down to a quiet early dinner at his hotel, when the Hope of Raynham burst into his room.

The baronet was not angry with his son. On the contrary, for he was singularly just and self-accusing while pride was not up in arms, he had been thinking all day after the receipt of Benson's letter that he was deficient in cordiality, and did not, by reason of his excessive anxiety, make himself sufficiently his son's companion: was not enough, as



he strove to be, mother and father to him.; preceptor and friend; previsor and associate. He had not to ask his conscience where he had lately been to blame towards the System. He had slunk away from Raynham in the very crisis of the Magnetic Age, and this young woman of the parish (as Benson had termed sweet Lucy in his letter) was the consequence.

Yes! pride and sensitiveness were his chief foes, and he would trample on them. To begin, he embraced his son: hard upon an Englishman at any time—doubly so to one so shamefaced at emotion in cool blood, as it were. It gave him a strange pleasure, nevertheless. And the youth seemed to answer to it; he was excited. Was his love, then, beginning to correspond with his father's as in those intimate days before the Blossoming Season?

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But when Richard, inarticulate at first in his haste, cried out, "My dear, dear father! You are safe! I feared—You are better, sir? Thank God!" Sir Austin stood away from him.

"Safe?" he said. "What has alarmed you?"

Instead of replying, Richard dropped into a chair, and seized his hand and kissed it.

Sir Austin took a seat, and waited for his son to explain.

"Those doctors are such fools!" Richard broke out. "I was sure they were wrong. They don't know headache from apoplexy. It's worth the ride, sir, to see you. You left Raynham so suddenly.—But you are well! It was not an attack of real apoplexy?"

His father's brows contorted, and he said, No, it was not. Richard pursued:

"If you were ill, I couldn't come too soon, though, if coroners' inquests sat on horses, those doctors would be found guilty of mare-slaughter. Cassandra'll be knocked up. I was too early for the train at Bellingham, and I wouldn't wait. She did the distance in four hours and three-quarters. Pretty good, sir, wasn't it?"

"It has given you appetite for dinner, I hope," said the baronet, not so well pleased to find that it was not simple obedience that had brought the youth to him in such haste.

"I'm ready," replied Richard. "I shall be in time to return by the last train to-night. I will leave Cassandra in your charge for a rest."

His father quietly helped him to soup, which he commenced gobbling with an eagerness that might pass for appetite.

"All well at Raynham?" said the baronet.

"Quite, sir."

"Nothing new?"

"Nothing, sir."

"The same as when I left?"

"No change whatever!"

"I shall be glad to get back to the old place," said the baronet. "My stay in town has certainly been profitable. I have made some pleasant acquaintances who may probably favour us with a visit there in the late autumn—people you may be pleased to know. They are very anxious to see Raynham."

"I love the old place," cried Richard. "I never wish to leave it."

"Why, boy, before I left you were constantly begging to see town."

"Was I, sir? How odd! Well! I don't want to remain here. I've seen enough of it."

"How did you find your way to me?"

Richard laughed, and related his bewilderment at the miles of brick, and the noise, and the troops of people, concluding, "There's no place like home!"

The baronet watched his symptomatic brilliant eyes, and favoured him with a double-dealing sentence—

"To anchor the heart by any object ere we have half traversed the world, is youth's foolishness, my son. Reverence time! A better maxim than your Horatian."

"He knows all!" thought Richard, and instantly drew away leagues from his father, and threw up fortifications round his love and himself.

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Dinner over, Richard looked hurriedly at his watch, and said, with much briskness, "I shall just be in time, sir, if we walk. Will you come with me to the station?"

The baronet did not answer.

Richard was going to repeat the question, but found his father's eyes fixed on him so meaningly that he wavered, and played with his empty glass.

"I think we will have a little more claret," said the baronet.

Claret was brought, and they were left alone.

The baronet then drew within arm's-reach of his son, and began:

"I am not aware what you may have thought of me, Richard, during the years we have lived together; and indeed I have never been in a hurry to be known to you; and, if I had died before my work was done, I should not have complained at losing half my reward, in hearing you thank me. Perhaps, as it is, I never may. Everything, save selfishness, has its recompense. I shall be content if you prosper."

He fetched a breath and continued: "You had in your infancy a great loss." Father and son coloured simultaneously. "To make that good to you I chose to isolate myself from the world, and devote myself entirely to your welfare; and I think it is not vanity that tells me now that the son I have reared is one of the most hopeful of God's creatures. But for that very reason you are open to be tempted the most, and to sink the deepest. It was the first of the angels who made the road to hell."

He paused again. Richard fingered at his watch.

"In our House, my son, there is peculiar blood. We go to wreck very easily. It sounds like superstition; I cannot but think we are tried as most men are not. I see it in us all. And you, my son, are compounded of two races. Your passions are violent. You have had a taste of revenge. You have seen, in a small way, that the pound of flesh draws rivers of blood. But there is now in you another power. You are mounting to the table-land of life, where mimic battles are changed to real ones. And you come upon it laden equally with force to create and to destroy." He deliberated to announce the intelligence, with deep meaning: "There are women in the world, my son!"

The young man's heart galloped back to Raynham.

"It is when you encounter them that you are thoroughly on trial. It is when you know them that life is either a mockery to you, or, as some find it, a gift of blessedness. They are our ordeal. Love of any human object is the soul's ordeal; and they are ours, loving them, or not."

The young man heard the whistle of the train. He saw the moon-lighted wood, and the vision of his beloved. He could barely hold himself down and listen.

“I believe,” the baronet spoke with little of the cheerfulness of belief, “good women exist.”

Oh, if he knew Lucy!

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“But,” and he gazed on Richard intently, “it is given to very few to meet them on the threshold—I may say, to none. We find them after hard buffeting, and usually, when we find the one fitted for us, our madness has misshaped our destiny, our lot is cast. For women are not the end, but the means, of life. In youth we think them the former, and thousands, who have not even the excuse of youth, select a mate—or worse—with that sole view. I believe women punish us for so perverting their uses. They punish Society.”

The baronet put his hand to his brow as his mind travelled into consequences.

‘Our most diligent pupil learns not so much as an earnest teacher,’ says The Pilgrim’s Scrip; and Sir Austin, in schooling himself to speak with moderation of women, was beginning to get a glimpse of their side of the case.

Cold Blood now touched on love to Hot Blood.

Cold Blood said, “It is a passion coming in the order of nature, the ripe fruit of our animal being.”

Hot Blood felt: “It is a divinity! All that is worth living for in the world.”

Cold Blood said: “It is a fever which tests our strength, and too often leads to perdition.”

Hot Blood felt: “Lead whither it will, I follow it.”

Cold Blood said: “It is a name men and women are much in the habit of employing to sanctify their appetites.”

Hot Blood felt: “It is worship; religion; life!”

And so the two parallel lines ran on.

The baronet became more personal:

“You know my love for you, my son. The extent of it you cannot know; but you must know that it is something very deep, and—I do not wish to speak of it—but a father must sometimes petition for gratitude, since the only true expression of it is his son’s moral good. If you care for my love, or love me in return, aid me with all your energies to keep you what I have made you, and guard you from the snares besetting you. It was in my hands once. It is ceasing to be so. Remember, my son, what my love is. It is different, I fear, with most fathers: but I am bound up in your welfare: what you do affects me vitally. You will take no step that is not intimate with my happiness, or my misery. And I have had great disappointments, my son.”

So far it was well. Richard loved his father, and even in his frenzied state he could not without emotion hear him thus speak.

Unhappily, the baronet, who by some fatality never could see when he was winning the battle, thought proper in his wisdom to water the dryness of his sermon with a little jocoseness, on the subject of young men fancying themselves in love, and, when they were raw and green, absolutely wanting to be—that most awful thing, which the wisest and strongest of men undertake in hesitation and after self-mortification and penance—married! He sketched the Foolish Young Fellow—the object of general

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ridicule and covert contempt. He sketched the Woman—the strange thing made in our image, and with all our faculties—passing to the rule of one who in taking her proved that he could not rule himself, and had no knowledge of her save as a choice morsel which he would burn the whole world, and himself in the bargain, to possess. He harped upon the Foolish Young Fellow, till the foolish young fellow felt his skin tingle and was half suffocated with shame and rage.

After this, the baronet might be as wise as he pleased: he had quite undone his work. He might analyze Love and anatomize Woman. He might accord to her her due position, and paint her fair: he might be shrewd, jocose, gentle, pathetic, wonderfully wise: he spoke to deaf ears.

Closing his sermon with the question, softly uttered: “Have you anything to tell me, Richard?” and hoping for a confession, and a thorough re-establishment of confidence, the callous answer struck him cold: “I have not.”

The baronet relapsed in his chair, and made diagrams of his fingers.

Richard turned his back on further dialogue by going to the window. In the section of sky over the street twinkled two or three stars; shining faintly, feeling the moon. The moon was rising: the woods were lifting up to her: his star of the woods would be there. A bed of moss set about flowers in a basket under him breathed to his nostril of the woodland keenly, and filled him with delirious longing.

A succession of hard sighs brought his father’s hand on his shoulder.

“You have nothing you could say to me, my son? Tell me, Richard! Remember, there is no home for the soul where dwells a shadow of untruth!”

“Nothing at all, sir,” the young man replied, meeting him with the full orbs of his eyes.

The baronet withdrew his hand, and paced the room.

At last it grew impossible for Richard to control his impatience, and he said: “Do you intend me to stay here, sir? Am I not to return to Raynham at all to-night?”

His father was again falsely jocular:

“What? and catch the train after giving it ten minutes’ start?”

“Cassandra will take me,” said the young man earnestly. “I needn’t ride her hard, sir. Or perhaps you would lend me your Winkelried? I should be down with him in little better than three hours.”

“Even then, you know, the park-gates would be locked.”

“Well, I could stable him in the village. Dowling knows the horse, and would treat him properly. May I have him, sir?”

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The cloud cleared off Richard's face as he asked. At least, if he missed his love that night he would be near her, breathing the same air, marking what star was above her bedchamber, hearing the hushed night-talk of the trees about her dwelling: looking on the distances that were like hope half fulfilled and a bodily presence bright as Hesper, since he knew her. There were two swallows under the eaves shadowing Lucy's chamber-windows: two swallows, mates in one nest, blissful birds, who twittered and cheep-cheeped to the sole-lying beauty in her bed. Around these birds the lover's heart revolved, he knew not why. He associated them with all his close-veiled dreams of happiness. Seldom a morning passed when he did not watch them leave the nest on their breakfast-flight, busy in the happy stillness of dawn. It seemed to him now that if he could be at Raynham to see them in to-morrow's dawn he would be compensated for his incalculable loss of to-night: he would forgive and love his father, London, the life, the world. Just to see those purple backs and white breasts flash out into the quiet morning air! He wanted no more.

The baronet's trifling had placed this enormous boon within the young man's visionary grasp.

He still went on trying the boy's temper.

"You know there would be nobody ready for you at Raynham. It is unfair to disturb the maids."

Richard overrode every objection.

"Well, then, my son," said the baronet, preserving his half-jocular air, "I must tell you that it is my wish to have you in town."

"Then you have not been ill at all, sir!" cried Richard, as in his despair he seized the whole plot.

"I have been as well as you could have desired me to be," said his father.

"Why did they lie to me?" the young man wrathfully exclaimed.

"I think, Richard, you can best answer that," rejoined Sir Austin, kindly severe.

Dread of being signalized as the Foolish Young Fellow prevented Richard from expostulating further. Sir Austin saw him grinding his passion into powder for future explosion, and thought it best to leave him for awhile.

CHAPTER XXII

For three weeks Richard had to remain in town and endure the teachings of the System in a new atmosphere. He had to sit and listen to men of science who came to renew their intimacy with his father, and whom of all men his father wished him to respect and study; practically scientific men being, in the baronet's estimation, the only minds thoroughly mated and enviable. He had to endure an introduction to the Grandisons, and meet the eyes of his kind, haunted as he was by the Foolish Young Fellow. The idea that he might by any chance be identified with him held the poor youth in silent subjection. And it was horrible. For it was a continued outrage on the fair image he had in his heart. The notion of the world

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laughing at him because he loved sweet Lucy stung him to momentary frenzies, and developed premature misanthropy in his spirit. Also the System desired to show him whither young women of the parish lead us, and he was dragged about at nighttime to see the sons and daughters of darkness, after the fashion prescribed to Mr. Thompson; how they danced and ogled down the high road to perdition. But from this sight possibly the teacher learnt more than his pupil, since we find him seriously asking his meditative hours, in the Note-book: "Wherefore Wild Oats are only of one gender?" a question certainly not suggested to him at Raynham; and again—"Whether men might not be attaching too rigid an importance?"...to a subject with a dotted tail apparently, for he gives it no other in the Note-book. But, as I apprehend, he had come to plead in behalf of women here, and had deduced something from positive observation. To Richard the scenes he witnessed were strange wild pictures, likely if anything to have increased his misanthropy, but for his love.

Certain sweet little notes from Lucy sustained the lover during the first two weeks of exile. They ceased; and now Richard fell into such despondency that his father in alarm had to take measures to hasten their return to Raynham. At the close of the third week Berry laid a pair of letters, bearing the Raynham post-mark, on the breakfast-table, and, after reading one attentively, the baronet asked his son if he was inclined to quit the metropolis.

"For Raynham, air?" cried Richard, and relapsed, saying, "As you will!" aware that he had given a glimpse of the Foolish Young Fellow.

Berry accordingly received orders to make arrangements for their instant return to Raynham.

The letter Sir Austin lifted his head from to bespeak his son's wishes was a composition of the wise youth Adrian's, and ran thus:

"Benson is doggedly recovering. He requires great indemnities. Happy when a faithful fool is the main sufferer in a household! I quite agree with you that our faithful fool is the best servant of great schemes. Benson is now a piece of history. I tell him that this is indemnity enough, and that the sweet Muse usually insists upon gentlemen being half-flayed before she will condescend to notice them; but Benson, I regret to say, rejects the comfort so fine a reflection should offer, and had rather keep his skin and live opaque. Heroism seems partly a matter of training. Faithful folly is Benson's nature: the rest has been thrust upon.

"The young person has resigned the neighbourhood. I had an interview with the fair Papist myself, and also with the man Blaize. They were both sensible, though one swore and the other sighed. She is pretty. I hope she does not paint. I can affirm that

her legs are strong, for she walks to Bellingham twice a week to take her Scarlet bath, when, having confessed and been made clean by the Romish

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unction, she walks back the brisker, of which my Protestant muscular systems is yet aware. It was on the road to Bellingham I engaged her. She is well in the matter of hair. Madam Godiva might challenge her, it would be a fair match. Has it never struck you that Woman is nearer the vegetable than Man?—Mr. Blaize intends her for his son a junction that every lover of fairy mythology must desire to see consummated. Young Tom is heir to all the agremens of the Beast. The maids of Lobourne say (I hear) that he is a very Proculus among them. Possibly the envious men say it for the maids. Beauty does not speak bad grammar—and altogether she is better out of the way.”

The other letter was from Lady Blandish, a lady’s letter, and said:

“I have fulfilled your commission to the best of my ability, and heartily sad it has made me. She is indeed very much above her station—pity that it is so! She is almost beautiful—quite beautiful at times, and not in any way what you have been led to fancy. The poor child had no story to tell. I have again seen her, and talked with her for an hour as kindly as I could. I could gather nothing more than we know. It is just a woman’s history as it invariably commences. Richard is the god of her idolatry. She will renounce him, and sacrifice herself for his sake. Are we so bad? She asked me what she was to do. She would do whatever was imposed upon her—all but pretend to love another, and that she never would, and, I believe, never will. You know I am sentimental, and I confess we dropped a few tears together. Her uncle has sent her for the Winter to the institution where it appears she was educated, and where they are very fond of her and want to keep her, which it would be a good thing if they were to do. The man is a good sort of man. She was entrusted to him by her father, and he never interferes with her religion, and is very scrupulous about all that pertains to it, though, as he says, he is a Christian himself. In the Spring (but the poor child does not know this) she is to come back, and be married to his lout of a son. I am determined to prevent that. May I not reckon on your promise to aid me? When you see her, I am sure you will. It would be sacrilege to look on and permit such a thing. You know, they are cousins. She asked me, where in the world there was one like Richard? What could I answer? They were your own words, and spoken with a depth of conviction! I hope he is really calm. I shudder to think of him when he comes, and discovers what I have been doing. I hope I have been really doing right! A good deed, you say, never dies; but we cannot always know—I must rely on you. Yes, it is; I should think, easy to suffer martyrdom when one is sure of one’s cause! but then one must be sure of it. I have done nothing lately but to repeat to myself that saying of yours, No. 54, C. 7, P.S.; and it has consoled me, I cannot say why, except that all wisdom consoles, whether it applies directly or not:

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“For this reason so many fall from God, who have attained to Him; that they cling to Him with their Weakness, not with their Strength.’

“I like to know of what you are thinking when you composed this or that saying—what suggested it. May not one be admitted to inspect the machinery of wisdom? I feel curious to know how thoughts—real thoughts—are born. Not that I hope to win the secret. Here is the beginning of one (but we poor women can never put together even two of the three ideas which you say go to form a thought): ‘When a wise man makes a false step, will he not go farther than a fool?’ It has just flitted through me.

“I cannot get on with Gibbon, so wait your return to recommence the readings. I dislike the sneering essence of his writings. I keep referring to his face, until the dislike seems to become personal. How different is it with Wordsworth! And yet I cannot escape from the thought that he is always solemnly thinking of himself (but I do reverence him). But this is curious; Byron was a greater egoist, and yet I do not feel the same with him. He reminds me of a beast of the desert, savage and beautiful; and the former is what one would imagine a superior donkey reclaimed from the heathen to be—a very superior donkey, I mean, with great power of speech and great natural complacency, and whose stubbornness you must admire as part of his mission. The worst is that no one will imagine anything sublime in a superior donkey, so my simile is unfair and false. Is it not strange? I love Wordsworth best, and yet Byron has the greater power over me. How is that?”

(“Because,” Sir Austin wrote beside the query in pencil, “women are cowards, and succumb to Irony and Passion, rather than yield their hearts to Excellence and Nature’s Inspiration.”)

The letter pursued:

“I have finished Boiardo and have taken up Berni. The latter offends me. I suppose we women do not really care for humour. You are right in saying we have none ourselves, and ‘cackle’ instead of laugh. It is true (of me, at least) that ‘Falstaff is only to us an incorrigible fat man.’ I want to know what he illustrates. And Don Quixote—what end can be served in making a noble mind ridiculous?—I hear you say—practical. So it is. We are very narrow, I know. But we like wit—practical again! Or in your words (when I really think they generally come to my aid—perhaps it is that it is often all your thought); we ‘prefer the rapier thrust, to the broad embrace, of Intelligence.’”

He trifled with the letter for some time, re-reading chosen passages as he walked about the room, and considering he scarce knew what. There are ideas language is too gross for, and shape too arbitrary, which come to us and have a definite influence upon us, and yet we cannot fasten on the filmy things and make them visible and distinct to ourselves, much less to others. Why did he twice throw a look into the glass in the

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act of passing it? He stood for a moment with head erect facing it. His eyes for the nonce seemed little to peruse his outer features; the grey gathered brows, and the wrinkles much action of them had traced over the circles half up his high straight forehead; the iron-grey hair that rose over his forehead and fell away in the fashion of Richard's plume. His general appearance showed the tints of years; but none of their weight, and nothing of the dignity of his youth, was gone. It was so far satisfactory, but his eyes were wide, as one who looks at his essential self through the mask we wear.

Perhaps he was speculating as he looked on the sort of aspect he presented to the lady's discriminative regard. Of her feelings he had not a suspicion. But he knew with what extraordinary lucidity women can, when it pleases them, and when their feelings are not quite boiling under the noonday sun, seize all the sides of a character, and put their fingers on its weak point. He was cognizant of the total absence of the humorous in himself (the want that most shut him out from his fellows), and perhaps the clear-thoughted, intensely self-examining gentleman filmily conceived, Me also, in common with the poet, she gazes on as one of the superior—grey beasts!

He may have so conceived the case; he was capable of that great-mindedness, and could snatch at times very luminous glances at the broad reflector which the world of fact lying outside our narrow compass holds up for us to see ourselves in when we will. Unhappily, the faculty of laughter, which is due to this gift, was denied him; and having seen, he, like the companion of friend Balsam, could go no farther. For a good wind of laughter had relieved him of much of the blight of self-deception, and oddness, and extravagance; had given a healthier view of our atmosphere of life; but he had it not.

Journeying back to Bellingham in the train, with the heated brain and brilliant eye of his son beside him, Sir Austin tried hard to feel infallible, as a man with a System should feel; and because he could not do so, after much mental conflict, he descended to entertain a personal antagonism to the young woman who had stepped in between his experiment and success. He did not think kindly of her. Lady Blandish's encomiums of her behaviour and her beauty annoyed him. Forgetful that he had in a measure forfeited his rights to it, he took the common ground of fathers, and demanded, "Why he was not justified in doing all that lay in his power to prevent his son from casting himself away upon the first creature with a pretty face he encountered?" Deliberating thus, he lost the tenderness he should have had for his experiment—the living, burning youth at his elbow, and his excessive love for him took a rigorous tone. It appeared to him politic, reasonable, and just, that the uncle of this young woman, who had so long nursed the prudent scheme of marrying her to his son, should not only not be thwarted in his object but encouraged and even assisted. At least, not thwarted. Sir Austin had no glass before him while these ideas hardened in his mind, and he had rather forgotten the letter of Lady Blandish.

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Father and son were alone in the railway carriage. Both were too preoccupied to speak. As they neared Bellingham the dark was filling the hollows of the country. Over the pine-hills beyond the station a last rosy streak lingered across a green sky. Richard eyed it while they flew along. It caught him forward: it seemed full of the spirit of his love, and brought tears of mournful longing to his eyelids. The sad beauty of that one spot in the heavens seemed to call out to his soul to swear to his Lucy's truth to him: was like the sorrowful visage of his fleur-de-luce as he called her, appealing to him for faith. That tremulous tender way she had of half-closing and catching light on the nether-lids, when sometimes she looked up in her lover's face—as look so mystic-sweet that it had grown to be the fountain of his dreams: he saw it yonder, and his blood thrilled.

Know you those wand-like touches of I know not what, before which our grosser being melts; and we, much as we hope to be in the Awakening, stand etherealized, trembling with new joy? They come but rarely; rarely even in love, when we fondly think them revelations. Mere sensations they are, doubtless: and we rank for them no higher in the spiritual scale than so many translucent glorious polypi that quiver on the shores, the hues of heaven running through them. Yet in the harvest of our days it is something for the animal to have had such mere fleshly polypian experiences to look back upon, and they give him an horizon—pale seas of luring splendour. One who has had them (when they do not bound him) may find the Isles of Bliss sooner than another. Sensual faith in the upper glories is something. "Let us remember," says The Pilgrim's Scrip, "that Nature, though heathenish, reaches at her best to the footstool of the Highest. She is not all dust, but a living portion of the spheres. In aspiration it is our error to despise her, forgetting that through Nature only can we ascend. Cherished, trained, and purified, she is then partly worthy the divine mate who is to make her wholly so. St. Simeon saw the Hog in Nature, and took Nature for the Hog."

It was one of these strange bodily exaltations which thrilled the young man, he knew not how it was, for sadness and his forebodings vanished. The soft wand touched him. At that moment, had Sir Austin spoken openly, Richard might have fallen upon his heart. He could not.

He chose to feel injured on the common ground of fathers, and to pursue his System by plotting. Lady Blandish had revived his jealousy of the creature who menaced it, and jealousy of a System is unreflecting and vindictive as jealousy of woman.

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Heath-roots and pines breathed sharp in the cool autumn evening about the Bellingham station. Richard stood a moment as he stepped from the train, and drew the country air into his lungs with large heaves of the chest. Leaving his father to the felicitations of the station-master, he went into the Lobourne road to look for his faithful Tom, who had received private orders through Berry to be in attendance with his young master's mare, Cassandra, and was lurking in a plantation of firs unenclosed on the borders of the road, where Richard, knowing his retainer's zest for conspiracy too well to seek him anywhere but in the part most favoured with shelter and concealment, found him furtively whiffing tobacco.

"What news, Tom? Is there an illness?"

Tom sent his undress cap on one side to scratch at dilemma, an old agricultural habit to which he was still a slave in moments of abstract thought or sudden difficulty.

"No, I don't want the rake, Mr. Richard," he whinnied with a false grin, as he beheld his master's eye vacantly following the action.

"Speak out!" he was commanded. "I haven't had a letter for a week!"

Richard learnt the news. He took it with surprising outward calm, only getting a little closer to Cassandra's neck, and looking very hard at Tom without seeing a speck of him, which had the effect on Tom of making him sincerely wish his master would punch his head at once rather than fix him in that owl-like way.

"Go on!" said Richard, huskily. "Yes? She's gone! Well?"

Tom was brought to understand he must make the most of trifles, and recited how he had heard from a female domestic at Belthorpe of the name of Davenport, formerly known to him, that the young lady never slept a wink from the hour she knew she was going, but sat up in her bed till morning crying most pitifully, though she never complained. Hereat the tears unconsciously streamed down Richard's cheeks. Tom said he had tried to see her, but Mr. Adrian kept him at work, ciphering at a terrible sum—that and nothing else all day! saying, it was to please his young master on his return. "Likewise something in Lat'n," added Tom. "Nom'tive Mouser!—'nough to make ye mad, sir!" he exclaimed with pathos. The wretch had been put to acquire a Latin declension.

Tom saw her on the morning she went away, he said: she was very sorrowful-looking, and nodded kindly to him as she passed in the fly along with young Tom Blaize. "She have got uncommon kind eyes, sir," said Tom, "and cryin' don't spoil them." For which his hand was wrenched.

Tom had no more to tell, save that, in rounding the road, the young lady had hung out her hand, and seemed to move it forward and back, as much as to sap, Good-bye, Tom! “And though she couldn’t see me,” said Tom, “I took off my hat. I did take it so kind of her to think of a chap like me.” He was at high-pressure sentiment—what with his education for a hero and his master’s love-stricken state.

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"You saw no more of her, Tom?"

"No, sir. That was the last!"

"That was the last you saw of her, Tom?"

"Well, sir, I saw nothin' more."

"And so she went out of sight!"

"Clean gone, that she were, sir."

"Why did they take her away? what have they done with her? where have they taken her to?"

These red-hot questionings were addressed to the universal heaven rather than to Tom.

"Why didn't she write?" they were resumed. "Why did she leave? She's mine. She belongs to me! Who dared take her away? Why did she leave without writing?—Tom!"

"Yes, sir," said the well-drilled recruit, dressing himself up to the word of command. He expected a variation of the theme from the change of tone with which his name had been pronounced, but it was again, "Where have they taken her to?" and this was even more perplexing to Tom than his hard sum in arithmetic had been. He could only draw down the corners of his mouth hard, and glance up queerly.

"She had been crying—you saw that, Tom?"

"No mistake about that, Mr. Richard. Cryin' all night and all day, I sh'd say."

"And she was crying when you saw her?"

"She look'd as if she'd just done for a moment, sir."

"But her face was white?"

"White as a sheet."

Richard paused to discover whether his instinct had caught a new view from these facts. He was in a cage, always knocking against the same bars, fly as he might. Her tears were the stars in his black night. He clung to them as golden orbs. Inexplicable as they were, they were at least pledges of love.

The hues of sunset had left the West. No light was there but the steadfast pale eye of twilight. Thither he was drawn. He mounted Cassandra, saying: "Tell them something, Tom. I shan't be home to dinner," and rode off toward the forsaken home of light over



Belthorpe, whereat he saw the wan hand of his Lucy, waving farewell, receding as he advanced. His jewel was stolen,—he must gaze upon the empty box.

CHAPTER XXIII

Night had come on as Richard entered the old elm-shaded, grass-bordered lane leading down from Raynham to Belthorpe. The pale eye of twilight was shut. The wind had tossed up the bank of Western cloud, which was now flying broad and unlighted across the sky, broad and balmy—the charioted South-west at full charge behind his panting coursers. As he neared the farm his heart fluttered and leapt up. He was sure she must be there. She must have returned. Why should she have left for good without writing? He caught suspicion by the throat, making it voiceless, if it lived: he silenced reason. Her not writing was now a proof that she had returned. He listened to nothing but his imperious passion, and murmured sweet words for her, as if she were by:

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tender cherishing epithet's of love in the nest. She was there—she moved somewhere about like a silver flame in the dear old house, doing her sweet household duties. His blood began to sing: O happy those within, to see her, and be about her! By some extraordinary process he contrived to cast a sort of glory round the burly person of Farmer Blaize himself. And oh! to have companionship with a seraph one must know a seraph's bliss, and was not young Tom to be envied? The smell of late clematis brought on the wind enwrapped him, and went to his brain, and threw a light over the old red-brick house, for he remembered where it grew, and the winter rose-tree, and the jessamine, and the passion-flower: the garden in front with the standard roses tended by her hands; the long wall to the left striped by the branches of the cherry, the peep of a further garden through the wall, and then the orchard, and the fields beyond—the happy circle of her dwelling! it flashed before his eyes while he looked on the darkness. And yet it was the reverse of hope which kindled this light and inspired the momentary calm he experienced: it was despair exaggerating delusion, wilfully building up on a groundless basis. “For the tenacity of true passion is terrible,” says The Pilgrim's Scrip: “it will stand against the hosts of heaven, God's great array of Facts, rather than surrender its aim, and must be crushed before it will succumb—sent to the lowest pit!” He knew she was not there; she was gone. But the power of a will strained to madness fought at it, kept it down, conjured forth her ghost, and would have it as he dictated. Poor youth! the great array of facts was in due order of march.

He had breathed her name many times, and once over-loud; almost a cry for her escaped him. He had not noticed the opening of a door and the noise of a foot along the gravel walk. He was leaning over Cassandra's uneasy neck watching the one window intently, when a voice addressed him out of the darkness.

“Be that you, young gentleman?—Mr. Fev'rel?”

Richard's trance was broken. “Mr. Blaize!” he said; recognizing the farmer's voice.

“Good even'n t' you, sir,” returned the farmer. “I knew the mare though I didn't know you. Rather bluff to-night it be. Will ye step in, Mr. Fev'rel? it's beginning' to spit,—going to be a wildish night, I reckon.”

Richard dismounted. The farmer called one of his men to hold the mare, and ushered the young man in. Once there, Richard's conjurations ceased. There was a deadness about the rooms and passages that told of her absence. The walls he touched—these were the vacant shells of her. He had never been in the house since he knew her, and now what strange sweetness, and what pangs!

Young Tom Blaize was in the parlour, squared over the table in open-mouthed examination of an ancient book of the fashions for a summer month which had elapsed

during his mother's minority. Young Tom was respectfully studying the aspects of the radiant beauties of the polite work. He also was a thrall of woman, newly enrolled, and full of wonder.

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"What, Tom!" the farmer sang out as soon as he had opened the door; "there ye be! at yer Folly agin, are ye? What good'll them fashens do to you, I'd like t'know? Come, shut up, and go and see to Mr. Fev'el's mare. He's al'ays at that ther' Folly now. I say there never were a better name for a book than that ther' Folly! Talk about attitudes!"

The farmer laughed his fat sides into a chair, and motioned his visitor to do likewise.

"It's a comfort they're most on 'em females," he pursued, sounding a thwack on his knee as he settled himself agreeably in his seat. "It don't matter much what they does, except pinchin' in—waspin' it at the waist. Give me nature, I say—woman as she's made! eh, young gentleman?"

"You seem very lonely here," said Richard, glancing round, and at the ceiling.

"Lonely?" quoth the farmer. "Well, for the matter o' that, we be!—jest now, so't happens; I've got my pipe, and Tom've got his Folly. He's on one side the table, and I'm on t'other. He gapes, and I gazes. We are a bit lonesome. But there—it's for the best!"

Richard resumed, "I hardly expected to see you to-night, Mr. Blaize."

"Y'acted like a man in coming, young gentleman, and I does ye honour for it!" said Farmer Blaize with sudden energy and directness.

The thing implied by the farmer's words caused Richard to take a quick breath. They looked at each other, and looked away, the farmer thrumming on the arm of his chair.

Above the mantel-piece, surrounded by tarnished indifferent miniatures of high-collared, well-to-do yeomen of the anterior generation, trying their best not to grin, and high-waisted old ladies smiling an encouraging smile through plentiful cap-puckers, there hung a passably executed half-figure of a naval officer in uniform, grasping a telescope under his left arm, who stood forth clearly as not of their kith and kin. His eyes were blue, his hair light, his bearing that of a man who knows how to carry his head and shoulders. The artist, while giving him an epaulette to indicate his rank, had also recorded the juvenility which a lieutenant in the naval service can retain after arriving at that position, by painting him with smooth cheeks and fresh ruddy lips. To this portrait Richard's eyes were directed. Farmer Blaize observed it, and said—

"Her father, sir!"

Richard moderated his voice to praise the likeness.

"Yes," said the farmer, "pretty well. Next best to havin' her, though it's a long way off that!"

“An old family, Mr. Blaize—is it not?” Richard asked in as careless a tone as he could assume.

“Gentlefolks—what’s left of ’em,” replied the farmer with an equally affected indifference.

“And that’s her father?” said Richard, growing bolder to speak of her.

“That’s her father, young gentleman!”

“Mr. Blaize,” Richard turned to face him, and burst out, “where is she?”

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"Gone, sir! packed off!—Can't have her here now." The farmer thrummed a step brisker, and eyed the young man's wild face resolutely.

"Mr. Blaize," Richard leaned forward to get closer to him. He was stunned, and hardly aware of what he was saying or doing: "Where has she gone? Why did she leave?"

"You needn't to ask, sir—ye know," said the farmer, with a side shot of his head.

"But she did not—it was not her wish to go?"

"No! I think she likes the place. Mayhap she likes't too well!"

"Why did you send her away to make her unhappy, Mr. Blaize?"

The farmer bluntly denied it was he who made her unhappy. "Nobody can't accuse me. Tell ye what, sir. I wunt have the busybodies set to work about her, and there's all the matter. So let you and I come to an understandin'."

A blind inclination to take offence made Richard sit upright. He forgot it the next minute, and said humbly: "Am I the cause of her going?"

"Well!" returned the farmer, "to speak straight—ye be!"

"What can I do, Mr. Blaize, that she may come back again" the young hypocrite asked.

"Now," said the farmer, "you're coming to business. Glad to hear ye talk in that sensible way, Mr. Feverel. You may guess I wants her bad enough. The house ain't itself now she's away, and I ain't myself. Well, sir! This ye can do. If you gives me your promise not to meddle with her at all—I can't mak' out how you come to be acquainted; not to try to get her to be meetin' you—and if you'd 'a seen her when she left, you would —when did ye meet?—last grass, wasn't it?—your word as a gentleman not to be writing letters, and spyin' after her—I'll have her back at once. Back she shall come!"

"Give her up!" cried Richard.

"Ay, that's it!" said the farmer. "Give her up."

The young man checked the annihilation of time that was on his mouth.

"You sent her away to protect her from me, then?" he said savagely.

"That's not quite it, but that'll do," rejoined the farmer.

"Do you think I shall harm her, sir?"

“People seem to think she’ll harm you, young gentleman,” the farmer said with some irony.

“Harm me—she? What people?”

“People pretty intimate with you, sir.”

“What people? Who spoke of us?” Richard began to scent a plot, and would not be balked.

“Well, sir, look here,” said the farmer. “It ain’t no secret, and if it be, I don’t see why I’m to keep it. It appears your education’s peculiar!” The farmer drawled out the word as if he were describing the figure of a snake. “You ain’t to be as other young gentlemen. All the better! You’re a fine bold young gentleman, and your father’s a right to be proud of ye. Well, sir—I’m sure I thank him for’t he comes to hear of you and Luce, and of course he don’t want nothin’ o’ that—more

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do I. I meets him there! What's more I won't have nothin' of it. She be my gal. She were left to my protection. And she's a lady, sir. Let me tell ye, ye won't find many on 'em so well looked to as she be—my Luce! Well, Mr. Fev'rel, it's you, or it's her—one of ye must be out o' the way. So we're told. And Luce—I do believe she's just as anxious about yer education as yer father she says she'll go, and wouldn't write, and'd break it off for the sake o' your education. And she've kep' her word, haven't she?—She's a true'n. What she says she'll do!—True blue she be, my Luce! So now, sir, you do the same, and I'll thank ye."

Any one who has tossed a sheet of paper into the fire, and seen it gradually brown with heat, and strike to flame, may conceive the mind of the lover as he listened to this speech.

His anger did not evaporate in words, but condensed and sank deep. "Mr. Blaize," he said, "this is very kind of the people you allude to, but I am of an age now to think and act for myself—I love her, sir!" His whole countenance changed, and the muscles of his face quivered.

"Well!" said the farmer, appeasingly, "we all do at your age—somebody or other. It's natural!"

"I love her!" the young man thundered afresh, too much possessed by his passion to have a sense of shame in the confession. "Farmer!" his voice fell to supplication, "will you bring her back?"

Farmer Blaize made a queer face. He asked—what for? and where was the promise required?—But was not the lover's argument conclusive? He said he loved her! and he could not see why her uncle should not in consequence immediately send for her, that they might be together. All very well, quoth the farmer, but what's to come of it?—What was to come of it? Why, love, and more love! And a bit too much! the farmer added grimly.

"Then you refuse me, farmer," said Richard. "I must look to you for keeping her away from me, not to—to—these people. You will not have her back, though I tell you I love her better than my life?"

Farmer Blaize now had to answer him plainly, he had a reason and an objection of his own. And it was, that her character was at stake, and God knew whether she herself might not be in danger. He spoke with a kindly candour, not without dignity. He complimented Richard personally, but young people were young people; baronets' sons were not in the habit of marrying farmers' nieces.

At first the son of a System did not comprehend him. When he did, he said: "Farmer! if I give you my word of honour, as I hope for heaven, to marry her when I am of age, will you have her back?"

He was so fervid that, to quiet him, the farmer only shook his head doubtfully at the bars of the grate, and let his chest fall slowly. Richard caught what seemed to him a glimpse of encouragement in these signs, and observed: "It's not because you object to me, Mr. Blaize?"

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The farmer signified it was not that.

"It's because my father is against me," Richard went on, and undertook to show that love was so sacred a matter that no father could entirely and for ever resist his son's inclinations. Argument being a cool field where the farmer could meet and match him, the young man got on the tramroad of his passion, and went ahead. He drew pictures of Lucy, of her truth, and his own. He took leaps from life to death, from death to life, mixing imprecations and prayers in a torrent. Perhaps he did move the stolid old Englishman a little, he was so vehement, and made so visible a sacrifice of his pride.

Farmer Blaize tried to pacify him, but it was useless. His jewel he must have.

The farmer stretched out his hand for the pipe that allayeth botheration. "May smoke heer now," he said. "Not when—somebody's present. Smoke in the kitchen then. Don't mind smell?"

Richard nodded, and watched the operations while the farmer filled, and lighted, and began to puff, as if his fate hung on them.

"Who'd a' thought, when you sat over there once, of its comin' to this?" ejaculated the farmer, drawing ease and reflection from tobacco. "You didn't think much of her that day, young gentleman! I introduced ye. Well! things comes about. Can't you wait till she returns in due course, now?"

This suggestion, the work of the pipe, did but bring on him another torrent.

"It's queer," said the farmer, putting the mouth of the pipe to his wrinkled-up temples.

Richard waited for him, and then he laid down the pipe altogether, as no aid in perplexity, and said, after leaning his arm on the table and staring at Richard an instant:

"Look, young gentleman! My word's gone. I've spoke it. I've given 'em the 'surance she shan't be back till the Spring, and then I'll have her, and then—well! I do hope, for more reasons than one, ye'll both be wiser—I've got my own notions about her. But I an't the man to force a gal to marry 'gainst her inclines. Depend upon it I'm not your enemy, Mr. Fev'rel. You're jest the one to mak' a young gal proud. So wait,— and see. That's my 'dvice. Jest tak' and wait. I've no more to say."

Richard's impetuosity had made him really afraid of speaking his notions concerning the projected felicity of young Tom, if indeed they were serious.

The farmer repeated that he had no more to say; and Richard, with "Wait till the Spring! Wait till the Spring!" dinning despair in his ears, stood up to depart. Farmer Blaize shook his slack hand in a friendly way, and called out at the door for young Tom, who, dreading allusions to his Folly, did not appear. A maid rushed by Richard in the



passage, and slipped something into his grasp, which fixed on it without further consciousness than that of touch. The mare was led forth by the Bantam. A light rain was falling down strong warm gusts, and the trees were noisy in the night. Farmer Blaize requested Richard at the gate to give him his hand, and say all was well. He liked the young man for his earnestness and honest outspokening. Richard could not say all was well, but he gave his hand, and knitted it to the farmer's in a sharp squeeze, when he got upon Cassandra, and rode into the tumult.

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A calm, clear dawn succeeded the roaring West, and threw its glowing grey image on the waters of the Abbey-lake. Before sunrise Tom Bakewell was abroad, and met the missing youth, his master, jogging Cassandra leisurely along the Lobourne park-road, a sorry couple to look at. Cassandra's flanks were caked with mud, her head drooped: all that was in her had been taken out by that wild night. On what heaths and heavy fallows had she not spent her noble strength, recklessly fretting through the darkness!

"Take the mare," said Richard, dismounting and patting her between the eyes. "She's done up, poor old gal! Look to her, Tom, and then come to me in my room."

Tom asked no questions.

Three days would bring the anniversary of Richard's birth, and though Tom was close, the condition of the mare, and the young gentleman's strange freak in riding her out all night becoming known, prepared everybody at Raynham for the usual bad-luck birthday, the prophets of which were full of sad gratification. Sir Austin had an unpleasant office to require of his son; no other than that of humbly begging Benson's pardon, and washing out the undue blood he had spilt in taking his Pound of Flesh. Heavy Benson was told to anticipate the demand for pardon, and practised in his mind the most melancholy Christian deportment he could assume on the occasion. But while his son was in this state, Sir Austin considered that he would hardly be brought to see the virtues of the act, and did not make the requisition of him, and heavy Benson remained drawn up solemnly expectant at doorways, and at the foot of the staircase, a Saurian Caryatid, wherever he could get a step in advance of the young man, while Richard heedlessly passed him, as he passed everybody else, his head bent to the ground, and his legs bearing him like random instruments of whose service he was unconscious. It was a shock to Benson's implicit belief in his patron; and he was not consoled by the philosophic explanation, "That Good in a strong many-compounded nature is of slower growth than any other mortal thing, and must not be forced." Damnatory doctrines best pleased Benson. He was ready to pardon, as a Christian should, but he did want his enemy before him on his knees. And now, though the Saurian Eye saw more than all the other eyes in the house, and saw that there was matter in hand between Tom and his master to breed exceeding discomposure to the System, Benson, as he had not received his indemnity, and did not wish to encounter fresh perils for nothing, held his peace.

Sir Austin partly divined what was going on in the breast of his son, without conceiving the depths of distrust his son cherished or quite measuring the intensity of the passion that consumed him. He was very kind and tender with him. Like a cunning physician who has, nevertheless, overlooked the change in the disease superinduced by one false dose, he meditated his prescriptions carefully and confidently, sure that he knew the case, and was a match for it. He decreed that Richard's erratic behaviour should pass unnoticed. Two days before the birthday, he asked him whether he would object to

having company? To which Richard said: "Have whom you will, sir." The preparation for festivity commenced accordingly.

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On the birthday eve he dined with the rest. Lady Blandish was there, and sat penitently at his right. Hippias prognosticated certain indigestion for himself on the morrow. The Eighteenth Century wondered whether she should live to see another birthday. Adrian drank the two-years' distant term of his tutorship, and Algernon went over the list of the Lobourne men who would cope with Bursley on the morrow. Sir Austin gave ear and a word to all, keeping his mental eye for his son. To please Lady Blandish also, Adrian ventured to make trifling jokes about London's Mrs. Grandison; jokes delicately not decent, but so delicately so, that it was not decent to perceive it.

After dinner Richard left them. Nothing more than commonly peculiar was observed about him, beyond the excessive glitter of his eyes, but the baronet said, "Yes, yes! that will pass." He and Adrian, and Lady Blandish, took tea in the library, and sat till a late hour discussing casuistries relating mostly to the Apple-disease. Converse very amusing to the wise youth, who could suggest to the two chaste minds situations of the shadiest character, with the air of a seeker after truth, and lead them, unsuspecting, where they dared not look about them. The Aphorist had elated the heart of his constant fair worshipper with a newly rounded if not newly conceived sentence, when they became aware that they were four. Heavy Benson stood among them. He said he had knocked, but received no answer. There was, however, a vestige of surprise and dissatisfaction on his face beholding Adrian of the company, which had not quite worn away, and gave place, when it did vanish, to an aspect of flabby severity.

"Well, Benson? well?" said the baronet.

The unmoving man replied: "If you please, Sir Austin—Mr. Richard!"

"Well!"

"He's out!"

"Well?"

"With Bakewell!"

"Well?"

"And a carpet-bag!"

The carpet-bag might be supposed to contain that funny thing called a young hero's romance in the making.

Out Richard was, and with a carpet-bag, which Tom Bakewell carried. He was on the road to Bellingham, under heavy rain, hasting like an escaped captive, wild with joy, while Tom shook his skin, and grunted at his discomforts. The mail train was to be caught at Bellingham. He knew where to find her now, through the intervention of Miss

Davenport, and thither he was flying, an arrow loosed from the bow: thither, in spite of fathers and friends and plotters, to claim her, and take her, and stand with her against the world.

They were both thoroughly wet when they entered Bellingham, and Tom's visions were of hot drinks. He hinted the necessity for inward consolation to his master, who could answer nothing but "Tom! Tom! I shall see her tomorrow!" It was bad—travelling in the wet, Tom hinted again, to provoke the same insane outcry, and have his arm seized and furiously shaken into the bargain. Passing the principal inn of the place, Tom spoke plainly for brandy.

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"No!" cried Richard, "there's not a moment to be lost!" and as he said it, he reeled, and fell against Tom, muttering indistinctly of faintness, and that there was no time to lose. Tom lifted him in his arms, and got admission to the inn. Brandy, the country's specific, was advised by host and hostess, and forced into his mouth, reviving him sufficiently to cry out, "Tom! the bell's ringing: we shall be late," after which he fell back insensible on the sofa where they had stretched him. Excitement of blood and brain had done its work upon him. The youth suffered them to undress him and put him to bed, and there he lay, forgetful even of love; a drowned weed borne onward by the tide of the hours. There his father found him.

Was the Scientific Humanist remorseful? He had looked forward to such a crisis as that point in the disease his son was the victim of, when the body would fail and give the spirit calm to conquer the malady, knowing very well that the seeds of the evil were not of the spirit. Moreover, to see him and have him was a repose after the alarm Benson had sounded. "Mark!" he said to Lady Blandish, "when he recovers he will not care for her."

The lady had accompanied him to the Bellingham inn on first hearing of Richard's seizure.

"What an iron man you can be," she exclaimed, smothering her intuitions. She was for giving the boy his bauble; promising it him, at least, if he would only get well and be the bright flower of promise he once was.

"Can you look on him," she pleaded, "can you look on him and persevere?"

It was a hard sight for this man who loved his son so deeply. The youth lay in his strange bed, straight and motionless, with fever on his cheeks, and altered eyes.

Old Dr. Clifford of Lobourne was the medical attendant, who, with head-shaking, and gathering of lips, and reminiscences of ancient arguments, guaranteed to do all that leech could do in the matter. The old doctor did admit that Richard's constitution was admirable, and answered to his prescriptions like a piano to the musician. "But," he said at a family consultation, for Sir Austin had told him how it stood with the young man, "drugs are not much in cases of this sort. Change! That's what's wanted, and as soon as may be. Distraction! He ought to see the world, and know what he is made of. It's no use my talking, I know," added the doctor.

"On the contrary," said Sir Austin, "I am quite of your persuasion. And the world he shall see—now."

"We have dipped him in Styx, you know, doctor," Adrian remarked.

"But, doctor," said Lady Blandish, "have you known a case of this sort before?"

“Never, my lady,” said the doctor, “they’re not common in these parts. Country people are tolerably healthy-minded.”

“But people—and country people—have died for love, doctor?”

The doctor had not met any of them.

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"Men, or women?" inquired the baronet.

Lady Blandish believed mostly women.

"Ask the doctor whether they were healthy-minded women," said the baronet. "No! you are both looking at the wrong end. Between a highly-cultured being, and an emotionless animal, there is all the difference in the world. But of the two, the doctor is nearer the truth. The healthy nature is pretty safe. If he allowed for organization he would be right altogether. To feel, but not to feel to excess, that is the problem."

"If I can't have the one I chose,
To some fresh maid I will propose,"

Adrian hummed a country ballad.

CHAPTER XXIV

When the young Experiment again knew the hours that rolled him onward, he was in his own room at Raynham. Nothing had changed: only a strong fist had knocked him down and stunned him, and he opened his eyes to a grey world: he had forgotten what he lived for. He was weak and thin, and with a pale memory of things. His functions were the same, everything surrounding him was the same: he looked upon the old blue hills, the far-lying fallows, the river, and the woods: he knew them, they seemed to have lost recollection of him. Nor could he find in familiar human faces the secret of intimacy of heretofore. They were the same faces: they nodded and smiled to him. What was lost he could not tell. Something had been knocked out of him! He was sensible of his father's sweetness of manner, and he was grieved that he could not reply to it, for every sense of shame and reproach had strangely gone. He felt very useless. In place of the fiery love for one, he now bore about a cold charity to all.

Thus in the heart of the young man died the Spring Primrose, and while it died another heart was pushing forth the Primrose of Autumn.

The wonderful change in Richard, and the wisdom of her admirer, now positively proved, were exciting matters to Lady Blandish. She was rebuked for certain little rebellious fancies concerning him that had come across her enslaved mind from time to time. For was he not almost a prophet? It distressed the sentimental lady that a love like Richard's could pass off in mere smoke, and words such as she had heard him speak in Abbey-wood resolve to emptiness. Nay, it humiliated her personally, and the baronet's shrewd prognostication humiliated her. For how should he know, and dare to say, that love was a thing of the dust that could be trodden out under the heel of science? But he had said so; and he had proved himself right. She heard with wonderment that Richard of his own accord had spoken to his father of the folly he had



been guilty of, and had begged his pardon. The baronet told her this, adding that the youth had done it in a cold unwavering way, without a movement of his features: had evidently done it to throw off the burden of the duty, he had conceived. He had thought himself bound to acknowledge that he had been the Foolish Young Fellow, wishing, possibly, to abjure the fact by an set of penance. He had also given satisfaction to Benson, and was become a renovated peaceful spirit, whose main object appeared to be to get up his physical strength by exercise and no expenditure of speech.

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In her company he was composed and courteous; even when they were alone together, he did not exhibit a trace of melancholy. Sober he seemed, as one who has recovered from a drunkenness and has determined to drink no more. The idea struck her that he might be playing a part, but Tom Bakewell, in a private conversation they had, informed her that he had received an order from his young master, one day while boxing with him, not to mention the young lady's name to him as long as he lived; and Tom could only suppose that she had offended him. Theoretically wise Lady Blandish had always thought the baronet; she was unprepared to find him thus practically sagacious. She fell many degrees; she wanted something to cling to; so she clung to the man who struck her low. Love, then, was earthly; its depth could be probed by science! A man lived who could measure it from end to end; foretell its term; handle the young cherub as were he a shot owl! We who have flown into cousinship with the empyrean, and disported among immortal hosts, our base birth as a child of Time is made bare to us! —our wings are cut! Oh, then, if science is this victorious enemy of love, let us love science! was the logic of the lady's heart; and secretly cherishing the assurance that she should confute him yet, and prove him utterly wrong, she gave him the fruits of present success, as it is a habit of women to do; involuntarily partly. The fires took hold of her. She felt soft emotions such as a girl feels, and they flattered her. It was like youth coming back. Pure women have a second youth. The Autumn primrose flourished.

We are advised by The Pilgrim's Scrip that—

"The ways of women, which are Involution, and their practices, which are Opposition, are generally best hit upon by guess work, and a bold word;" —it being impossible to track them and hunt them down in the ordinary style.

So that we may not ourselves become involved and opposed, let us each of us venture a guess and say a bold word as to how it came that the lady, who trusted love to be eternal, grovelled to him that shattered her tender faith, and loved him.

Hitherto it had been simply a sentimental dalliance, and gossips had maligned the lady. Just when the gossips grew tired of their slander, and inclined to look upon her charitably, she set about to deserve every word they had said of her; which may instruct us, if you please, that gossips have only to persist in lying to be crowned with verity, or that one has only to endure evil mouths for a period to gain impunity. She was always at the Abbey now. She was much closeted with the baronet. It seemed to be understood that she had taken Mrs. Doria's place. Benson in his misogynic soul perceived that she was taking Lady Feverel's: but any report circulated by Benson was sure to meet discredit, and drew the gossips upon himself; which made his meditations tragic. No sooner was one woman defeated than another took the field! The object of the System was no sooner safe than its great author was in danger!

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"I can't think what has come to Benson" he said to Adrian.

"He seems to have received a fresh legacy of several pounds of lead," returned the wise youth, and imitating Dr. Clifford's manner. "Change is what he wants! distraction! send him to Wales for a month, sir, and let Richard go with him. The two victims of woman may do each other good."

"Unfortunately I can't do without him," said the baronet.

"Then we must continue to have him on our shoulders all day, and on our chests all night!" Adrian ejaculated.

"I think while he preserves this aspect we won't have him at the dinner-table," said the baronet.

Adrian thought that would be a relief to their digestions; and added: "You know, sir, what he says?"

Receiving a negative, Adrian delicately explained to him that Benson's excessive ponderosity of demeanour was caused by anxiety for the safety of his master.

"You must pardon a faithful fool, sir," he continued, for the baronet became red, and exclaimed:

"His stupidity is past belief! I have absolutely to bolt my study-door against him."

Adrian at once beheld a charming scene in the interior of the study, not unlike one that Benson had visually witnessed. For, like a wary prophet, Benson, that he might have warrant for what he foretold of the future, had a care to spy upon the present: warned haply by The Pilgrim's Scrip, of which he was a diligent reader, and which says, rather emphatically: "Could we see Time's full face, we were wise of him." Now to see Time's full face, it is sometimes necessary to look through keyholes, the veteran having a trick of smiling peace to you on one cheek and grimacing confusion on the other behind the curtain. Decency and a sense of honour restrain most of us from being thus wise and miserable for ever. Benson's excuse was that he believed in his master, who was menaced. And moreover, notwithstanding his previous tribulation, to spy upon Cupid was sweet to him. So he peeped, and he saw a sight. He saw Time's full face; or, in other words, he saw the wiles of woman and the weakness of man: which is our history, as Benson would have written it, and a great many poets and philosophers have written it.

Yet it was but the plucking of the Autumn primrose that Benson had seen: a somewhat different operation from the plucking of the Spring one: very innocent! Our staid elderly sister has paler blood, and has, or thinks she has, a reason or two about the roots. She is not all instinct. "For this high cause, and for that I know men, and know him to be the

flower of men, I give myself to him!" She makes that lofty inward exclamation while the hand is detaching her from the roots. Even so strong a self-justification she requires. She has not that blind glory in excess which her younger sister can gild the longest leap with. And if, moth-like, she desires the star, she is nervously cautious of

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candles. Hence her circles about the dangerous human flame are wide and shy. She must be drawn nearer and nearer by a fresh reason. She loves to sentimentalize. Lady Blandish had been sentimentalizing for ten years. She would have preferred to pursue the game. The dark-eyed dame was pleased with her smooth life and the soft excitement that did not ruffle it. Not willingly did she let herself be won.

“Sentimentalists,” says The Pilgrim’s Scrip, “are they who seek to enjoy without incurring the Immense Debtorship for a thing done.”

“It is,” the writer says of Sentimentalism elsewhere, “a happy pastime and an important science to the timid, the idle, and the heartless; but a damning one to them who have anything to forfeit.”

However, one who could set down the dying for love, as a sentimentalism, can hardly be accepted as a clear authority. Assuredly he was not one to avoid the incurring of the immense debtorship in any way: but he was a bondsman still to the woman who had forsaken him, and a spoken word would have made it seem his duty to face that public scandal which was the last evil to him. What had so horrified the virtuous Benson, Richard had already beheld in Daphne’s Bower; a simple kissing of the fair white hand! Doubtless the keyhole somehow added to Benson’s horror. The two similar performances, so very innocent, had wondrous opposite consequences. The first kindled Richard to adore Woman; the second destroyed Benson’s faith in Man. But Lady Blandish knew the difference between the two. She understood why the baronet did not speak; excused, and respected him for it. She was content, since she must love, to love humbly, and she had, besides, her pity for his sorrows to comfort her. A hundred fresh reasons for loving him arose and multiplied every day. He read to her the secret book in his own handwriting, composed for Richard’s Marriage Guide: containing Advice and Directions to a Young Husband, full of the most tender wisdom and delicacy; so she thought; nay, not wanting in poetry, though neither rhymed nor measured. He expounded to her the distinctive character of the divers ages of love, giving the palm to the flower she put forth, over that of Spring, or the Summer rose. And while they sat and talked; “My wound has healed,” he said. “How?” she asked. “At the fountain of your eyes,” he replied, and drew the joy of new life from her blushes, without incurring further debtor ship for a thing done.

CHAPTER XXV

Let it be some apology for the damage caused by the careering hero, and a consolation to the quiet wretches, dragged along with him at his chariot-wheels, that he is generally the last to know when he has made an actual start; such a mere creature is he, like the rest of us, albeit the head of our fates. By this you perceive the true hero, whether he

be a prince or a pot-boy, that he does not plot; Fortune does all for him. He may be compared to one to whom, in an electric circle, it is given to carry the battery.

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We caper and grimace at his will; yet not his the will, not his the power. 'Tis all Fortune's, whose puppet he is. She deals her dispensations through him. Yea, though our capers be never so comical, he laughs not. Intent upon his own business, the true hero asks little services of us here and there; thinks it quite natural that they should be acceded to, and sees nothing ridiculous in the lamentable contortions we must go through to fulfil them. Probably he is the elect of Fortune, because of that notable faculty of being intent upon his own business: "Which is," says The Pilgrim's Scrip, "with men to be valued equal to that force which in water makes a stream." This prelude was necessary to the present chapter of Richard's history.

It happened that in the turn of the year, and while old earth was busy with her flowers, the fresh wind blew, the little bird sang, and Hippias Feverel, the Dyspepsy, amazed, felt the Spring move within him. He communicated his delightful new sensations to the baronet, his brother, whose constant exclamation with regard to him, was: "Poor Hippias! All his machinery is bare!" and had no hope that he would ever be in a condition to defend it from view. Nevertheless Hippias had that hope, and so he told his brother, making great exposure of his machinery to effect the explanation. He spoke of all his physical experiences exultingly, and with wonder. The achievement of common efforts, not usually blazoned, he celebrated as triumphs, and, of course, had Adrian on his back very quickly. But he could bear him, or anything, now. It was such ineffable relief to find himself looking out upon the world of mortals instead of into the black phantasmal abysses of his own complicated frightful structure. "My mind doesn't so much seem to haunt itself, now," said Hippias, nodding shortly and peering out of intense puckers to convey a glimpse of what hellish sufferings his had been: "I feel as if I had come aboveground."

A poor Dyspepsy may talk as he will, but he is the one who never gets sympathy, or experiences compassion: and it is he whose groaning petitions for charity do at last rout that Christian virtue. Lady Blandish, a charitable soul, could not listen to Hippias, though she had a heart for little mice and flies, and Sir Austin had also small patience with his brother's gleam of health, which was just enough to make his disease visible. He remembered his early follies and excesses, and bent his ear to him as one man does to another who complains of having to pay a debt legally incurred.

"I think," said Adrian, seeing how the communications of Hippias were received, "that when our Nemesis takes lodgings in the stomach, it's best to act the Spartan, smile hard, and be silent."

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Richard alone was decently kind to Hippias; whether from opposition, or real affection, could not be said, as the young man was mysterious. He advised his uncle to take exercise, walked with him, cultivated cheerful impressions in him, and pointed out innocent pursuits. He made Hippias visit with him some of the poor old folk of the village, who bewailed the loss of his cousin Austin Wentworth, and did his best to waken him up, and give the outer world a stronger hold on him. He succeeded in nothing but in winning his uncle's gratitude. The season bloomed scarce longer than a week for Hippias, and then began to languish. The poor Dyspepsy's eager grasp at beatification relaxed: he went underground again. He announced that he felt "spongy things"—one of the more constant throes of his malady. His bitter face recurred: he chewed the cud of horrid hallucinations. He told Richard he must give up going about with him: people telling of their ailments made him so uncomfortable—the birds were so noisy, pairing—the rude bare soil sickened him.

Richard treated him with a gravity equal to his father's. He asked what the doctors said.

"Oh! the doctors!" cried Hippias with vehement scepticism. "No man of sense believes in medicine for chronic disorder. Do you happen to have heard of any new remedy then, Richard? No? They advertise a great many cures for indigestion, I assure you, my dear boy. I wonder whether one can rely upon the authenticity of those signatures? I see no reason why there should be no cure for such a disease?—Eh? And it's just one of the things a quack, as they call them, would hit upon sooner than one who is in the beaten track. Do you know, Richard, my dear boy, I've often thought that if we could by any means appropriate to our use some of the extraordinary digestive power that a boa constrictor has in his gastric juices, there is really no manner of reason why we should not comfortably dispose of as much of an ox as our stomachs will hold, and one might eat French dishes without the wretchedness of thinking what's to follow. And this makes me think that those fellows may, after all, have got some truth in them: some secret that, of course, they require to be paid for. We distrust each other in this world too much, Richard. I've felt inclined once or twice—but it's absurd!—If it only alleviated a few of my sufferings I should be satisfied. I've no hesitation in saying that I should be quite satisfied if it only did away with one or two, and left me free to eat and drink as other people do. Not that I mean to try them. It's only a fancy—Eh? What a thing health is, my dear boy! Ah! if I were like you! I was in love once!"

"Were you!" said Richard, coolly regarding him.

"I've forgotten what I felt!" Hippias sighed. "You've very much improved, my dear boy."

"So people say," quoth Richard.

Hippias looked at him anxiously: "If I go to town and get the doctor's opinion about trying a new course—Eh, Richard? will you come with me? I should like your company."

We could see London together, you know. Enjoy ourselves,” and Hippias rubbed his hands.

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Richard smiled at the feeble glimmer of enjoyment promised by his uncle's eyes, and said he thought it better they should stay where they were—an answer that might mean anything. Hippias immediately became possessed by the beguiling project. He went to the baronet, and put the matter before him, instancing doctors as the object of his journey, not quacks, of course; and requesting leave to take Richard. Sir Austin was getting uneasy about his son's manner. It was not natural. His heart seemed to be frozen: he had no confidences: he appeared to have no ambition—to have lost the virtues of youth with the poison that had passed out of him. He was disposed to try what effect a little travelling might have on him, and had himself once or twice hinted to Richard that it would be good for him to move about, the young man quietly replying that he did not wish to quit Raynham at all, which was too strict a fulfilment of his father's original views in educating him there entirely. On the day that Hippias made his proposal, Adrian, seconded by Lady Blandish, also made one. The sweet Spring season stirred in Adrian as well as in others: not to pastoral measures: to the joys of the operatic world and bravura glories. He also suggested that it would be advisable to carry Richard to town for a term, and let him know his position, and some freedom. Sir Austin weighed the two proposals. He was pretty certain that Richard's passion was consumed, and that the youth was now only under the burden of its ashes. He had found against his heart, at the Bellingham inn: a great lock of golden hair. He had taken it, and the lover, after feeling about for it with faint hands, never asked for it. This precious lock (Miss Davenport had thrust it into his hand at Belthorpe as Lucy's last gift), what sighs and tears it had weathered! The baronet laid it in Richard's sight one day, and beheld him take it up, turn it over, and drop it down again calmly, as if he were handling any common curiosity. It pacified him on that score. The young man's love was dead. Dr. Clifford said rightly: he wanted distractions. The baronet determined that Richard should go. Hippias and Adrian then pressed their several suits as to which should have him. Hippias, when he could forget himself, did not lack sense. He observed that Adrian was not at present a proper companion for Richard, and would teach him to look on life from the false point.

"You don't understand a young philosopher," said the baronet.

"A young philosopher's an old fool!" returned Hippias, not thinking that his growl had begotten a phrase.

His brother smiled with gratification, and applauded him loudly: "Excellent! worthy of your best days! You're wrong, though, in applying it to Adrian. He has never been precocious. All he has done has been to bring sound common sense to bear upon what he hears and sees. I think, however," the baronet added, "he may want faith in the better qualities of men." And this reflection inclined him not to let his son be alone with Adrian. He gave Richard his choice, who saw which way his father's wishes tended, and decided so to please him. Naturally it annoyed Adrian extremely. He said to his chief:

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"I suppose you know what you are doing, sir. I don't see that we derive any advantage from the family name being made notorious for twenty years of obscene suffering, and becoming a byword for our constitutional tendency to stomachic distension before we fortunately encountered Quackem's Pill. My uncle's tortures have been huge, but I would rather society were not intimate with them under their several headings." Adrian enumerated some of the most abhorrent. "You know him, sir. If he conceives a duty, he will do it in the face of every decency—all the more obstinate because the conception is rare. If he feels a little brisk the morning after the pill, he sends the letter that makes us famous! We go down to posterity with heightened characteristics, to say nothing of a contemporary celebrity nothing less than our being turned inside-out to the rabble. I confess I don't desire to have my machinery made bare to them."

Sir Austin assured the wise youth that Hippias had arranged to go to Dr. Bairam. He softened Adrian's chagrin by telling him that in about two weeks they would follow to London: hinting also at a prospective Summer campaign. The day was fixed for Richard to depart, and the day came. Madame the Eighteenth Century called him to her chamber and put into his hand a fifty-pound note, as her contribution toward his pocket-expenses. He did not want it, he said, but she told him he was a young man, and would soon make that fly when he stood on his own feet. The old lady did not at all approve of the System in her heart, and she gave her grandnephew to understand that, should he require more, he knew where to apply, and secrets would be kept. His father presented him with a hundred pounds—which also Richard said he did not want—he did not care for money. "Spend it or not," said the baronet, perfectly secure in him.

Hippias had few injunctions to observe. They were to take up quarters at the hotel, Algernon's general run of company at the house not being altogether wholesome. The baronet particularly forewarned Hippias of the imprudence of attempting to restrict the young man's movements, and letting him imagine he was under surveillance. Richard having been, as it were, pollarded by despotism, was now to grow up straight, and bloom again, in complete independence, as far as he could feel. So did the sage decree; and we may pause a moment to reflect how wise were his provisions, and how successful they must have been, had not Fortune, the great foe to human cleverness, turned against him, or he against himself.

The departure took place on a fine March morning. The bird of Winter sang from the budding tree; in the blue sky sang the bird of Summer. Adrian rode between Richard and Hippias to the Bellingham station, and vented his disgust on them after his own humorous fashion, because it did not rain and damp their ardour. In the rear came Lady Blandish and the baronet, conversing on the calm summit of success.

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"You have shaped him exactly to resemble yourself," she said, pointing with her riding-whip to the grave stately figure of the young man.

"Outwardly, perhaps," he answered, and led to a discussion on Purity and Strength, the lady saying that she preferred Purity.

"But you do not," said the baronet. "And there I admire the always true instinct of women, that they all worship Strength in whatever form, and seem to know it to be the child of heaven; whereas Purity is but a characteristic, a garment, and can be spotted—how soon! For there are questions in this life with which we must grapple or be lost, and when, hunted by that cold eye of intense inner-consciousness, the clearest soul becomes a cunning fox, if it have not courage to stand and do battle. Strength indicates a boundless nature—like the Maker. Strength is a God to you—Purity a toy. A pretty one, and you seem to be fond of playing with it," he added, with unaccustomed slyness.

The lady listened, pleased at the sportive malice which showed that the constraint on his mind had left him. It was for women to fight their fight now; she only took part in it for amusement. This is how the ranks of our enemies are thinned; no sooner do poor women put up a champion in their midst than she betrays them.

"I see," she said archly, "we are the lovelier vessels; you claim the more direct descent. Men are seedlings: Women—slips! Nay, you have said so," she cried out at his gestured protestation, laughing.

"But I never printed it."

"Oh! what you speak answers for print with me."

Exquisite Blandish! He could not choose but love her.

"Tell me what are your plans?" she asked. "May a woman know?"

He replied, "I have none or you would share them. I shall study him in the world. This indifference must wear off. I shall mark his inclinations now, and he shall be what he inclines to. Occupation will be his prime safety. His cousin Austin's plan of life appears most to his taste, and he can serve the people that way as well as in Parliament, should he have no stronger ambition. The clear duty of a man of any wealth is to serve the people as he best can. He shall go among Austin's set, if he wishes it, though personally I find no pleasure in rash imaginations, and undigested schemes built upon the mere instinct of principles."

"Look at him now," said the lady. "He seems to care for nothing; not even for the beauty of the day."

"Or Adrian's jokes," added the baronet.

Adrian could be seen to be trying zealously to torment a laugh, or a confession of irritation, out of his hearers, stretching out his chin to one, and to the other, with audible asides. Richard he treated as a new instrument of destruction about to be let loose on the slumbering metropolis; Hippias as one in an interesting condition; and he got so much fun out of the notion of these two journeying together, and the mishaps that might occur to them, that he esteemed it almost a personal insult for his hearers not to laugh. The wise youth's dull life at Raynham had afflicted him with many peculiarities of the professional joker.

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“Oh! the Spring! the Spring!” he cried, as in scorn of his sallies they exchanged their unmeaning remarks on the sweet weather across him. “You seem both to be uncommonly excited by the operations of turtles, rooks, and daws. Why can’t you let them alone?”

‘Wind bloweth,
Cock croweth,
Doodle-doo;
Hippy verteth,
Ricky sterteth,
Sing Cuckoo!’

There’s an old native pastoral!—Why don’t you write a Spring sonnet, Ricky? The asparagus-beds are full of promise, I hear, and eke the strawberry. Berries I fancy your Pegasus has a taste for. What kind of berry was that I saw some verses of yours about once?—amatory verses to some kind of berry—yewberry, blueberry, glueberry! Pretty verses, decidedly warm. Lips, eyes, bosom, legs—legs? I don’t think you gave her any legs. No legs and no nose. That appears to be the poetic taste of the day. It shall be admitted that you create the very beauties for a chaste people.

‘O might I lie where leans her lute!’

and offend no moral community. That’s not a bad image of yours, my dear boy:

‘Her shape is like an antelope
Upon the Eastern hills.’

But as a candid critic, I would ask you if the likeness can be considered correct when you give her no legs? You will see at the ballet that you are in error about women at present, Richard. That admirable institution which our venerable elders have imported from Gallia for the instruction of our gaping youth, will edify and astonish you. I assure you I used, from reading The Pilgrim’s Scrip, to imagine all sorts of things about them, till I was taken there, and learnt that they are very like us after all, and then they ceased to trouble me. Mystery is the great danger to youth, my son! Mystery is woman’s redoubtable weapon, O Richard of the Ordeal! I’m aware that you’ve had your lessons in anatomy, but nothing will persuade you that an anatomical figure means flesh and blood. You can’t realize the fact. Do you intend to publish when you’re in town? It’ll be better not to put your name. Having one’s name to a volume of poems is as bad as to an advertising pill.”

“I will send you an early copy, Adrian, when I publish,” quoth Richard. “Hark at that old blackbird, uncle.”



“Yes!” Hippias quavered; looking up from the usual subject of his contemplation, and trying to take an interest in him, “fine old fellow!”

“What a chuckle he gives out before he flies! Not unlike July nightingales. You know that bird I told you of—the blackbird that had its mate shot, and used to come to sing to old Dame Bakewell’s bird from the tree opposite. A rascal knocked it over the day before yesterday, and the dame says her bird hasn’t sung a note since.”

“Extraordinary!” Hippias muttered abstractedly. “I remember the verses.”

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“But where’s your moral?” interposed the wrathful Adrian. “Where’s constancy rewarded?”

‘The ouzel-cock so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill;
The rascal with his aim so true;
The Poet’s little quill!’

“Where’s the moral of that? except that all’s game to the poet! Certainly we have a noble example of the devotedness of the female, who for three entire days refuses to make herself heard, on account of a defunct male. I suppose that’s what Ricky dwells on.”

“As you please, my dear Adrian,” says Richard, and points out larch-buds to his uncle, as they ride by the young green wood.

The wise youth was driven to extremity. Such a lapse from his pupil’s heroics to this last verge of Arcadian coolness, Adrian could not believe in. “Hark at this old blackbird!” he cried, in his turn, and pretending to interpret his fits of song:

“Oh, what a pretty comedy!—Don’t we wear the mask well, my Fiasco?— Genoa will be our own to-morrow!—Only wait until the train has started— jolly! jolly! jolly! We’ll be winners yet!

“Not a bad verse—eh, Ricky? my Lucius Junius!”

“You do the blackbird well,” said Richard, and looked at him in a manner mildly affable.

Adrian shrugged. “You’re a young man of wonderful powers,” he emphatically observed; meaning to say that Richard quite beat him; for which opinion Richard gravely thanked him, and with this they rode into Bellingham.

There was young Tom Blaize at the station, in his Sunday beaver and gala waistcoat and neckcloth, coming the lord over Tom Bakewell, who had preceded his master in charge of the baggage. He likewise was bound for London. Richard, as he was dismounting, heard Adrian say to the baronet: “The Beast, sir, appears to be going to fetch Beauty;” but he paid no heed to the words. Whether young Tom heard them or not, Adrian’s look took the lord out of him, and he shrunk away into obscurity, where the nearest approach to the fashions which the tailors of Bellingham could supply to him, sat upon him more easily, and he was not stiffened by the eyes of the superiors whom he sought to rival. The baronet, Lady Blandish, and Adrian remained on horseback, and received Richard’s adieux across the palings. He shook hands with each of them in the same kindly cold way, eliciting from Adrian a marked encomium on his style of doing it. The train came up, and Richard stepped after his uncle into one of the carriages.

Now surely there will come an age when the presentation of science at war with Fortune and the Fates, will be deemed the true epic of modern life; and the aspect of a scientific humanist who, by dint of incessant watchfulness, has maintained a System against those active forties, cannot be reckoned less than sublime, even though at the moment he but sit upon his horse, on a fine March morning such as this, and smile wistfully

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to behold the son of his heart, his System incarnate, wave a serene adieu to tutelage, neither too eager nor morbidly unwilling to try his luck alone for a term of two weeks. At present, I am aware, an audience impatient for blood and glory scorns the stress I am putting on incidents so minute, a picture so little imposing. An audience will come to whom it will be given to see the elementary machinery at work: who, as it were, from some slight hint of the straws, will feel the winds of March when they do not blow. To them will nothing be trivial, seeing that they will have in their eyes the invisible conflict going on around us, whose features a nod, a smile, a laugh of ours perpetually changes. And they will perceive, moreover, that in real life all hangs together: the train is laid in the lifting of an eyebrow, that bursts upon the field of thousands. They will see the links of things as they pass, and wonder not, as foolish people now do, that this great matter came out of that small one.

Such an audience, then, will participate in the baronet's gratification at his son's demeanour, wherein he noted the calm bearing of experience not gained in the usual wanton way: and will not be without some excited apprehension at his twinge of astonishment, when, just as the train went sliding into swiftness, he beheld the grave, cold, self-possessed young man throw himself back in the carriage violently laughing. Science was at a loss to account for that. Sir Austin checked his mind from inquiring, that he might keep suspicion at a distance, but he thought it odd, and the jarring sensation that ran along his nerves at the sight, remained with him as he rode home.

Lady Blandish's tender womanly intuition bade her say: "You see it was the very thing he wanted. He has got his natural spirits already."

"It was," Adrian put in his word, "the exact thing he wanted. His spirits have returned miraculously."

"Something amused him," said the baronet, with an eye on the puffing train.

"Probably something his uncle said or did," Lady Blandish suggested, and led off at a gallop.

Her conjecture chanced to be quite correct. The cause for Richard's laughter was simple enough. Hippias, on finding the carriage-door closed on him, became all at once aware of the bright-haired hope which dwells in Change; for one who does not woo her too frequently; and to express his sudden relief from mental despondency at the amorous prospect, the Dyspepsy bent and gave his hands a sharp rub between his legs: which unlucky action brought Adrian's pastoral,

"Hippy verteth,
Sing cuckoo!"

in such comic colours before Richard, that a demon of laughter seized him.

“Hippy verteth!”

Every time he glanced at his uncle the song sprang up, and he laughed so immoderately that it looked like madness come upon him.

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"Why, why, why, what are you laughing at, my dear boy," said Hippias, and was provoked by the contagious exercise to a modest "ha! ha!"

"Why, what are you laughing at, uncle?" cried Richard.

"I really don't know," Hippias chuckled.

"Nor I, uncle! Sing, cuckoo!"

They laughed themselves into the pleasantest mood imaginable. Hippias not only came aboveground, he flew about in the very skies, verting like any blithe creature of the season. He remembered old legal jokes, and anecdotes of Circuit; and Richard laughed at them all, but more at him— he was so genial, and childishly fresh, and innocently joyful at his own transformation, while a lurking doubt in the bottom of his eyes, now and then, that it might not last, and that he must go underground again, lent him a look of pathos and humour which tickled his youthful companion irresistibly, and made his heart warm to him.

"I tell you what, uncle," said Richard, "I think travelling's a capital thing."

"The best thing in the world, my dear boy," Hippias returned. "It makes me wish I had given up that Work of mine, and tried it before, instead of chaining myself to a task. We're quite different beings in a minute. I am. Hem! what shall we have for dinner?"

"Leave that to me, uncle. I shall order for you. You know, I intend to make you well. How gloriously we go along! I should like to ride on a railway every day."

Hippias remarked: "They say it rather injures the digestion."

"Nonsense! see how you'll digest to-night and to-morrow."

"Perhaps I shall do something yet," sighed Hippias, alluding to the vast literary fame he had aforetime dreamed of. "I hope I shall have a good night to-night."

"Of course you will! What! after laughing like that?"

"Ugh!" Hippias grunted, "I daresay, Richard, you sleep the moment you get into bed!"

"The instant my head's on my pillow, and up the moment I wake. Health's everything!"

"Health's everything!" echoed Hippias, from his immense distance.

"And if you'll put yourself in my hands," Richard continued, "you shall do just as I do. You shall be well and strong, and sing 'Jolly!' like Adrian's blackbird. You shall, upon my honour, uncle!"

He specified the hours of devotion to his uncle's recovery—no less than twelve a day—that he intended to expend, and his cheery robustness almost won his uncle to leap up recklessly and clutch health as his own.

“Mind,” quoth Hippias, with a half-seduced smile, “mind your dishes are not too savoury!”

“Light food and claret! Regular meals and amusement! Lend your heart to all, but give it to none!” exclaims young Wisdom, and Hippias mutters, “Yes! yes!” and intimates that the origin of his malady lay in his not following that maxim earlier.

“Love ruins us, my dear boy,” he said, thinking to preach Richard a lesson, and Richard boisterously broke out:

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"The love of Monsieur Francatelli,
It was the ruin of—et coetera."

Hippias blinked, exclaiming, "Really, my dear boy! I never saw you so excited."

"It's the railway! It's the fun, uncle!"

"Ah!" Hippias wagged a melancholy head, "you've got the Golden Bride! Keep her if you can. That's a pretty fable of your father's. I gave him the idea, though. Austin filches a great many of my ideas!"

"Here's the idea in verse, uncle:

'O sunless walkers by the tide!
O have you seen the Golden Bride!
They say that she is fair beyond
All women; faithful, and more fond!

"You know, the young inquirer comes to a group of penitent sinners by the brink of a stream. They howl, and answer:

Faithful she is, but she forsakes:
And fond, yet endless woe she makes:
And fair! but with this curse she's cross'd;
To know her not till she is lost!

"Then the doleful party march off in single file solemnly, and the fabulist pursues:

'She hath a palace in the West:
Bright Hesper lights her to her rest:
And him the Morning Star awakes
Whom to her charmed arms she takes.

So lives he till he sees, alas!
The maids of baser metal pass.'

"And prodigal of the happiness she lends him, he asks to share it with one of them. There is the Silver Maid, and the Copper, and the Brassy Maid, and others of them. First, you know, he tries Argentine, and finds her only twenty to the pound, and has a worse experience with Copperina, till he descends to the scullery; and the lower he goes, the less obscure become the features of his Bride of Gold, and all her radiance shines forth, my uncle."

"Verse rather blunts the point. Well, keep to her, now you've got her," says Hippias.



"We will, uncle!—Look how the farms fly past! Look at the cattle in the fields! And how the lines duck, and swim up!

'She claims the whole, and not the part—
The coin of an unused heart!
To gain his Golden Bride again,
He hunts with melancholy men,'

—and is waked no longer by the Morning Star!"

"Not if he doesn't sleep till an hour before it rises!" Hippias interjected. "You don't rhyme badly. But stick to prose. Poetry's a Base-metal maid. I'm not sure that any writing's good for the digestion. I'm afraid it has spoilt mine."

"Fear nothing, uncle!" laughed Richard. "You shall ride in the park with me every day to get an appetite. You and I and the Golden Bride. You know that little poem of Sandoe's?

'She rides in the park on a prancing bay,
She and her squires together;
Her dark locks gleam from a bonnet of grey,
And toss with the tossing feather.



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'Too calmly proud for a glance of pride
Is the beautiful face as it passes;
The cockneys nod to each other aside,
The coxcombs lift their glasses.

'And throng to her, sigh to her, you that can breach
The ice-wall that guards her securely;
You have not such bliss, though she smile on you each,
As the heart that can image her purely.'

"Wasn't Sandoe once a friend of my father's? I suppose they quarrelled. He understands the heart. What does he make his 'Humble Lover' say?"

'True, Madam, you may think to part
Conditions by a glacier-ridge,
But Beauty's for the largest heart,
And all abysses Love can bridge!

"Hippias now laughed; grimly, as men laugh at the emptiness of words."

"Largest heart!" he sneered. "What's a 'glacier-ridge'? I've never seen one. I can't deny it rhymes with 'bridge.' But don't go parading your admiration of that person, Richard. Your father will speak to you on the subject when he thinks fit."

"I thought they had quarrelled," said Richard. "What a pity!" and he murmured to a pleased ear:

"Beauty's for the largest heart!"

The flow of their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of passengers at a station. Richard examined their faces with pleasure. All faces pleased him. Human nature sat tributary at the feet of him and his Golden Bride. As he could not well talk his thoughts before them, he looked out at the windows, and enjoyed the changing landscape, projecting all sorts of delights for his old friend Ripton, and musing hazily on the wondrous things he was to do in the world; of the great service he was to be to his fellow-creatures. In the midst of his reveries he was landed in London. Tom Bakewell stood at the carriage door. A glance told Richard that his squire had something curious on his mind; and he gave Tom the word to speak out. Tom edged his master out of hearing, and began sputtering a laugh.

"Dash'd if I can help it, sir!" he said. "That young Tom! He've come to town dressed that spicy! and he don't know his way about no more than a stag. He's come to fetch somebody from another rail, and he don't know how to get there, and he ain't sure about which rail 'tis. Look at him, Mr. Richard! There he goes."

Young Tom appeared to have the weight of all London on his beaver.

“Who has he come for?” Richard asked.

“Don’t you know, sir? You don’t like me to mention the name,” mumbled Tom, bursting to be perfectly intelligible.

“Is it for her, Tom?”

“Miss Lucy, sir.”

Richard turned away, and was seized by Hippias, who begged him to get out of the noise and pother, and caught hold of his slack arm to bear him into a conveyance; but Richard, by wheeling half to the right, or left, always got his face round to the point where young Tom was manoeuvring to appear at his ease. Even when they were seated in the conveyance, Hippias could not persuade him to drive off. He made the excuse that he did not wish to start till there was a clear road. At last young Tom cast anchor by a policeman, and, doubtless at the official’s suggestion, bashfully took seat in a cab, and was shot into the whirlpool of London. Richard then angrily asked his driver what he was waiting for.

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"Are you ill, my boy?" said Hippias. "Where's your colour?"

He laughed oddly, and made a random answer that he hoped the fellow would drive fast.

"I hate slow motion after being in the railway," he said.

Hippias assured him there was something the matter with him.

"Nothing, uncle! nothing!" said Richard, looking fiercely candid.

They say, that when the skill and care of men rescue a drowned wretch from extinction, and warm the flickering spirit into steady flame, such pain it is, the blood forcing its way along the dry channels, and the heavily-ticking nerves, and the sullen heart—the struggle of life and death in him—grim death relaxing his gripe; such pain it is, he cries out no thanks to them that pull him by inches from the depths of the dead river. And he who has thought a love extinct, and is surprised by the old fires, and the old tyranny, he rebels, and strives to fight clear of the cloud of forgotten sensations that settle on him; such pain it is, the old sweet music reviving through his frame, and the charm of his passion filing him afresh. Still was fair Lucy the one woman to Richard. He had forbidden her name but from an instinct of self-defence. Must the maids of baser metal dominate him anew, it is in Lucy's shape. Thinking of her now so near him—his darling! all her graces, her sweetness, her truth; for, despite his bitter blame of her, he knew her true—swam in a thousand visions before his eyes; visions pathetic, and full of glory, that now wrung his heart, and now elated it. As well might a ship attempt to calm the sea, as this young man the violent emotion that began to rage in his breast. "I shall not see her!" he said to himself exultingly, and at the same instant thought, how black was every corner of the earth but that one spot where Lucy stood! how utterly cheerless the place he was going to! Then he determined to bear it; to live in darkness; there was a refuge in the idea of a voluntary martyrdom. "For if I chose I could see her—this day within an hour!—I could see her, and touch her hand, and, oh, heaven!—But I do not choose." And a great wave swelled through him, and was crushed down only to swell again more stormily.

Then Tom Bakewell's words recurred to him that young Tom Blaize was uncertain where to go for her, and that she might be thrown on this Babylon alone. And flying from point to point, it struck him that they had known at Raynham of her return, and had sent him to town to be out of the way—they had been miserably plotting against him once more. "They shall see what right they have to fear me. I'll shame them!" was the first turn taken by his wrathful feelings, as he resolved to go, and see her safe, and calmly return to his uncle, whom he sincerely believed not to be one of the conspirators. Nevertheless, after forming that resolve, he sat still, as if there were something fatal in the wheels that bore him away from it—perhaps

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because he knew, as some do when passion is lord, that his intelligence juggled with him; though none the less keenly did he feel his wrongs and suspicions. His Golden Bride was waning fast. But when Hippias ejaculated to cheer him: "We shall soon be there!" the spell broke. Richard stopped the cab, saying he wanted to speak to Tom, and would ride with him the rest of the journey. He knew well enough which line of railway his Lucy must come by. He had studied every town and station on the line. Before his uncle could express more than a mute remonstrance, he jumped out and hailed Tom Bakewell, who came behind with the boxes and baggage in a companion cab, his head a yard beyond the window to make sure of his ark of safety, the vehicle preceding.

"What an extraordinary, impetuous boy it is," said Hippias. "We're in the very street!"

Within a minute the stalwart Berry, despatched by the baronet to arrange everything for their comfort, had opened the door, and made his bow.

"Mr. Richard, sir?—evaporated?" was Berry's modulated inquiry.

"Behind—among the boxes, fool!" Hippias growled, as he received Berry's muscular assistance to alight. "Lunch ready—eh!"

"Luncheon was ordered precise at two o'clock, sir—been in attendance one quarter of an hour. Heah!" Berry sang out to the second cab, which, with its pyramid of luggage, remained stationary some thirty paces distant. At his voice the majestic pile deliberately turned its back on them, and went off in a contrary direction.

CHAPTER XXVI

On the stroke of the hour when Ripton Thompson was accustomed to consult his gold watch for practical purposes, and sniff freedom and the forthcoming dinner, a burglarious foot entered the clerk's office where he sat, and a man of a scowling countenance, who looked a villain, and whom he was afraid he knew, slid a letter into his hands, nodding that it would be prudent for him to read, and be silent. Ripton obeyed in alarm. Apparently the contents of the letter relieved his conscience; for he reached down his hat, and told Mr. Beazley to inform his father that he had business of pressing importance in the West, and should meet him at the station. Mr. Beazley zealously waited upon the paternal Thompson without delay, and together making their observations from the window, they beheld a cab of many boxes, into which Ripton darted and was followed by one in groom's dress. It was Saturday, the day when Ripton gave up his law-readings, magnanimously to bestow himself upon his family, and Mr. Thompson liked to have his son's arm as he walked down to the station; but that third

glass of Port which always stood for his second, and the groom's suggestion of aristocratic acquaintances, prevented Mr. Thompson from interfering: so Ripton was permitted to depart.

In the cab Ripton made a study of the letter he held. It had the preciseness of an imperial mandate.

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Dear Ripton,—You are to get lodgings for a lady immediately. Not a word to a soul. Then come along with Tom. R.D.F.”

“Lodgings for a lady!” Ripton meditated aloud: “What sort of lodgings? Where am I to get lodgings? Who’s the lady?—I say!” he addressed the mysterious messenger. “So you’re Tom Bakewell, are you, Tom?”

Tom grinned his identity.

“Do you remember the rick, Tom? Ha! ha! We got out of that neatly. We might all have been transported, though. I could have convicted you, Tom, safe! It’s no use coming across a practised lawyer. Now tell me.” Ripton having flourished his powers, commenced his examination: “Who’s this lady?”

“Better wait till you see Mr. Richard, sir,” Tom resumed his scowl to reply.

“Ah!” Ripton acquiesced. “Is she young, Tom?”

Tom said she was not old.

“Handsome, Tom?”

“Some might think one thing, some another,” Tom said.

“And where does she come from now?” asked Ripton, with the friendly cheerfulness of a baffled counsellor.

“Comes from the country, sir.”

“A friend of the family, I suppose? a relation?”

Ripton left this insinuating query to be answered by a look. Tom’s face was a dead blank.

“Ah!” Ripton took a breath, and eyed the mask opposite him. “Why, you’re quite a scholar, Tom! Mr. Richard is well. All right at home?”

“Come to town this mornin’ with his uncle,” said Tom. “All well, thank ye, sir.”

“Ha!” cried Ripton, more than ever puzzled, “now I see. You all came to town to-day, and these are your boxes outside. So, so! But Mr. Richard writes for me to get lodgings for a lady. There must be some mistake—he wrote in a hurry. He wants lodgings for you all—eh?”

“‘M sure I d’n know what he wants,” said Tom. “You’d better go by the letter, sir.”

Ripton re-consulted that document. “Lodgings for a lady, and then come along with Tom. Not a word to a soul.’ I say! that looks like—but he never cared for them. You don’t mean to say, Tom, he’s been running away with anybody?”

Tom fell back upon his first reply: “Better wait till ye see Mr. Richard, sir,” and Ripton exclaimed: “Hanged if you ain’t the tightest witness I ever saw! I shouldn’t like to have you in a box. Some of you country fellows beat any number of cockneys. You do!”

Tom received the compliment stubbornly on his guard, and Ripton, as nothing was to be got out of him, set about considering how to perform his friend’s injunctions; deciding firstly, that a lady fresh from the country ought to lodge near the parks, in which direction he told the cabman to drive. Thus, unaware of his high destiny, Ripton joined the hero, and accepted his character in the New Comedy.

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It is, nevertheless, true that certain favoured people do have beneficent omens to prepare them for their parts when the hero is in full career, so that they really may be nerved to meet him; ay, and to check him in his course, had they that signal courage. For instance, Mrs. Elizabeth Berry, a ripe and wholesome landlady of advertised lodgings, on the borders of Kensington, noted, as she sat rocking her contemplative person before the parlour fire this very March afternoon, a supernatural tendency in that fire to burn all on one side: which signifies that a wedding approaches the house. Why—who shall say? Omens are as impassable as heroes. It may be because in these affairs the fire is thought to be all on one side. Enough that the omen exists, and spoke its solemn warning to the devout woman. Mrs. Berry, in her circle, was known as a certificated lecturer against the snares of matrimony. Still that was no reason why she should not like a wedding. Expectant, therefore, she watched the one glowing cheek of Hymen, and with pleasing tremours beheld a cab of many boxes draw up by her bit of garden, and a gentleman emerge from it in the set of consulting an advertisement paper. The gentleman required lodgings for a lady. Lodgings for a lady Mrs. Berry could produce, and a very roseate smile for a gentleman; so much so that Ripton forgot to ask about the terms, which made the landlady in Mrs. Berry leap up to embrace him as the happy man. But her experienced woman's eye checked her enthusiasm. He had not the air of a bridegroom: he did not seem to have a weight on his chest, or an itch to twiddle everything with his fingers. At any rate, he was not the bridegroom for whom omens fly abroad. Promising to have all ready for the lady within an hour, Mrs. Berry fortified him with her card, curtsied him back to his cab, and floated him off on her smiles.

The remarkable vehicle which had woven this thread of intrigue through London streets, now proceeded sedately to finish its operations. Ripton was landed at a hotel in Westminster. Ere he was halfway up the stairs, a door opened, and his old comrade in adventure rushed down. Richard allowed no time for salutations. "Have you done it?" was all he asked. For answer Ripton handed him Mrs. Berry's card. Richard took it, and left him standing there. Five minutes elapsed, and then Ripton heard the gracious rustle of feminine garments above. Richard came a little in advance, leading and half-supporting a figure in a black-silk mantle and small black straw bonnet; young—that was certain, though she held her veil so close he could hardly catch the outlines of her face; girlishly slender, and sweet and simple in appearance. The hush that came with her, and her soft manner of moving, stirred the silly youth to some of those ardours that awaken the Knight of Dames in our bosoms. He felt that he would have given considerable sums for her to lift her veil.

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He could see that she was trembling—perhaps weeping. It was the master of her fate she clung to. They passed him without speaking. As she went by, her head passively bent, Ripton had a glimpse of noble tresses and a lovely neck; great golden curls hung loosely behind, pouring from under her bonnet. She looked a captive borne to the sacrifice. What Ripton, after a sight of those curls, would have given for her just to lift her veil an instant and strike him blind with beauty, was, fortunately for his exchequer, never demanded of him. And he had absolutely been composing speeches as he came along in the cab! gallant speeches for the lady, and sly congratulatory ones for his friend, to be delivered as occasion should serve, that both might know him a man of the world, and be at their ease. He forgot the smirking immoralities he had revelled in. This was clearly serious. Ripton did not require to be told that his friend was in love, and meant that life and death business called marriage, parents and guardians consenting or not.

Presently Richard returned to him, and said hurriedly, “I want you now to go to my uncle at our hotel. Keep him quiet till I come. Say I had to see you—say anything. I shall be there by the dinner hour. Rip! I must talk to you alone after dinner.”

Ripton feebly attempted to reply that he was due at home. He was very curious to hear the plot of the New Comedy; and besides, there was Richard’s face questioning him sternly and confidently for signs of unhesitating obedience. He finished his grimaces by asking the name and direction of the hotel. Richard pressed his hand. It is much to obtain even that recognition of our devotion from the hero.

Tom Bakewell also received his priming, and, to judge by his chuckles and grins, rather appeared to enjoy the work cut out for him. In a few minutes they had driven to their separate destinations; Ripton was left to the unusual exercise of his fancy. Such is the nature of youth and its thirst for romance, that only to act as a subordinate is pleasant. When one unfurls the standard of defiance to parents and guardians, he may be sure of raising a lawless troop of adolescent ruffians, born rebels, to any amount. The beardless crew know that they have not a chance of pay; but what of that when the rosy prospect of thwarting their elders is in view? Though it is to see another eat the Forbidden Fruit, they will run all his risks with him. Gaily Ripton took rank as lieutenant in the enterprise, and the moment his heart had sworn the oaths, he was rewarded by an exquisite sense of the charms of existence. London streets wore a sly laugh to him. He walked with a dandified heel. The generous youth ogled aristocratic carriages, and glanced intimately at the ladies, overflowing with happiness. The crossing-sweepers blessed him. He hummed lively tunes, he turned over old jokes in his mouth unctuously, he hugged himself, he had a mind to dance down Piccadilly, and all because a friend of his was running away with a pretty girl, and he was in the secret.

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It was only when he stood on the doorstep of Richard's hotel, that his jocund mood was a little dashed by remembering that he had then to commence the duties of his office, and must fabricate a plausible story to account for what he knew nothing about—a part that the greatest of sages would find it difficult to perform. The young, however, whom sages well may envy, seldom fail in lifting their inventive faculties to the level of their spirits, and two minutes of Hippias's angry complaints against the friend he serenely inquired for, gave Ripton his cue.

"We're in the very street—within a stone's-throw of the house, and he jumps like a harlequin out of my cab into another; he must be mad—that boy's got madness in him!—and carries off all the boxes—my dinner-pills, too! and keeps away the whole of the day, though he promised to go to the doctor, and had a dozen engagements with me," said Hippias, venting an enraged snarl to sum up his grievances.

Ripton at once told him that the doctor was not at home.

"Why, you don't mean to say he's been to the doctor?" Hippias cried out.

"He has called on him twice, sir," said Ripton, expressively. "On leaving me he was going a third time. I shouldn't wonder that's what detains him—he's so determined."

By fine degrees Ripton ventured to grow circumstantial, saying that Richard's case was urgent and required immediate medical advice; and that both he and his father were of opinion Richard should not lose an hour in obtaining it.

"He's alarmed about himself," said Ripton, and tapped his chest.

Hippias protested he had never heard a word from his nephew of any physical affliction.

"He was afraid of making you anxious, I think, sir."

Algernon Feverel and Richard came in while he was hammering at the alphabet to recollect the first letter of the doctor's name. They had met in the hall below, and were laughing heartily as they entered the room. Ripton jumped up to get the initiative.

"Have you seen the doctor?" he asked, significantly plucking at Richard's fingers.

Richard was all abroad at the question.

Algernon clapped him on the back. "What the deuce do you want with doctor, boy?"

The solid thump awakened him to see matters as they were. "Oh, ay! the doctor!" he said, smiling frankly at his lieutenant. "Why, he tells me he'd back me to do Milo's trick in a week from the present day.—Uncle," he came forward to Hippias, "I hope you'll excuse me for running off as I did. I was in a hurry. I left something at the railway. This

stupid Rip thinks I went to the doctor about myself. The fact was, I wanted to fetch the doctor to see you here—so that you might have no trouble, you know. You can't bear the sight of his instruments and skeletons—I've heard you say so. You said it set all your marrow in revolt—'fried your marrow,' I think were the words, and made you see twenty thousand different ways of sliding down to the chambers of the Grim King. Don't you remember?"

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Hippias emphatically did not remember, and he did not believe the story. Irritation at the mad ravishment of his pill-box rendered him incredulous. As he had no means of confuting his nephew, all he could do safely to express his disbelief in him, was to utter petulant remarks on his powerlessness to appear at the dinner-table that day: upon which— Berry just then trumpeting dinner—Algernon seized one arm of the Dyspepsy, and Richard another, and the laughing couple bore him into the room where dinner was laid, Ripton sniggering in the rear, the really happy man of the party.

They had fun at the dinner-table. Richard would have it; and his gaiety, his by-play, his princely superiority to truth and heroic promise of overriding all our laws, his handsome face, the lord and possessor of beauty that he looked, as it were a star shining on his forehead, gained the old complete mastery over Ripton, who had been, mentally at least, half patronizing him till then, because he knew more of London and life, and was aware that his friend now depended upon him almost entirely.

After a second circle of the claret, the hero caught his lieutenant's eye across the table, and said:

"We must go out and talk over that law-business, Rip, before you go. Do you think the old lady has any chance?"

"Not a bit!" said Ripton, authoritatively.

"But it's worth fighting—eh, Rip?"

"Oh, certainly!" was Ripton's mature opinion.

Richard observed that Ripton's father seemed doubtful. Ripton cited his father's habitual caution. Richard made a playful remark on the necessity of sometimes acting in opposition to fathers. Ripton agreed to it—in certain cases.

"Yes, yes! in certain cases," said Richard.

"Pretty legal morality, gentlemen!" Algernon interjected; Hippias adding: "And lay, too!"

The pair of uncles listened further to the fictitious dialogue, well kept up on both sides, and in the end desired a statement of the old lady's garrulous case; Hippias offering to decide what her chances were in law, and Algernon to give a common-sense judgment.

"Rip will tell you," said Richard, deferentially signalling the lawyer. "I'm a bad hand at these matters. Tell them how it stands, Rip."

Ripton disguised his excessive uneasiness under endeavours to right his position on his chair, and, inwardly praying speed to the claret jug to come and strengthen his wits, began with a careless aspect: "Oh, nothing! She very curious old character! She—a

—wears a wig. She—a—very curious old character indeed! She—a—quite the old style. There's no doing anything with her!" and Ripton took a long breath to relieve himself after his elaborate fiction.

"So it appears," Hippias commented, and Algernon asked: "Well? and about her wig? Somebody stole it?" while Richard, whose features were grim with suppressed laughter, bade the narrator continue.

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Ripton lunged for the claret jug. He had got an old lady like an oppressive bundle on his brain, and he was as helpless as she was. In the pangs of ineffectual authorship his ideas shot at her wig, and then at her one characteristic of extreme obstinacy, and tore back again at her wig, but she would not be animated. The obstinate old thing would remain a bundle. Law studies seemed light in comparison with this tremendous task of changing an old lady from a doll to a human creature. He flung off some claret, perspired freely, and, with a mental tribute to the cleverness of those author fellows, recommenced: "Oh, nothing! She— Richard knows her better than I do—an old lady—somewhere down in Suffolk. I think we had better advise her not to proceed. The expenses of litigation are enormous! She—I think we had better advise her to stop short, and not make any scandal."

"And not make any scandal!" Algernon took him up. "Come, come! there's something more than a wig, then?"

Ripton was commanded to proceed, whether she did or no. The luckless fictionist looked straight at his pitiless leader, and blurted out dubiously, "She—there's a daughter."

"Born with effort!" ejaculated Hippias. "Must give her pause after that! and I'll take the opportunity to stretch my length on the sofa. Heigho! that's true what Austin says: 'The general prayer should be for a full stomach, and the individual for one that works well; for on that basis only are we a match for temporal matters, and able to contemplate eternal.' Sententious, but true. I gave him the idea, though! Take care of your stomachs, boys! and if ever you hear of a monument proposed to a scientific cook or gastronomic doctor, send in your subscriptions. Or say to him while he lives, Go forth, and be a Knight! Ha! They have a good cook at this house. He suits me better than ours at Raynham. I almost wish I had brought my manuscript to town, I feel so much better. Aha! I didn't expect to digest at all without my regular incentive. I think I shall give it up.—What do you say to the theatre to-night, boys!"

Richard shouted, "Bravo, uncle!"

"Let Mr. Thompson finish first," said Algernon. "I want to hear the conclusion of the story. The old girl has a wig and a daughter. I'll swear somebody runs away with one of the two! Fill your glass, Mr. Thompson, and forward!"

"So somebody does," Ripton received his impetus. "And they're found in town together," he made a fresh jerk. "She—a—that is, the old lady— found them in company."

"She finds him with her wig on in company!" said Algernon. "Capital! Here's matter for the lawyers!"

“And you advise her not to proceed, under such circumstances of aggravation?” Hippias observed, humorously twinkling with his stomachic contentment.

“It’s the daughter,” Ripton sighed, and surrendering to pressure, hurried on recklessly, “A runaway match—beautiful girl!—the only son of a baronet—married by special licence. A—the point is,” he now brightened and spoke from his own element, “the point is whether the marriage can be annulled, as she’s of the Catholic persuasion and he’s a Protestant, and they’re both married under age. That’s the point.”

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Having come to the point he breathed extreme relief, and saw things more distinctly; not a little amazed at his leader's horrified face.

The two elders were making various absurd inquiries, when Richard sent his chair to the floor, crying, "What a muddle you're in, Rip! You're mixing half-a-dozen stories together. The old lady I told you about was old Dame Bakewell, and the dispute was concerning a neighbour of hers who encroached on her garden, and I said I'd pay the money to see her righted!"

"Ah," said Ripton, humbly, "I was thinking of the other. Her garden! Cabbages don't interest me"—

"Here, come along," Richard beckoned to him savagely. "I'll be back in five minutes, uncle," he nodded coolly to either.

The young men left the room. In the hall-passage they met Berry, dressed to return to Raynham. Richard dropped a helper to the intelligence into his hand, and warned him not to gossip much of London. Berry bowed perfect discreetness.

"What on earth induced you to talk about Protestants and Catholics marrying, Rip?" said Richard, as soon as they were in the street.

"Why," Ripton answered, "I was so hard pushed for it, 'pon my honour, I didn't know what to say. I ain't an author, you know; I can't make a story. I was trying to invent a point, and I couldn't think of any other, and I thought that was just the point likely to make a jolly good dispute. Capital dinners they give at those crack hotels. Why did you throw it all upon me? I didn't begin on the old lady."

The hero mused, "It's odd! It's impossible you could have known! I'll tell you why, Rip! I wanted to try you. You fib well at long range, but you don't do at close quarters and single combat. You're good behind walls, but not worth a shot in the open. I just see what you're fit for. You're staunch—that I am certain of. You always were. Lead the way to one of the parks—down in that direction. You know?—where she is!"

Ripton led the way. His dinner had prepared this young Englishman to defy the whole artillery of established morals. With the muffled roar of London around them, alone in a dark slope of green, the hero, leaning on his henchman, and speaking in a harsh clear undertone, delivered his explanations. Doubtless the true heroic insignia and point of view will be discerned, albeit in common private's uniform.

"They've been plotting against me for a year, Rip! When you see her, you'll know what it was to have such a creature taken away from you. It nearly killed me. Never mind what she is. She's the most perfect and noble creature God ever made! It's not only her beauty—I don't care so much about that!—but when you've once seen her, she

seems to draw music from all the nerves of your body; but she's such an angel. I worship her. And her mind's like her face. She's pure gold. There, you'll see her to-night.

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"Well," he pursued, after inflating Ripton with this rapturous prospect, "they got her away, and I recovered. It was Mister Adrian's work. What's my father's objection to her? Because of her birth? She's educated; her manners are beautiful—full of refinement—quick and soft! Can they show me one of their ladies like her?—she's the daughter of a naval lieutenant! Because she's a Catholic? What has religion to do with"—he pronounced "Love!" a little modestly—as it were a blush in his voice.

"Well, when I recovered I thought I did not care for her. It shows how we know ourselves! And I cared for nothing. I felt as if I had no blood. I tried to imitate my dear Austin. I wish to God he were here. I love Austin. He would understand her. He's coming back this year, and then—but it'll be too late then.—Well, my father's always scheming to make me perfect—he has never spoken to me a word about her, but I can see her in his eyes—he wanted to give me a change, he said, and asked me to come to town with my uncle Hippy, and I consented. It was another plot to get me out of the way! As I live, I had no more idea of meeting her than of flying to heaven!"

He lifted his face. "hook at those old elm branches! How they seem to mix among the stars!—glittering fruits of Winter!"

Ripton tipped his comical nose upward, and was in duty bound to say, Yes! though he observed no connection between them and the narrative.

"Well," the hero went on, "I came to town. There I heard she was coming, too—coming home. It must have been fate, Ripton! Heaven forgive me! I was angry with her, and I thought I should like to see her once—only once—and reproach her for being false—for she never wrote to me. And, oh, the dear angel! what she must have suffered!—I gave my uncle the slip, and got to the railway she was coming by. There was a fellow going to meet her—a farmer's son—and, good God! they were going to try and make her marry him! I remembered it all then. A servant of the farm had told me. That fellow went to the wrong station, I suppose, for we saw nothing of him. There she was—not changed a bit!—looking lovelier than ever! And when she saw me, I knew in a minute that she must love me till death!—You don't know what it is yet, Rip!—Will you believe, it?— Though I was as sure she loved me and had been true as steel, as that I shall see her to-night, I spoke bitterly to her. And she bore it meekly--she looked like a saint. I told her there was but one hope of life for me—she must prove she was true, and as I give up all, so must she. I don't know what I said. The thought of losing her made me mad. She tried to plead with me to wait—it was for my sake, I know. I pretended, like a miserable hypocrite, that she did not love me at all. I think I said shameful things. Oh what noble creatures women are! She hardly had strength to move. I took her to that place where you found us, Rip! she

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went down on her knees to me, I never dreamed of anything in life so lovely as she looked then. Her eyes were thrown up, bright with a crowd of tears—her dark brows bent together, like Pain and Beauty meeting in one; and her glorious golden hair swept off her shoulders as she hung forward to my hands.—Could I lose such a prize.—If anything could have persuaded me, would not that?—I thought of Dante's Madonna—Guido's Magdalen.—Is there sin in it? I see none! And if there is, it's all mine! I swear she's spotless of a thought of sin. I see her very soul? Cease to love her? Who dares ask me? Cease to love her? Why, I live on her!—To see her little chin straining up from her throat, as she knelt to me!—there was one curl that fell across her throat"....

Ripton listened for more. Richard had gone off in a muse at the picture.

"Well?" said Ripton, "and how about that young farmer fellow?"

The hero's head was again contemplating the starry branches. His lieutenant's question came to him after an interval.

"Young Tom? Why, it's young Torn Blaize—son of our old enemy, Rip! I like the old man now. Oh! I saw nothing of the fellow."

"Lord!" cried Ripton, "are we going to get into a mess with Blaizes again? I don't like that!"

His commander quietly passed his likes or dislikes.

"But when he goes to the train, and finds she's not there?" Ripton suggested.

"I've provided for that. The fool went to the South-east instead of the South-west. All warmth, all sweetness, comes with the South-west!—I've provided for that, friend Rip. My trusty Tom awaits him there, as if by accident. He tells him he has not seen her, and advises him to remain in town, and go for her there to-morrow, and the day following. Tom has money for the work. Young Tom ought to see London, you know, Rip!—like you. We shall gain some good clear days. And when old Blaize hears of it—what then? I have her! she's mine!—Besides, he won't hear for a week. This Tom beats that Tom in cunning, I'll wager. Ha! ha!" the hero burst out at a recollection. "What do you think, Rip? My father has some sort of System with me, it appears, and when I came to town the time before, he took me to some people—the Grandisons—and what do you think? one of the daughters is a little girl—a nice little thing enough very funny—and he wants me to wait for her! He hasn't said so, but I know it. I know what he means. Nobody understands him but me. I know he loves me, and is one of the best of men—but just consider!—a little girl who just comes up to my elbow. Isn't it ridiculous? Did you ever hear such nonsense?"

Ripton emphasized his opinion that it certainly was foolish.

“No, no! The die’s cast!” said Richard. “They’ve been plotting for a year up to this day, and this is what comes of it! If my father loves me, he will love her. And if he loves me, he’ll forgive my acting against his wishes, and see it was the only thing to be done. Come! step out! what a time we’ve been!” and away he went, compelling Ripton to the sort of strides a drummer-boy has to take beside a column of grenadiers.

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Ripton began to wish himself in love, seeing that it endowed a man with wind so that he could breathe great sighs, while going at a tremendous pace, and experience no sensation of fatigue. The hero was communing with the elements, his familiars, and allowed him to pant as he pleased. Some keen-eyed Kensington urchins, noticing the discrepancy between the pedestrian powers of the two, aimed their wit at Mr. Thompson junior's expense. The pace, and nothing but the pace, induced Ripton to proclaim that they had gone too far, when they discovered that they had over shot the mark by half a mile. In the street over which stood love's star, the hero thundered his presence at a door, and evoked a flying housemaid, who knew not Mrs. Berry. The hero attached significance to the fact that his instincts should have betrayed him, for he could have sworn to that house. The door being shut he stood in dead silence.

"Haven't you got her card?" Ripton inquired, and heard that it was in the custody of the cabman. Neither of them could positively bring to mind the number of the house.

"You ought to have chalked it, like that fellow in the Forty Thieves," Ripton hazarded a pleasantry which met with no response.

Betrayed by his instincts, the magic slaves of Love! The hero heavily descended the steps.

Ripton murmured that they were done for. His commander turned on him, and said: "Take all the houses on the opposite side, one after another. I'll take these." With a wry face Ripton crossed the road, altogether subdued by Richard's native superiority to adverse circumstances.

Then were families aroused. Then did mortals dimly guess that something portentous was abroad. Then were labourers all day in the vineyard, harshly wakened from their evening's nap. Hope and Fear stalked the street, as again and again the loud companion summonses resounded. Finally Ripton sang out cheerfully. He had Mrs. Berry before him, profuse of mellow curtsies.

Richard ran to her and caught her hands: "She's well?—upstairs?"

"Oh, quite well! only a trifle tired with her journey, and fluttering-like," Mrs. Berry replied to Ripton alone. The lover had flown aloft.

The wise woman sagely ushered Ripton into her own private parlour, there to wait till he was wanted.

CHAPTER XXVII

"In all cases where two have joined to commit an offence, punish one of the two lightly," is the dictum of The Pilgrim's's Scrip.



It is possible for young heads to conceive proper plans of action, and occasionally, by sheer force of will, to check the wild horses that are ever fretting to gallop off with them. But when they have given the reins and the whip to another, what are they to do? They may go down on their knees, and beg and pray the furious charioteer to stop, or moderate his pace. Alas! each fresh thing they do redoubles

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his ardour: There is a power in their troubled beauty women learn the use of, and what wonder? They have seen it kindle Ilium to flames so often! But ere they grow matronly in the house of Menelaus, they weep, and implore, and do not, in truth, know how terribly two-edged is their gift of loveliness. They resign themselves to an incomprehensible frenzy; pleasant to them, because they attribute it to excessive love. And so the very sensible things which they can and do say, are vain.

I reckon it absurd to ask them to be quite in earnest. Are not those their own horses in yonder team? Certainly, if they were quite in earnest, they might soon have my gentleman as sober as a carter. A hundred different ways of disenchanting him exist, and Adrian will point you out one or two that shall be instantly efficacious. For Love, the charioteer, is easily tripped, while honest jog-trot Love keeps his legs to the end. Granted dear women are not quite in earnest, still the mere words they utter should be put to their good account. They do mean them, though their hearts are set the wrong way. 'Tis a despairing, pathetic homage to the judgment of the majority, in whose faces they are flying. Punish Helen, very young, lightly. After a certain age you may select her for special chastisement. An innocent with Theseus, with Paris she is an advanced incendiary.

The fair young girl was sitting as her lover had left her; trying to recall her stunned senses. Her bonnet was un-removed, her hands clasped on her knees; dry tears in her eyes. Like a dutiful slave, she rose to him. And first he claimed her mouth. There was a speech, made up of all the pretty wisdom her wild situation and true love could gather, awaiting him there; but his kiss scattered it to fragments. She dropped to her seat weeping, and hiding her shamed cheeks.

By his silence she divined his thoughts, and took his hand and drew it to her lips.

He bent beside her, bidding her look at him.

"Keep your eyes so."

She could not.

"Do you fear me, Lucy?"

A throbbing pressure answered him.

"Do you love me, darling?"

She trembled from head to foot.

"Then why do you turn from me?"



She wept: "O Richard, take me home! take me home!"

"Look at me, Lucy!"

Her head shrank timidly round.

"Keep your eyes on me, darling! Now speak!"

But she could not look and speak too. The lover knew his mastery when he had her eyes.

"You wish me to take you home?"

She faltered: "O Richard? it is not too late."

"You regret what you have done for me?"

"Dearest! it is ruin."

"You weep because you have consented to be mine?"

"Not for me! O Richard!"

"For me you weep? Look at me! For me?"

"How will it end! O Richard!"

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“You weep for me?”

“Dearest! I would die for you!”

“Would you see me indifferent to everything in the world? Would you have me lost? Do you think I will live another day in England without you? I have staked all I have on you, Lucy. You have nearly killed me once. A second time, and the earth will not be troubled by me. You ask me to wait, when they are plotting against us on all sides? Darling Lucy! look on me. Fix—your fond eyes on me. You ask me to wait when here you are given to me when you have proved my faith—when we know we love as none have loved. Give me your eyes! Let them tell me I have your heart!”

Where was her wise little speech? How could she match such mighty eloquence? She sought to collect a few more of the scattered fragments.

“Dearest! your father may be brought to consent by and by, and then—oh! if you take me home now”—

The lover stood up. “He who has been arranging that fine scheme to disgrace and martyrize you? True, as I live! that’s the reason of their having you back. Your old servant heard him and your uncle discussing it. He!—Lucy! he’s a good man, but he must not step in between you and me. I say God has given you to me.”

He was down by her side again, his arms enfolding her.

She had hoped to fight a better battle than in the morning, and she was weaker and softer.

Ah! why should she doubt that his great love was the first law to her? Why should she not believe that she would wreck him by resisting? And if she suffered, oh sweet to think it was for his sake! Sweet to shut out wisdom; accept total blindness, and be led by him!

The hag Wisdom annoyed them little further. She rustled her garments ominously, and vanished.

“Oh, my own Richard!” the fair girl just breathed.

He whispered, “Call me that name.”

She blushed deeply.

“Call me that name,” he repeated. “You said it once today.”

“Dearest!”

Not that.”

“O darling!”

“Not that.”

“Husband!”

She was won. The rosy gate from which the word had issued was closed with a seal.

Ripton did not enjoy his introduction to the caged bird of beauty that night. He received a lesson in the art of pumping from the worthy landlady below, up to an hour when she yawned, and he blinked, and their common candle wore with dignity the brigand’s hat of midnight, and cocked a drunken eye at them from under it.

ETEXT EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

A young philosopher’s an old fool!

Cold charity to all

I cannot get on with Gibbon

In our House, my son, there is peculiar blood. We go to wreck!

Our most diligent pupil learns not so much as an earnest teacher