

The Adventures Harry Richmond — Volume 8 eBook

The Adventures Harry Richmond — Volume 8 by George Meredith

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STRANGE REVELATIONS, AND MY GRANDFATHER HAS HIS LAST OUTBURST

My father and I stood at different windows, observing the unconcerned people below.

'Did you scheme to bring Prince Hermann over here as well?' I asked him.

He replied laughing: 'I really am not the wonderful wizard you think me, Richie. I left Prince Ernest's address as mine with Waddy in case the Frau Feld-Marschall should take it into her head to come. Further than that you must question Providence, which I humbly thank for its unfailing support, down to unexpected trifles. Only this—to you and to all of them: nothing bends me. I will not be robbed of the fruit of a lifetime.'

'Supposing I refuse?'

'You refuse, Richie, to restore the princess her character and the prince his serenity of mind at their urgent supplication? I am utterly unable to suppose it. You are married in the papers this morning. I grieve to say that the position of Prince Hermann is supremely ridiculous. I am bound to add he is a bold boy. It requires courage in one of the pretenders to the hand of the princess to undertake the office of intercessor, for he must know—the man must know in his heart that he is doing her no kindness. He does not appeal to me, you see. I have shown that my arrangements are unalterable. What he will make of your grandad! . . . Why on earth he should have been sent to—of all men in the world—your grandad, Richie!'

I was invited to sympathetic smiles of shrewd amusement.

He caught sight of friends, and threw up the window, saluting them.

The squire returned with my aunt Dorothy and Janet to behold the detested man communicating with the outer world from his own rooms. He shouted unceremoniously, 'Shut that window!' and it was easy to see that he had come back heavily armed for the offensive. 'Here, Mr. Richmond, I don't want all men to know you're in my apartments.'

'I forgot, sir, temporarily,' said my father, 'I had vacated the rooms for your convenience—be assured.'

An explanation on the subject of the rooms ensued between the old man and the ladies;—it did not improve his temper.

His sense of breeding, nevertheless, forced him to remark, 'I can't thank you, sir, for putting me under an obligation I should never have incurred myself.'



'Oh, I was happy to be of use to the ladies, Mr. Beltham, and require no small coin of exchange,' my father responded with the flourish of a pacifying hand. 'I have just heard from a posse of friends that the marriage is signalled in this morning's papers—numberless congratulations, I need not observe.'

'No, don't,' said the squire. 'Nobody'll understand them here, and I needn't ask you to sit down, because I don't want you to stop. I'll soon have done now; the game's played. Here, Harry, quick; has all that money been spent—no offence to you, but as a matter of business?'



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'Not all, sir,' I was able to say.

'Half?'

'Yes, I think so.'

'Three parts?'

'It may be.'

'And liabilities besides?'

'There are some.'

'You're not a liar. That'll do for you.'

He turned to my aunt: her eyes had shut.

'Dorothy, you've sold out twenty-five thousand pounds' worth of stock. You're a truthful woman, as I said, and so I won't treat you like a witness in a box. You gave it to Harry to help him out of his scrape. Why, short of staring lunacy, did you pass it through the hands of this man? He sweated his thousands out of it at the start. Why did you make a secret of it to make the man think his nonsense?—Ma'am, behave like a lady and my daughter,' he cried, fronting her, for the sudden and blunt attack had slackened her nerves; she moved as though to escape, and was bewildered. I stood overwhelmed. No wonder she had attempted to break up the scene.

'Tell me your object, Dorothy Beltham, in passing the money through the hands of this man? Were you for helping him to be a man of his word? Help the boy—that I understand. However, you were mistress of your money! I've no right to complain, if you will go spending a fortune to whitewash the blackamoor! Well, it's your own, you'll say. So it is: so 's your character!'

The egregious mildness of these interjections could not long be preserved.

'You deceived me, ma'am. You wouldn't build school-houses, you couldn't subscribe to Charities, you acted parsimony, to pamper a scamp and his young scholar! You went to London—you did it in cool blood; you went to your stockbroker, and from the stockbroker to the Bank, and you sold out stock to fling away this big sum. I went to the Bank on business, and the books were turned over for my name, and there at "Beltham" I saw quite by chance the cross of the pen, and I saw your folly, ma'am; I saw it all in a shot. I went to the Bank on my own business, mind that. Ha! you know me by this time; I loathe spying; the thing jumped out of the book; I couldn't help seeing. Now I don't reckon how many positive fools go to make one superlative humbug; you're one of the lot, and I've learnt it.'



My father airily begged leave to say: 'As to positive and superlative, Mr. Beltham, the three degrees of comparison are no longer of service except to the trader. I do not consider them to exist for ladies. Your positive is always particularly open to dispute, and I venture to assert I cap you your superlative ten times over.'

He talked the stuff for a diversion, presenting in the midst of us an incongruous image of smiles that filled me with I knew not what feelings of angry alienation, until I was somewhat appeased by the idea that he had not apprehended the nature of the words just spoken.

It seemed incredible, yet it was true; it was proved to be so to me by his pricking his ears and his attentive look at the mention of the word prepossessing him in relation to the money: Government.



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The squire said something of Government to my aunt Dorothy, with sarcastical emphasis.

As the observation was unnecessary, and was wantonly thrown in by him, she seized on it to escape from her compromising silence: 'I know nothing of Government or its ways.'

She murmured further, and looked at Janet, who came to her aid, saying: 'Grandada, we've had enough talk of money, money! All is done that you wanted done. Stocks, Shares, Banks—we've gone through them all. Please, finish! Please, do. You have only to state what you have heard from Prince Hermann.'

Janet gazed in the direction of my father, carefully avoiding my eyes, but evidently anxious to shield my persecuted aunty.

'Speaking of Stocks and Shares, Miss Ilchester,' said my father, 'I myself would as soon think of walking into a field of scythe-blades in full activity as of dabbling in them. One of the few instances I remember of our Jorian stooping to a pun, is upon the contango: ingenious truly, but objectionable, because a pun. I shall not be guilty of repeating it. "The stockmarket is the national snapdragon bowl," he says, and is very amusing upon the Jews; whether quite fairly, Mr. Beltham knows better than I, on my honour.'

He appealed lightly to the squire, for thus he danced on the crater's brink, and had for answer,

'You're a cool scoundrel, Richmond.'

'I choose to respect you, rather in spite of yourself, I fear, sir,' said my father, bracing up.

'Did you hear my conversation with my daughter?'

'I heard, if I may say so, the lion taking his share of it.'

'All roaring to you, was it?'

'Mr. Beltham, we have our little peculiarities; I am accustomed to think of a steam-vent when I hear you indulging in a sentence of unusual length, and I hope it is for our good, as I thoroughly believe it is for yours, that you should deliver yourself freely.'

'So you tell me; like a stage lacquey!' muttered the old man, with surprising art in caricaturing a weakness in my father's bearing, of which I was cruelly conscious, though his enunciation was flowing. He lost his naturalness through forcing for ease in the teeth of insult.

'Grandada, aunty and I will leave you,' said Janet, waxing importunate.



'When I've done,' said he, facing his victim savagely. 'The fellow pretends he didn't understand. She's here to corroborate. Richmond, there, my daughter, Dorothy Beltham, there's the last of your fools and dupes. She's a truthful woman, I'll own, and she'll contradict me if what I say is not the fact. That twenty-five thousand from "Government" came out of her estate.'

'Out of—'

'Out of be damned, sir! She's the person who paid it.'

'If the "damns" have set up, you may as well let the ladies go,' said I.

He snapped at me like a rabid dog in career.



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'She's the person—one of your petticoat "Government"—who paid—do you hear me, Richmond?—the money to help you to keep your word: to help you to give your Balls and dinners too. She—I won't say she told you, and you knew it—she paid it. She sent it through her Mr. Bannerbridge. Do you understand now? You had it from her. My God! look at the fellow!'

A dreadful gape of stupefaction had usurped the smiles on my father's countenance; his eyes rolled over, he tried to articulate, and was indeed a spectacle for an enemy. His convulsed frame rocked the syllables, as with a groan, unpleasant to hear, he called on my aunt Dorothy by successive stammering apostrophes to explain, spreading his hands wide. He called out her Christian name. Her face was bloodless.

'Address my daughter respectfully, sir, will you! I won't have your infernal familiarities!' roared the squire.

'He is my brother-in-law,' said Dorothy, reposing on the courage of her blood, now that the worst had been spoken. 'Forgive me, Mr. Richmond, for having secretly induced you to accept the loan from me.'

'Loan!' interjected the squire. 'They fell upon it like a pair of kites. You'll find the last ghost of a bone of your loan in a bill, and well picked. They've been doing their bills: I've heard that.'

My father touched the points of his fingers on his forehead, straining to think, too theatrically, but in hard earnest, I believe. He seemed to be rising on tiptoe.

'Oh, madam! Dear lady! my friend! Dorothy, my sister! Better a thousand times that I had married, though I shrank from a heartless union! This money?—it is not—'

The old man broke in: 'Are you going to be a damned low vulgar comedian and tale of a trumpet up to the end, you Richmond? Don't think you'll gain anything by standing there as if you were jumping your trunk from a shark. Come, sir, you're in a gentleman's rooms; don't pitch your voice like a young jackanapes blowing into a horn. Your gasps and your spasms, and howl of a yawning brute! Keep your menagerie performances for your pantomime audiences. What are you meaning? Do you pretend you're astonished? She's not the first fool of a woman whose money you've devoured, with your "Madam," and "My dear" and mouthing and elbowing your comedy tricks; your gabble of "Government" protection, and scandalous advertisements of the by-blow of a star-coated rascalion. If you've a recollection of the man in you, show your back, and be off, say you've fought against odds—I don't doubt you have, counting the constables—and own you're a villain: plead guilty, and be off and be silent, and do no more harm. Is it "Government" still?'



My aunt Dorothy had come round to me. She clutched my arm to restrain me from speaking, whispering:

'Harry, you can't save him. Think of your own head.' She made me irresolute, and I was too late to check my father from falling into the trap.



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'Oh! Mr. Beltham,' he said, 'you are hard, sir. I put it to you: had you been in receipt of a secret subsidy from Government for a long course of years—'

'How long?' the squire interrupted.

Prompt though he would have been to dismiss the hateful person, he was not, one could see, displeased to use the whip upon so exciteable and responsive a frame. He seemed to me to be basely guilty of leading his victim on to expose himself further.

'There's no necessity for "how long,"' I said.

The old man kept the question on his face.

My father reflected.

'I have to hit my memory, I am shattered, sir. I say, you would be justified, amply justified—'

'How long?' was reiterated.

'I can at least date it from the period of my marriage.'

'From the date when your scoundrelism first touches my family, that's to say! So "Government" agreed to give you a stipend to support your wife!'

'Mr. Beltham, I breathe with difficulty. It was at that period, on the death of a nobleman interested in restraining me—I was his debtor for kindnesses . . . my head is whirling! I say, at that period, upon the recommendation of friends of high standing, I began to agitate for the restitution of my rights. From infancy——'

'To the deuce, your infancy! I know too much about your age. Just hark, you Richmond! none of your "I was a child" to provoke compassion from women. I mean to knock you down and make you incapable of hurting these poor foreign people you trapped. They defy you, and I'll do my best to draw your teeth. Now for the annuity. You want one to believe 'you thought you frightened "Government," eh?'

'Annual proof was afforded me, sir.'

'Oh! annual! through Mr. Charles Adolphus Bannerbridge, deceased!'

Janet stepped up to my aunt Dorothy to persuade her to leave the room, but she declined, and hung by me, to keep me out of danger, as she hoped, and she prompted me with a guarding nervous squeeze of her hand on my arm to answer temperately when I was questioned:



'Harry, do you suspect Government paid that annuity?'

'Not now, certainly.'

'Tell the man who 'tis you suspect.'

My aunt Dorothy said: 'Harry is not bound to mention his suspicions.'

'Tell him yourself, then.'

'Does it matter—?'

'Yes, it matters. I'll break every plank he walks on, and strip him stark till he flops down shivering into his slough—a convicted common swindler, with his dinners and Balls and his private bands! Richmond, you killed one of my daughters; t' other fed you, through her agent, this Mr. Charles Adolphus Bannerbridge, from about the date of your snaring my poor girl and carrying her off behind your postillions—your trotting undertakers! and the hours of her life reckoned in milestones. She's here to contradict me, if she can. Dorothy Beltham was your "Government" that paid the annuity.'

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I took Dorothy Beltham into my arms. She was trembling excessively, yet found time to say, 'Bear up, dearest; keep still.' All I thought and felt foundered in tears.

For a while I heard little distinctly of the tremendous tirade which the vindictive old man, rendered thrice venomous by the immobility of the petrified large figure opposed to him, poured forth. My poor father did not speak because he could not; his arms dropped; and such was the torrent of attack, with its free play of thunder and lightning in the form of oaths, epithets, short and sharp comparisons, bitter home thrusts and most vehement imprecatory denunciations, that our protesting voices quailed. Janet plucked at my aunt Dorothy's dress to bear her away.

'I can't leave my father,' I said.

'Nor I you, dear,' said the tender woman; and so we remained to be scourged by this tongue of incarnate rage.

'You pensioner of a silly country spinster!' sounded like a return to mildness. My father's chest heaved up.

I took advantage of the lull to make myself heard: I did but heap fuel on fire, though the old man's splanetic impetus had partly abated.

'You Richmond! do you hear him? he swears he's your son, and asks to be tied to the stake beside you. Disown him, and I'll pay you money and thank you. I'll thank my God for anything short of your foul blood in the family. You married the boy's mother to craze and kill her, and guttle her property. You waited for the boy to come of age to swallow what was settled on him. You wait for me to lie in my coffin to pounce on the strongbox you think me the fool to toss to a young donkey ready to ruin all his belongings for you! For nine-and-twenty years you've sucked the veins of my family, and struck through my house like a rotting-disease. Nine-and-twenty years ago you gave a singing-lesson in my house: the pest has been in it ever since! You breed vermin in the brain to think of you! Your wife, your son, your dupes, every soul that touches you, mildews from a blight! You were born of ropery, and you go at it straight, like a webfoot to water. What's your boast?—your mother's disgrace! You shame your mother. Your whole life's a ballad o' bastardy. You cry up the woman's infamy to hook at a father. You swell and strut on her pickings. You're a cock forced from the smoke of the dunghill! You shame your mother, damned adventurer! You train your boy for a swindler after your own pattern; you twirl him in your curst harlequinade to a damnation as sure as your own. The day you crossed my threshold the devils danced on their flooring. I've never seen the sun shine fair on me after it. With your guitar under the windows, of moonlight nights! your Spanish fopperies and trickeries! your French phrases and toeings! I was touched by a leper. You set your traps for both my girls: you caught the brown one first, did you, and flung



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her second for t' other, and drove a tandem of 'em to live the spangled hog you are; and down went the mother of the boy to the place she liked better, and my other girl here—the one you cheated for her salvation—you tried to cajole her from home and me, to send her the same way down. She stuck to decency. Good Lord! you threatened to hang yourself, guitar and all. But her purse served your turn. For why? You 're a leech. I speak before ladies or I'd rip your town-life to shreds. Your cause! your romantic history! your fine figure! every inch of you 's notched with villany! You fasten on every moneyed woman that comes in your way. You've outdone Herod in murdering the innocents, for he didn't feed on 'em, and they've made you fat. One thing I'll say of you: you look the beastly thing you set yourself up for. The kindest blow to you 's to call you impostor.'

He paused, but his inordinate passion of speech was unsated: his white lips hung loose for another eruption.

I broke from my aunt Dorothy to cross over to my father, saying on the way: 'We 've heard enough, sir. You forget the cardinal point of invective, which is, not to create sympathy for the person you assail.'

'Oh! you come in with your infernal fine language, do you!' the old man thundered at me. 'I 'll just tell you at once, young fellow—'

My aunt Dorothy supplicated his attention. 'One error I must correct.' Her voice issued from a contracted throat, and was painfully thin and straining, as though the will to speak did violence to her weaker nature. 'My sister loved Mr. Richmond. It was to save her life, because I believed she loved him much and would have died, that Mr. Richmond—in pity—offered her his hand, at my wish': she bent her head: 'at my cost. It was done for me. I wished it; he obeyed me. No blame—' her dear mouth faltered. 'I am to be accused, if anybody.'

She added more firmly: 'My money would have been his. I hoped to spare his feelings, I beg his forgiveness now, by devoting some of it, unknown to him, to assist him. That was chiefly to please myself, I see, and I am punished.'

'Well, ma'am,' said the squire, calm at white heat; 'a fool's confession ought to be heard out to the end. What about the twenty-five thousand?'

'I hoped to help my Harry.'

'Why didn't you do it openly?'



She breathed audible long breaths before she could summon courage to say: 'His father was going to make an irreparable sacrifice. I feared that if he knew this money came from me he would reject it, and persist.'

Had she disliked the idea of my father's marrying?

The old man pounced on the word sacrifice. 'What sacrifice, ma'am? What's the sacrifice?'

I perceived that she could not without anguish, and perhaps peril of a further exposure, bring herself to speak, and explained: 'It relates to my having tried to persuade my father to marry a very wealthy lady, so that he might produce the money on the day appointed. Rail at me, sir, as much as you like. If you can't understand the circumstances without a chapter of statements, I'm sorry for you. A great deal is due to you, I know; but I can't pay a jot of it while you go on rating my father like a madman.'



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'Harry!' either my aunt or Janet breathed a warning.

I replied that I was past mincing phrases. The folly of giving the tongue an airing was upon me: I was in fact invited to continue, and animated to do it thoroughly, by the old man's expression of face, which was that of one who says, 'I give you rope,' and I dealt him a liberal amount of stock irony not worth repeating; things that any cultivated man in anger can drill and sting the Boeotian with, under the delusion that he has not lost a particle of his self-command because of his coolness. I spoke very deliberately, and therefore supposed that the words of composure were those of prudent sense. The error was manifest. The women saw it. One who has indulged his soul in invective will not, if he has power in his hand, be robbed of his climax with impunity by a cool response that seems to trifle, and scourges.

I wound up by thanking my father for his devotion to me: I deemed it, I said, excessive and mistaken in the recent instance, but it was for me.

Upon this he awoke from his dreamy-looking stupefaction.

'Richie does me justice. He is my dear boy. He loves me: I love him. None can cheat us of that. He loves his wreck of a father. You have struck me to your feet, Mr. Beltham.'

'I don't want to see you there, sir; I want to see you go, and not stand rapping your breast-bone, sounding like a burst drum, as you are,' retorted the unappeasable old man.

I begged him in exasperation to keep his similes to himself.

Janet and my aunt Dorothy raised their voices.

My father said: 'I am broken.'

He put out a swimming hand that trembled when it rested, like that of an aged man grasping a staff. I feared for a moment he was acting, he spoke so like himself, miserable though he appeared: but it was his well-known native old style in a state of decrepitude.

'I am broken,' he repeated. 'I am like the ancient figure of mortality entering the mouth of the tomb on a sepulchral monument, somewhere, by a celebrated sculptor: I have seen it: I forget the city. I shall presently forget names of men. It is not your abuse, Mr. Beltham. I should have bowed my head to it till the storm passed. Your facts . . . Oh! Miss Beltham, this last privilege to call you dearest of human beings! my benefactress! my blessing! Do not scorn me, madam.'

'I never did; I never will; I pitied you,' she cried, sobbing.



The squire stamped his foot.

'Madam,' my father bowed gently. 'I was under heaven's special protection—I thought so. I feel I have been robbed—I have not deserved it! Oh! madam, no: it was your generosity that I did not deserve. One of the angels of heaven persuaded me to trust in it. I did not know. . . . Adieu, madam. May I be worthy to meet you!—Ay, Mr. Beltham, your facts have committed the death-wound. You



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have taken the staff out of my hand: you have extinguished the light. I have existed—ay, a pensioner, unknowingly, on this dear lady's charity; to her I say no more. To you, sir, by all that is most sacred to a man—by the ashes of my mother! by the prospects of my boy! I swear the annuity was in my belief a tangible token that my claims to consideration were in the highest sources acknowledged to be just. I cannot speak! One word to you, Mr. Beltham: put me aside, I am nothing:—Harry Richmond!—his fortunes are not lost; he has a future! I entreat you—he is your grandson—give him your support; go this instant to the prince—no! you will not deny your countenance to Harry Richmond: let him abjure my name; let me be nameless in his house. And I promise you I shall be unheard of both in Christendom and Heathendom: I have no heart except for my boy's nuptials with the princess: this one thing, to see him the husband of the fairest and noblest lady upon earth, with all the life remaining in me I pray for! I have won it for him. I have a moderate ability, immense devotion. I declare to you, sir, I have lived, actually subsisted, on this hope! and I have directed my efforts incessantly, sleeplessly, to fortify it. I die to do it! I implore you, sir, go to the prince. If I' (he said this touchingly) 'if I am any further in anybody's way, it is only as a fallen tree.' But his inveterate fancifulness led him to add: 'And that may bridge a cataract.'

My grandfather had been clearing his throat two or three times.

'I 'm ready to finish and get rid of you, Richmond.'

My father bowed.

'I am gone, sir. I feel I am all but tongue-tied. Think that it is Harry who petitions you to ensure his happiness. To-day I guarantee-it.'

The old man turned an inquiring eyebrow upon me. Janet laid her hand on him. He dismissed the feline instinct to prolong our torture, and delivered himself briskly.

'Richmond, your last little bit of villany 's broken in the egg. I separate the boy from you: he's not your accomplice there, I'm glad to know. You witched the lady over to pounce on her like a fowler, you threatened her father with a scandal, if he thought proper to force the trap; swore you 'd toss her to be plucked by the gossips, eh? She's free of you! You got your English and your Germans here to point their bills, and stretch their necks, and hiss, if this gentleman—and your newspapers!—if he didn't give up to you like a funky traveller to a highwayman. I remember a tale of a clumsy Turpin, who shot himself when he was drawing the pistol out of his holsters to frighten the money-bag out of a market farmer. You've done about the same, you Richmond; and, of all the damned poor speeches I ever heard from a convicted felon, yours is the worst—a sheared sheep'd ha' done it more respectably, grant the beast a tongue! The lady is free of you, I tell you. Harry has to thank you for that



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kindness. She—what is it, Janet? Never mind, I've got the story—she didn't want to marry; but this prince, who called on me just now, happened to be her father's nominee, and he heard of your scoundrelism, and he behaved like a man and a gentleman, and offered himself, none too early nor too late, as it turns out; and the princess, like a good girl, has made amends to her father by accepting him. I've the word of this Prince Hermann for it. Now you can look upon a game of stale-mate. If I had gone to the prince, it wouldn't have been to back your play; but, if you hadn't been guilty of the tricks of a blackguard past praying for, this princess would never have been obliged to marry a man to protect her father and herself. They sent him here to stop any misunderstanding. He speaks good English, so that's certain. Your lies will be contradicted, every one of 'em, seriatim, in to-morrow's newspapers, setting the real man in place of the wrong one; and you 'll draw no profit from them in your fashionable world, where you 've been grinning lately, like a blackamoor's head on a conjuror's plate—the devil alone able to account for the body and joinings. Now you can be off.'

I went up to my father. His plight was more desperate than mine, for I had resembled the condemned before the firing-party, to whom the expected bullet brings a merely physical shock. He, poor man, heard his sentence, which is the heart's pang of death; and how fondly and rootedly he had clung to the idea of my marriage with the princess was shown in his extinction after this blow.

My grandfather chose the moment as a fitting one to ask me for the last time to take my side.

I replied, without offence in the tones of my voice, that I thought my father need not lose me into the bargain, after what he had suffered that day.

He just as quietly rejoined with a recommendation to me to divorce myself for good and all from a scoundrel.

I took my father's arm: he was not in a state to move away unsupported.

My aunt Dorothy stood weeping; Janet was at the window, no friend to either of us.

I said to her, 'You have your wish.'

She shook her head, but did not look back.

My grandfather watched me, step by step, until I had reached the door.

'You're going, are you?' he said. 'Then I whistle you off my fingers!'



An attempt to speak was made by my father in the doorway. He bowed wide of the company, like a blind man. I led him out.

Dimness of sight spared me from seeing certain figures, which were at the toll-bar of the pier, on the way to quit our shores. What I heard was not of a character to give me faith in the sanity of the companion I had chosen. He murmured it at first to himself:

'Waddy shall have her monument!'

My patience was not proof against the repetition of it aloud to me. Had I been gentler I might have known that his nature was compelled to look forward to something, and he discerned nothing in the future, save the task of raising a memorial to a faithful servant.



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CHAPTER LIII

THE HEIRESS PROVES THAT SHE INHERITS THE FEUD AND I GO DRIFTING

My grandfather lived eight months after a scene that had afforded him high gratification at the heaviest cost a plain man can pay for his pleasures: it killed him.

My father's supple nature helped him to survive it in apparently unimpeded health, so that the world might well suppose him unconquerable, as he meant that it should. But I, who was with him, knew, though he never talked of his wounds, they had been driven into his heart. He collapsed in speech, and became what he used to call 'one of the ordinary nodding men,' forsaken of his swamping initiative. I merely observed him; I did not invite his confidences, being myself in no mood to give sympathy or to receive it. I was about as tender in my care of him as a military escort bound to deliver up a captive alive.

I left him at Bulsted on my way to London to face the creditors. Adversity had not lowered the admiration of the captain and his wife for the magnificent host of those select and lofty entertainments which I was led by my errand to examine in the skeleton, and with a wonder as big as theirs, but of another complexion: They hung about him, and perused and petted him quaintly; it was grotesque; they thought him deeply injured: by what, by whom, they could not say; but Julia was disappointed in me for refraining to come out with a sally on his behalf. He had quite intoxicated their imaginations. Julia told me of the things he did not do as marvellingly as of the things he did or had done; the charm, it seemed, was to find herself familiar with him to the extent of all but nursing him and making him belong to her. Pilgrims coming upon the source of the mysteriously-abounding river, hardly revere it the less because they love it more when they behold the babbling channels it issues from; and the sense of possession is the secret, I suppose. Julia could inform me rapturously that her charge had slept eighteen hours at a spell. His remarks upon the proposal to fetch a doctor, feeble in themselves, were delicious to her, because they recalled his old humour to show his great spirit, and from her and from Captain William in turn I was condemned to hear how he had said this and that of the doctor, which in my opinion might have been more concise. 'Really, deuced good indeed!' Captain William would exclaim. 'Don't you see it, Harry, my boy? He denies the doctor has a right to cast him out of the world on account of his having been the official to introduce him, and he'll only consent to be visited when he happens to be as incapable of resisting as upon their very first encounter.'

The doctor and death and marriage, I ventured to remind the captain, had been riddled in this fashion by the whole army of humourists and their echoes.



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He and Julia fancied me cold to my father's merits. Fond as they were of the squire, they declared war against him in private, they criticized Janet, they thought my aunt Dorothy slightly wrong in making a secret of her good deed: my father was the victim. Their unabated warmth consoled me in the bitterest of seasons. He found a home with them at a time when there would have been a battle at every step. The world soon knew that my grandfather had cast me off, and with this foundation destroyed, the entire fabric of the Grand Parade fell to the ground at once. The crash was heavy. Jorian DeWitt said truly that what a man hates in adversity is to see 'faces'; meaning that the humanity has gone out of them in their curious observation of you under misfortune. You see neither friends nor enemies. You are too sensitive for friends, and are blunted against enemies. You see but the mask of faces: my father was sheltered from that. Julia consulted his wishes in everything; she set traps to catch his whims, and treated them as birds of paradise; she could submit to have the toppling crumpled figure of a man, Bagenhope, his pensioner and singular comforter, in her house. The little creature was fetched out of his haunts in London purposely to soothe my father with performances on his ancient clarionet, a most querulous plaintive instrument in his discoursing, almost the length of himself; and she endured the nightly sound of it in the guest's blue bedroom, heroically patient, a model to me. Bagenhope drank drams: she allowed him. He had known my father's mother, and could talk of her in his cups: his playing, and his aged tunes, my father said, were a certification to him that he was at the bottom of the ladder. Why that should afford him peculiar comfort, none of us could comprehend. 'He was the humble lover of my mother, Richie,' I heard with some confusion, and that he adored her memory. The statement was part of an entreaty to me to provide liberally for Bagenhope's pension before we quitted England. 'I am not seriously anxious for much else,' said my father. Yet was he fully conscious of the defeat he had sustained and the catastrophe he had brought down upon me: his touch of my hand told me that, and his desire for darkness and sleep. He had nothing to look to, nothing to see twinkling its radiance for him in the dim distance now; no propitiating Government, no special Providence. But he never once put on a sorrowful air to press for pathos, and I thanked him. He was a man endowed to excite it in the most effective manner, to a degree fearful enough to win English sympathies despite his un-English faults. He could have drawn tears in floods, infinite pathetic commiseration, from our grangousier public, whose taste is to have it as it may be had to the mixture of one-third of nature in two-thirds of artifice. I believe he was expected to go about with this beggar's petition for compassion, and it was a disappointment to the generous, for which they punished him, that he should have abstained. And moreover his simple quietude was really touching to true-hearted people. The elements of pathos do not permit of their being dispensed from a stout smoking bowl. I have to record no pathetic field-day. My father was never insincere in emotion.



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I spared his friends, chums, associates, excellent men of a kind, the trial of their attachment by shunning them. His servants I dismissed personally, from M. Alphonse down to the coachman Jeremy, whose speech to me was, that he should be happy to serve my father again, or me, if he should happen to be out of a situation when either of us wanted him, which at least showed his preference for employment: on the other hand, Alphonse, embracing the grand extremes of his stereotyped national oratory, where '*Si JAMAIS,*' like the herald Mercury new-mounting, takes its august flight to set in the splendour of '*ausqu'n La Mort,*' declared all other service than my father's repugnant, and vowed himself to a hermitage, remote from condiments. They both meant well, and did but speak the diverse language of their blood. Mrs. Waddy withdrew a respited heart to Dipwell; it being, according to her experiences, the third time that my father had relinquished house and furniture to go into eclipse on the Continent after blazing over London. She strongly recommended the Continent for a place of restoration, citing his likeness to that animal the chameleon, in the readiness with which he forgot himself among them that knew nothing of him. We quitted Bulsted previous to the return of the family to Riversley. My grandfather lay at the island hotel a month, and was brought home desperately ill. Lady Edbury happened to cross the channel with us. She behaved badly, I thought; foolishly, my father said. She did as much as obliqueness of vision and sharpness of feature could help her to do to cut him in the presence of her party: and he would not take nay. It seemed in very bad taste on his part; he explained to me off-handedly that he insisted upon the exchange of a word or two for the single purpose of protecting her from calumny. By and by it grew more explicable to me how witless she had been to give gossip a handle in the effort to escape it. She sent for him in Paris, but he did not pay the visit.

My grandfather and I never saw one another again. He had news of me from various quarters, and I of him from one; I was leading a life in marked contrast from the homely Riversley circle of days: and this likewise was set in the count of charges against my father. Our Continental pilgrimage ended in a course of riotousness that he did not participate in, and was entirely innocent of, but was held accountable for, because he had been judged a sinner.

'I am ordered to say,' Janet wrote, scrupulously obeying the order, 'that if you will leave Paris and come home, and not delay in doing it, your grandfather will receive you on the same footing as heretofore.'

As heretofore! in a letter from a young woman supposed to nourish a softness!

I could not leave my father in Paris, alone; I dared not bring him to London. In wrath at what I remembered, I replied that I was willing to return to Riversley if my father should find a welcome as well.

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Janet sent a few dry lines to summon me over in April, a pleasant month on heath-lands when the Southwest sweeps them. The squire was dead. I dropped my father at Bulsted. I could have sworn to the terms of the Will; Mr. Burgin had little to teach me. Janet was the heiress; three thousand pounds per annum fell to the lot of Harry Lepel Richmond, to be paid out of the estate, and pass in reversion to his children, or to Janet's should the aforesaid Harry die childless.

I was hard hit, and chagrined, but I was not at all angry, for I knew what the Will meant. My aunt Dorothy supplied the interlining eagerly to mollify the seeming cruelty. 'You have only to ask to have it all, Harry.' The sturdy squire had done his utmost to forward his cherished wishes after death. My aunt received five-and-twenty thousand pounds, the sum she had thrown away. 'I promised that no money of mine should go where the other went,' she said.

The surprise in store for me was to find how much this rough-worded old man had been liked by his tenantry, his agents and servants. I spoke of it to Janet. 'They loved him,' she said. 'No one who ever met him fairly could help loving him.' They followed him to his grave in a body. From what I chanced to hear among them, their squire was the man of their hearts: in short, an Englishman of the kind which is perpetually perishing out of the land. Janet expected me to be enthusiastic likewise, or remorseful. She expected sympathy; she read me the long list of his charities. I was reminded of Julia Bulsted commenting on my father, with her this he did and that. 'He had plenty,' I said, and Janet shut her lips. Her coldness was irritating.

What ground of accusation had she against me? Our situation had become so delicate that a cold breath sundered us as far as the Poles. I was at liberty to suspect that now she was the heiress, her mind was simply obedient to her grandada's wish; but, as I told my aunt Dorothy, I would not do her that injustice.

'No,' said Dorothy; 'it is the money that makes her position so difficult, unless you break the ice.'

I urged that having steadily refused her before, I could hardly advance without some invitation now.

'What invitation?' said my aunt.

'Not a corpse-like consent,' said I.

'Harry,' she twitted me, 'you have not forgiven her.' That was true.

Sir Roderick and Lady Ilchester did not conceal their elation at their daughter's vast inheritance, though the lady appealed to my feelings in stating that her son Charles was not mentioned in the Will. Sir Roderick talked of the squire with personal pride:—'Now,



as to his management of those unwieldy men, his miners they sent him up the items of their complaints. He took them one by one, yielding here, discussing there, and holding to his point. So the men gave way; he sent them a month's pay to reward



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them for their good sense. He had the art of moulding the men who served him in his own likeness. His capacity for business was extraordinary; you never expected it of a country gentleman. He more than quadrupled his inheritance—much more!’ I state it to the worthy Baronet’s honour, that although it would have been immensely to his satisfaction to see his daughter attracting the suitor proper to an heiress of such magnitude, he did not attempt to impose restriction upon my interviews with Janet: Riversley was mentioned as my home. I tried to feel at home; the heir of the place seemed foreign, and so did Janet. I attributed it partly to her deep mourning dress that robed her in so sedate a womanliness, partly, in spite of myself, to her wealth.

‘Speak to her kindly of your grandfather,’ said my aunt Dorothy. To do so, however, as she desired it, would be to be guilty of a form of hypocrisy, and I belied my better sentiments by keeping silent. Thus, having ruined myself through anger, I allowed silly sensitiveness to prevent the repair.

It became known that my father was at Bulsted.

I saw trouble one morning on Janet’s forehead.

We had a conversation that came near to tenderness; at last she said: ‘Will you be able to forgive me if I have ever the misfortune to offend you?’

‘You won’t offend me,’ said I.

She hoped not.

I rallied her: ‘Tut, tut, you talk like any twelve-years-old, Janet.’

‘I offended you then!’

‘Every day! it’s all that I care much to remember.’

She looked pleased, but I was so situated that I required passion and abandonment in return for a confession damaging to my pride. Besides, the school I had been graduating in of late unfitted me for a young English gentlewoman’s shades and interwoven descents of emotion. A glance up and a dimple in the cheek, were pretty homely things enough, not the blaze I wanted to unlock me, and absolutely thought I had deserved.

Sir Roderick called her to the library on business, which he was in the habit of doing ten times a day, as well as of discussing matters of business at table, ostentatiously consulting his daughter, with a solemn countenance and a transparently reeling heart of parental exultation. ‘Janet is supreme,’ he would say: ‘my advice is simple advice; I am

her chief agent, that is all.' Her chief agent, as director of three Companies and chairman of one, was perhaps competent to advise her, he remarked. Her judgement upon ordinary matters he agreed with my grandfather in thinking consummate.



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Janet went to him, and shortly after drove him to the station for London. My aunt Dorothy had warned me that she was preparing some deed in my favour, and as I fancied her father to have gone to London for that purpose, and supposed she would now venture to touch on it, I walked away from the East gates of the park as soon as I heard the trot of her ponies, and was led by an evil fate (the stuff the fates are composed of in my instance I have not kept secret) to walk Westward. Thither my evil fate propelled me, where accident was ready to espouse it and breed me mortifications innumerable. My father chanced to have heard the particulars of Squire Beltham's will that morning: I believe Captain William's coachman brushed the subject despondently in my interests; it did not reach him through Julia.

He stood outside the Western gates, and as I approached, I could perceive a labour of excitement on his frame. He pulled violently at the bars of the obstruction.

'Richie, I am interdicted house and grounds!' he called, and waved his hand toward the lodge: 'they decline to open to me.'

'Were you denied admission?' I asked him.

'—Your name, if you please, sir?—Mr. Richmond Roy.—We are sorry we have orders not to admit you. And they declined; they would not admit me to see my son.'

'Those must be the squire's old orders,' I said, and shouted to the lodge-keeper.

My father, with the forethoughtfulness which never forsook him, stopped me.

'No, Richie, no; the good woman shall not have the responsibility of letting me in against orders; she may be risking her place, poor soul! Help me, dear lad.'

He climbed the bars to the spikes, tottering, and communicating a convulsion to me as I assisted him in the leap down: no common feat for one of his age and weight.

He leaned on me, quaking.

'Impossible! Richie, impossible!' he cried, and reviewed a series of interjections.

It was some time before I discovered that they related to the Will. He was frenzied, and raved, turning suddenly from red to pale under what I feared were redoubtable symptoms, physical or mental. He came for sight of the Will; he would contest it, overthrow it. Harry ruined? He would see Miss Beltham and fathom the plot;—angel, he called her, and was absurdly exclamatory, but in dire earnest. He must have had the appearance of a drunken man to persons observing him from the Grange windows.

My father was refused admission at the hall-doors.



The butler, the brute Sillabin, withstood me impassively.

Whose orders had he?

Miss Ilchester's.

'They are afraid of me!' my father thundered.

I sent a message to Janet.

She was not long in coming, followed by a footman who handed a twist of note-paper from my aunt Dorothy to my father. He opened it and made believe to read it, muttering all the while of the Will.



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Janet dismissed the men-servants. She was quite colourless.

'We have been stopped in the doorway,' I said.

She answered: 'I wish it could have been prevented.'

'You take it on yourself, then?'

She was inaudible.

'My dear Janet, you call Riversley my home, don't you?'

'It is yours.'

'Do you intend to keep up this hateful feud now my grandfather is dead?'

'No, Harry, not I.'

'Did you give orders to stop my father from entering the house and grounds?'

'I did.'

'You won't have him here?'

'Dear Harry, I hoped he would not come just yet.'

'But you gave the orders?'

'Yes.'

'You're rather incomprehensible, my dear Janet.'

'I wish you could understand me, Harry.'

'You arm your servants against him!'

'In a few days—' she faltered.

'You insult him and me now,' said I, enraged at the half indication of her relenting, which spoiled her look of modestly—resolute beauty, and seemed to show that she meant to succumb without letting me break her. 'You are mistress of the place.'

'I am. I wish I were not.'

'You are mistress of Riversley, and you refuse to let my father come in!'



'While I am the mistress, yes.'

'Anywhere but here, Harry! If he will see me or aunty, if he will kindly appoint any other place, we will meet him, we shall be glad.'

'I request you to let him enter the house. Do you consent or not?'

'He was refused once at these doors. Do you refuse him a second time?'

'I do.'

'You mean that?'

'I am obliged to.'

'You won't yield a step to me?'

'I cannot.'

The spirit of an armed champion was behind those mild features, soft almost to supplication to me, that I might know her to be under a constraint. The nether lip dropped in breathing, the eyes wavered: such was her appearance in open war with me, but her will was firm.

Of course I was not so dense as to be unable to perceive her grounds for refusing.

She would not throw the burden on her grandada, even to propitiate me—the man she still loved.

But that she should have a reason, and think it good, in spite of me, and cling to it, defying me, and that she should do hurt to a sentient human creature, who was my father, for the sake of blindly obeying to the letter the injunction of the dead, were intolerable offences to me and common humanity. I, for my own part, would have forgiven her, as I congratulated myself upon reflecting. It was on her account—to open her mind, to enlighten her concerning right and wrong determination, to bring her feelings to bear upon a crude judgement—that I condescended to argue the case. Smarting with admiration, both of the depths and shallows of her character,



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and of her fine figure, I began:—She was to consider how young she was to pretend to decide on the balance of duties, how little of the world she had seen; an oath sworn at the bedside of the dead was a solemn thing, but was it Christian to keep it to do an unnecessary cruelty to the living? if she had not studied philosophy, she might at least discern the difference between just resolves and insane—between those the soul sanctioned, and those hateful to nature; to bind oneself to carry on another person's vindictiveness was voluntarily to adopt slavery; this was flatly-avowed insanity, and so forth, with an emphatic display of patience.

The truth of my words could not be controverted. Unhappily I confounded right speaking with right acting, and conceived, because I spoke so justly, that I was specially approved in pressing her to yield.

She broke the first pause to say, 'It's useless, Harry. I do what I think I am bound to do.'

'Then I have spoken to no purpose!'

'If you will only be kind, and wait two or three days?'

'Be sensible!'

'I am, as much as I can be.'

'Hard as a flint—you always were! The most grateful woman alive, I admit. I know not another, I assure you, Janet, who, in return for millions of money, would do such a piece of wanton cruelty. What! You think he was not punished enough when he was berated and torn to shreds in your presence? They would be cruel, perhaps—we will suppose it of your sex—but not so fond of their consciences as to stamp a life out to keep an oath. I forget the terms of the Will. Were you enjoined in it to force him away?'

My father had stationed himself in the background. Mention of the Will caught his ears, and he commenced shaking my aunt Dorothy's note, blinking and muttering at a great rate, and pressing his temples.

'I do not read a word of this,' he said,—'upon my honour, not a word; and I know it is her handwriting. That Will!—only, for the love of heaven, madam,'—he bowed vaguely to Janet 'not a syllable of this to the princess, or we are destroyed. I have a great bell in my head, or I would say more. Hearing is out of the question.'

Janet gazed piteously from him to me.

To kill the deer and be sorry for the suffering wretch is common.



I begged my father to walk along the carriage-drive. He required that the direction should be pointed out accurately, and promptly obeyed me, saying: 'I back you, remember. I should certainly be asleep now but for this extraordinary bell.' After going some steps, he turned to shout 'Gong,' and touched his ear. He walked loosely, utterly unlike the walk habitual to him even recently in Paris.

'Has he been ill?' Janet asked.

'He won't see the doctor; the symptoms threaten apoplexy or paralysis, I 'm told. Let us finish. You were aware that you were to inherit Riversley?'



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'Yes, Riversley, Harry; I knew that; I knew nothing else.'

'The old place was left to you that you might bar my father out?'

'I gave my word.'

'You pledged it—swore?'

'No.'

'Well, you've done your worst, my dear. If the axe were to fall on your neck for it, you would still refuse, would you not?'

Janet answered softly: 'I believe so.'

'Then, good-bye,' said I.

That feminine softness and its burden of unalterable firmness pulled me two ways, angering me all the more that I should feel myself susceptible to a charm which came of spiritual rawness rather than sweetness; for she needed not to have made the answer in such a manner; there was pride in it; she liked the soft sound of her voice while declaring herself invincible: I could see her picturing herself meek but fixed.

'Will you go, Harry? Will you not take Riversley?' she said.

I laughed.

'To spare you the repetition of the dilemma?'

'No, Harry; but this might be done.'

'But—my fullest thanks to you for your generosity: really! I speak in earnest: it would be decidedly against your grandada's wishes, seeing that he left the Grange to you, and not to me.'

'Grandada's wishes! I cannot carry out all his wishes,' she sighed.

'Are you anxious to?'

We were on the delicate ground, as her crimson face revealed to me that she knew as well as I.

I, however, had little delicacy in leading her on it. She might well feel that she deserved some wooing.



I fancied she was going to be overcome, going to tremble and show herself ready to fall on my bosom, and I was uncertain of the amount of magnanimity in store there.

She replied calmly, 'Not immediately.'

'You are not immediately anxious to fulfil his wishes?'

'Harry, I find it hard to do those that are thrust on me.'

'But, as a matter of serious obligation, you would hold yourself bound by and by to perform them all?'

'I cannot speak any further of my willingness, Harry.'

'The sense of duty is evidently always sufficient to make you act upon the negative—to deny, at least?'

'Yes, I daresay,' said Janet.

We shook hands like a pair of commercial men.

I led my father to Bulsted. He was too feverish to remain there. In the evening, after having had a fruitless conversation with my aunt Dorothy upon the event of the day, I took him to London that he might visit his lawyers, who kindly consented to treat him like doctors, when I had arranged to make over to them three parts of my annuity, and talked of his Case encouragingly; the effect of which should not have astonished me. He closed a fit of reverie resembling his drowsiness, by exclaiming: 'Richie will be indebted to his dad for his place in the world after all!' Temporarily, he admitted, we must



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be fugitives from creditors, and as to that eccentric tribe, at once so human and so inhuman, he imparted many curious characteristics gained of his experience. Jorian DeWitt had indeed compared them to the female ivy that would ultimately kill its tree, but inasmuch as they were parasites, they loved their debtor; he was life and support to them, and there was this remarkable fact about them: by slipping out of their clutches at critical moments when they would infallibly be pulling you down, you were enabled to return to them fresh, and they became inspired with another lease of lively faith in your future: et caetera. I knew the language. It was a flash of himself, and a bad one, but I was not the person whom he meant to deceive with it. He was soon giving me other than verbal proof out of England that he was not thoroughly beaten. We had no home in England. At an hotel in Vienna, upon the close of the aristocratic season there, he renewed an acquaintance with a Russian lady, Countess Kornikoff, and he and I parted. She disliked the Margravine of Rippau, who was in Vienna, and did not recognize us. I heard that it was the Margravine who had despatched Prince Hermann to England as soon as she discovered Ottilia's flight thither. She commissioned him to go straightway to Roy in London, and my father's having infatuatedly left his own address for Prince Ernest's in the island, brought Hermann down: he only met Eckart in the morning train. I mention it to show the strange working of events.

Janet sent me a letter by the hands of Temple in August. It was moderately well written for so blunt a writer, and might have touched me but for other news coming simultaneously that shook the earth under my feet.

She begged my forgiveness for her hardness, adding characteristically that she could never have acted in any other manner. The delusion, that what she was she must always be, because it was her nature, had mastered her understanding, or rather it was one of the doors of her understanding not yet opened: she had to respect her grandada's wishes. She made it likewise appear that she was ready for further sacrifices to carry out the same.

'At least you will accept a division of the property, Harry. It should be yours. It is an excess, and I feel it a snare to me. I was a selfish child: I may not become an estimable woman. You have not pardoned my behaviour at the island last year, and I cannot think I was wrong: perhaps I might learn: I want your friendship and counsel. Aunty will live with me: she says that you would complete us. At any rate I transfer Riversley to you. Send me your consent. Papa will have it before the transfer is signed.'

The letter ended with an adieu, a petition for an answer, and 'yours affectionately.'

On the day of its date, a Viennese newspaper lying on the Salzburg Hotel table chronicled Ottilia's marriage with Prince Hermann.



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I turned on Temple to walk him off his legs if I could.

Carry your fever to the Alps, you of minds diseased not to sit down in sight of them ruminating, for bodily ease and comfort will trick the soul and set you measuring our lean humanity against yonder sublime and infinite; but mount, rack the limbs, wrestle it out among the peaks; taste danger, sweat, earn rest: learn to discover ungrudgingly that haggard fatigue is the fair vision you have run to earth, and that rest is your uttermost reward. Would you know what it is to hope again, and have all your hopes at hand?—hang upon the crags at a gradient: that makes your next step a debate between the thing you are and the thing you may become. There the merry little hopes grow for the climber like flowers and food, immediate, prompt to prove their uses, sufficient: if just within the grasp, as mortal hopes should be. How the old lax life closes in about you there! You are the man of your faculties, nothing more. Why should a man pretend to more? We ask it wonderingly when we are healthy. Poetic rhapsodists in the vales below may tell you of the joy and grandeur of the upper regions, they cannot pluck you the medical herb. He gets that for himself who wanders the marshy ledge at nightfall to behold the distant Sennhiittchen twinkle, who leaps the green-eyed crevasses, and in the solitude of an emerald alp stretches a salt hand to the mountain kine.

CHAPTER LIV

MY RETURN TO ENGLAND

I passed from the Alps to the desert, and fell in love with the East, until it began to consume me. History, like the air we breathe, must be in motion to keep us uncorrupt: otherwise its ancient homes are infectious. My passion for the sun and his baked people lasted awhile, the drudgery of the habit of voluntary exile some time longer, and then, quite unawares, I was seized with a thirst for England, so violent that I abandoned a correspondence of several months, lying for me both at Damascus and Cairo, to catch the boat for Europe. A dream of a rainy morning, in the midst of the glowing furnace, may have been the origin of the wild craving I had for my native land and Janet. The moist air of flying showers and drenched spring buds surrounded her; I saw her plainly lifting a rose's head; was it possible I had ever refused to be her yokefellow? Could so noble a figure of a fair young woman have been offered and repudiated again and again by a man in his senses? I spurned the intolerable idiot, to stop reflection. Perhaps she did likewise now. There was nothing to alarm me save my own eagerness.

The news of my father was perplexing, leading me to suppose him re-established in London, awaiting the coming on of his Case. Whence the money?



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Money and my father, I knew, met as they divided, fortuitously; in illustration of which, I well remembered, while passing in view of the Key of the Adige along the Lombard plain, a circumstance during my Alpine tour with Temple, of more importance to him than to me, when my emulous friend, who would never be beaten, sprained his ankle severely on the crags of a waterfall, not far from Innsbruck, and was invited into a house by a young English lady, daughter of a retired Colonel of Engineers of our army. The colonel was an exile from his country for no grave crime: but, as he told us, as much an exile as if he had committed a capital offence in being the father of nine healthy girls. He had been, against his judgement, he averred, persuaded to fix on his Tyrolese spot of ground by the two elder ones. Five were now married to foreigners; thus they repaid him, by scattering good English blood on the race of Counts and Freiherrns! 'I could understand the decrees of Providence before I was a parent,' said this dear old Colonel Heddon. 'I was looking up at the rainbow when I heard your steps, asking myself whether it was seen in England at that instant, and why on earth I should be out of England!' He lived abroad to be able to dower his girls. His sons-in-law were gentlemen; so far he was condemned to be satisfied, but supposing all his girls married foreigners? His primitive frankness charmed us, and it struck me that my susceptible Temple would have liked to be in a position to reassure him with regard to the Lucy of the four. We were obliged to confess that she was catching a foreign accent. The old colonel groaned. He begged us to forgive him for not treating us as strangers; his heart leapt out to young English gentlemen.

My name, he said, reminded him of a great character at home, in the old days: a certain Roy-Richmond, son of an actress and somebody, so the story went: and there was an old Lord Edbury who knew more about it than most. 'Now Roy was an adventurer, but he had a soul of true chivalry, by gad, he had! Plenty of foreign whiffmajigs are to be found, but you won't come upon a fellow like that. Where he got his money from none knew: all I can say is, I don't believe he ever did a dirty action for it. And one matter I'll tell you of: pardon me a moment, Mr. Richmond, I haven't talked English for half a century, or, at least, a quarter. Old Lord Edbury put him down in his will for some thousands, and he risked it to save a lady, who hated him for his pains. Lady Edbury was of the Bolton blood, none of the tamest; they breed good cavalry men. She ran away from her husband once. The old lord took her back. "It 's at your peril, mind!" says she. Well, Roy hears by-and-by of afresh affair. He mounted horse; he was in the saddle, I've been assured, a night and a day, and posted himself between my lady's park-gates, and the house, at dusk. The rumour ran that he knew of the marquis

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playing spy on his wife. However, such was the fact; she was going off again, and the marquis did play the mean part. She walked down the parkroad, and, seeing the cloaked figure of a man, she imagined him to be her Lothario, and very naturally, you will own, fell into his arms. The gentleman in question was an acquaintance of mine; and the less you follow our example the better for you. It was a damnable period in morals! He told me that he saw the scene from the gates, where he had his carriage-and-four ready. The old lord burst out of an ambush on his wife and her supposed paramour; the lady was imprisoned in her rescuer's arms, and my friend retired on tiptoe, which was, I incline to think, the best thing he could do. Our morals were abominable. Lady Edbury would never see Roy-Richmond after that, nor the old lord neither. He doubled the sum he had intended to leave him, though. I heard that he married a second young wife. Roy, I believe, ended by marrying a great heiress, and reforming. He was an eloquent fellow, and stood like a general in full uniform, cocked hat and feathers; most amusing fellow at table; beat a Frenchman for anecdote.'

I spared Colonel Heddon the revelation of my relationship to his hero, thanking his garrulity for interrupting me.

How I pitied him when I drove past the gates of the main route to Innsbruck! For I was bound homeward: I should soon see England, green cloudy England, the white cliffs, the meadows, the heaths! And I thanked the colonel again in my heart for having done something to reconcile me to the idea of that strange father of mine.

A banner-like stream of morning-coloured smoke rolled North-eastward as I entered London, and I drove to Temple's chambers. He was in Court, engaged in a case as junior to his father. Temple had become that radiant human creature, a working man, then? I walked slowly to the Court, and saw him there, hardly recognising him in his wig. All that he had to do was to prompt his father in a case of collision at sea; the barque Priscilla had run foul of a merchant brig, near the mouth of the Thames, and though I did not expect it on hearing the vessel's name, it proved to be no other than the barque Priscilla of Captain Jasper Welsh. Soon after I had shaken Temple's hand, I was going through the same ceremony with the captain himself, not at all changed in appearance, who blessed his heart for seeing me, cried out that a beard and mustachios made a foreign face of a young Englishman, and was full of the 'providential' circumstance of his having confided his case to Temple and his father.

'Ay, ay, Captain Welsh,' said Temple, 'we have pulled you through, only another time mind you keep an eye on that look-out man of yours. Some of your men, I suspect, see double with an easy conscience. A close net makes slippery eels.'

'Have you anything to say against my men?' the captain inquired.



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Temple replied that he would talk to him about it presently, and laughed as he drew me away.

'His men will get him into a deuce of a scrape some day, Richie. I shall put him on his guard. Have you had all my letters? You look made of iron. I'm beginning capitally, not afraid of the Court a bit, and I hope I'm not pert. I wish your father had taken it better!'

'Taken what?' said I.

'Haven't you heard from him?'

'Two or three times: a mass of interjections.'

'You know he brought his Case forward at last? Of course it went as we all knew it would.'

'Where is he? Have you seen Janet lately?'

'He is at Miss Ilchester's house in London.'

'Write the address on a card.'

Temple wrote it rather hesitatingly, I thought.

We talked of seeing one another in the evening, and I sprang off to Janet's residence, forgetting to grasp my old friend's hand at parting. I was madly anxious to thank her for the unexpected tenderness to my father. And now nothing stood between us!

My aunt Dorothy was the first to welcome me. 'He must be prepared for the sight of you, Harry. The doctors say that a shock may destroy him. Janet treats him so wonderfully.'

I pressed her on my heart and cheered her, praising Janet. She wept.

'Is there anything new the matter?' I said.

'It 's not new to us, Harry. I'm sure you're brave?'

'Brave! what am I asked to bear?'

'Much, if you love her, Harry!'

'Speak.'



'It is better you should hear it from me, Harry. I wrote you word of it. We all imagined it would not be disagreeable to you. Who could foresee this change in you? She least of all!'

'She's in love with some one?'

'I did not say in love.'

'Tell me the worst.'

'She is engaged to be married.'

Janet came into the room—another Janet for me. She had engaged herself to marry the Marquis of Edbury. At the moment when she enslaved me with gratitude and admiration she was lost to me. I knew her too well to see a chance of her breaking her pledged word.

My old grandfather said of Janet, 'She's a compassionate thing.' I felt now the tears under his speech, and how late I was in getting wisdom. Compassion for Edbury in Janet's bosom was the matchmaker's chief engine of assault, my aunt Dorothy told me. Lady Ilchester had been for this suitor, Sir Roderick for the other, up to the verge of a quarrel between the most united of wedding couples. Janet was persecuted. She heard that Edbury's life was running to waste; she liked him for his cricketing and hunting, his frankness, seeming manliness, and general native English enthusiasm. I permitted myself to comprehend the case as far as I could allow myself to excuse her.

Dorothy Beltham told me something of Janet that struck me to the dust.



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'It is this, dear Harry; bear to hear it! Janet and I and his good true woman of a housekeeper, whose name is Waddy, we are, I believe, the only persons that know it. He had a large company to dine at a City tavern, she told us, on the night after the decision—when the verdict went against him. The following morning I received a note from this good Mrs. Waddy addressed to Sir Roderick's London house, where I was staying with Janet; it said that he was ill; and Janet put on her bonnet at once to go to him.'

'The lady didn't fear contagion any longer?'

'She went, walking fast. He was living in lodgings, and the people of the house insisted on removing him, Mrs. Waddy told us. She was covering in the parlour. I had not the courage to go upstairs. Janet went by herself.'

My heart rose on a huge swell.

'She was alone with him, Harry. We could hear them.'

Dorothy Beltham looked imploringly on me to waken my whole comprehension.

'She subdued him. When I saw him he was white as death, but quiet, not dangerous at all.'

'Do you mean she found him raving?' I cried out on our Maker's name, in grief and horror.

'Yes, dear Harry, it was so.'

'She stepped between him and an asylum?'

'She quitted Sir Roderick's house to lodge your father safe in one that she hired, and have him under her own care. She watched him day and night for three weeks, and governed him, assisted only at intervals by the poor frightened woman, Mrs. Waddy, and just as frightened me. And I am still subject to the poor woman's way of pressing her hand to her heart at a noise. It's over now. Harry, Janet wished that you should never hear of it. She dreads any excitement for him. I think she is right in fancying her own influence the best: he is used to it. You know how gentle she is though she is so firm.'

'Oh! don't torture me, ma'am, for God's sake,' I called aloud.

CHAPTER LV

I MEET MY FIRST PLAYFELLOW AND TAKE MY PUNISHMENT



There came to me a little note on foreign paper, unaddressed, an enclosure forwarded by Janet, and containing merely one scrap from the playful XENIEN of Otilia's favourite brotherly poets, of untranslatable flavour:—

Who shuns true friends flies fortune in the concrete:
Would he see what he aims at? let him ask his heels.

It filled me with a breath of old German peace.

From this I learnt that Otilia and Janet corresponded. Upon what topics? to what degree of intimacy?

Janet now confessed to me that their intimacy had never known reserve. The princess had divined her attachment for Harry Richmond when their acquaintance was commenced in the island, and knew at the present moment that I had travelled round to the recognition of Janet's worth.

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Thus encouraged by the princess's changeless friendship, I wrote to her, leaving little to be guessed of my state of mind, withholding nothing of the circumstances surrounding me. Imagination dealt me all my sharpest misery, and now that Ottilia resumed her place there, I became infinitely peacefuller, and stronger to subdue my hungry nature. It caused me no pang, strangely though it read in my sight when written, to send warm greetings and respects to the prince her husband.

Is it any waste of time to write of love? The trials of life are in it, but in a narrow ring and a fierier. You may learn to know yourself through love, as you do after years of life, whether you are fit to lift them that are about you, or whether you are but a cheat, and a load on the backs of your fellows. The impure perishes, the inefficient languishes, the moderate comes to its autumn of decay—these are of the kinds which aim at satisfaction to die of it soon or late. The love that survives has strangled craving; it lives because it lives to nourish and succour like the heavens.

But to strangle craving is indeed to go through a death before you reach your immortality.

But again, to write of a love perverted by all the elements contributing to foolishness, and foredoomed to chastisement, would be a graceless business. Janet and I went through our trial, she, you may believe, the braver under the most to bear.

I was taken by Temple down to the ship—smelling East of London, for the double purpose of trying to convince Captain Welsh of the extravagance of a piece of chivalry he was about to commit, and of seeing a lady with a history, who had recently come under his guardianship. Temple thought I should know her, but he made a mystery of it until the moment of our introduction arrived, not being certain of her identity, and not wishing to have me disappointed. It appeared that Captain Welsh questioned his men closely after he had won his case, and he arrived at the conclusion that two or three of them had been guilty of false swearing in his interests. He did not dismiss them, for, as he said, it was twice a bad thing to turn sinners loose: it was to shove them out of the direct road of amendment, and it was a wrong to the population. He insisted, however, on paying the legal costs and an indemnity for the collision at sea; and Temple was in great distress about it, he having originally suggested the suspicion of his men to Captain Welsh. 'I wanted to put him on his guard against those rascals,' Temple said, 'and I suppose,' he sighed, 'I wanted the old captain to think me enormously clever all round.' He shook himself, and assumed a bearish aspect, significant of disgust and recklessness. 'The captain 'll be ruined, Richie; and he's not young, you know, to go on sailing his barque Priscilla for ever. If he pays, why, I ought to pay, and then you ought to pay, for I shouldn't have shown off before him alone, and then the wind that fetched you ought to pay. Toss common sense overboard, there's no end to your fine-drawings; that's why it's always safest to swear by the Judge.'



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We rolled down to the masts among the chimneys on the top of an omnibus. The driver was eloquent on cricket-matches. Now, cricket, he said, was fine manly sport; it might kill a man, but it never meant mischief: foreigners themselves had a bit of an idea that it was the best game in the world, though it was a nice joke to see a foreigner playing at it! None of them could stand to be bowled at. Hadn't stomachs for it; they'd have to train for soldiers first. On one occasion he had seen a Frenchman looking on at a match. 'Ball was hit a shooter twixt the slips: off starts Frenchman, catches it, heaves it up, like his head, half-way to wicket, and all the field set to bawling at him, and sending him, we knew where. He tripped off: "You no comprong politeness in dis country." Ha! ha!'

To prove the aforesaid Frenchman wrong, we nodded to the driver's laughter at his exquisite imitation.

He informed us that he had backed the Surrey Eleven last year, owing to the report of a gentleman-bowler, who had done things in the way of tumbling wickets to tickle the ears of cricketers. Gentlemen-batters were common: gentlemen-bowlers were quite another dish. Saddlebank was the gentleman's name.

'Old Nandrew Saddle?' Temple called to me, and we smiled at the supposition of Saddlebank's fame, neither of us, from what we had known of his bowling, doubting that he deserved it.

'Acquainted with him, gentlemen?' the driver inquired, touching his hat. 'Well, and I ask why don't more gentlemen take to cricket? 'stead of horses all round the year! Now, there's my notion of happiness,' said the man condemned to inactivity, in the perpetual act of motion; 'cricket in cricket season! It comprises—count: lots o' running; and that's good: just enough o' taking it easy; that's good: a appetite for your dinner, and your ale or your Port, as may be the case; good, number three. Add on a tired pipe after dark, and a sound sleep to follow, and you say good morning to the doctor and the parson; for you're in health body and soul, and ne'er a parson 'll make a better Christian of ye, that I'll swear.'

As if anxious not to pervert us, he concluded: 'That's what I think, gentlemen.'

Temple and I talked of the ancient raptures of a first of May cricketing-day on a sunny green meadow, with an ocean of a day before us, and well-braced spirits for the match. I had the vision of a matronly, but not much altered Janet, mounted on horseback, to witness the performance of some favourite Eleven of youngsters with her connoisseur's eye; and then the model of an English lady, wife, and mother, waving adieu to the field and cantering home to entertain her husband's guests. Her husband!

Temple was aware of my grief, but saw no remedy. I knew that in his heart he thought me justly punished, though he loved me.



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We had a long sitting with Captain Welsh, whom I found immovable, as I expected I should. His men, he said, had confessed their sin similarly to the crab in a hole, with one claw out, as the way of sinners was. He blamed himself mainly. 'Where you have accidents, Mr. Richmond, you have faults; and where you have faults aboard a ship you may trace a line to the captain. I should have treated my ship's crew like my conscience, and gone through them nightly. As it is, sir, here comes round one of your accidents to tell me I have lived blinded by conceit. That is my affliction, my young friend. The payment of the money is no more so than to restore money held in trust.'

Temple and I argued the case with him, as of old on our voyage, on board the barque Priscilla, quite unavailingly.

'Is a verdict built on lies one that my Maker approves of?' said he. 'If I keep possession of that money, my young friends, will it clothe me? Ay, with stings! Will it feed me? Ay, with poison. And they that should be having it shiver and want!'

He was emphatic, as he would not have been, save to read us an example, owing to our contention with him. 'The money is Satan in my very hands!' When he had dismissed the subject he never returned to it.

His topic of extreme happiness, to which Temple led him, was the rescue of a beautiful sinner from a life of shame. It appeared that Captain Welsh had the habit between his voyages of making one holiday expedition to the spot of all creation he thought the fairest, Richmond Hill, overlooking the Thames; and there, one evening, he espied a lady in grief, and spoke to her, and gave her consolation. More, he gave her a blameless home. The lady's name was Mabel Bolton. She was in distress of spirit rather than of circumstances, for temptation was thick about one so beautiful, to supply the vanities and luxuries of the father of sin. He described her.

She was my first playfellow, the miller's daughter of Dipwell, Mabel Sweetwinter, taken from her home by Lord Edbury during my German university career, and now put away by him upon command of his family on the eve of his marriage.

She herself related her history to me, after telling me that she had seen me once at the steps of Edbury's Club. Our meeting was no great surprise to either of us. She had heard my name as that of an expected visitor; she had seen Temple, moreover, and he had prompted me with her Christian name and the praise of her really glorious hair, to anticipate the person who was ushered into the little cabin-like parlour by Captain Welsh's good old mother.



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Of Edbury she could not speak for grief, believing that he loved her still and was acting under compulsion. Her long and faithful attachment to the scapegrace seemed to preserve her from the particular regrets Captain Welsh supposed to occupy her sinner's mind; so that, after some minutes of the hesitation and strangeness due to our common recollections, she talked of him simply and well—as befitted her situation, a worldling might say. But she did not conceal her relief in escaping to this quaint little refuge (she threw a kindly-comical look, not overtone, at the miniature ships on the mantelpiece, and the picture of Joseph leading Mary with her babe on the ass) from the temptations I could imagine a face like hers would expose her to. The face was splendid, the figure already overblown. I breathed some thanks to my father while she and I conversed apart. The miller was dead, her brother in America. She had no other safe home than the one Captain Welsh had opened to her. When I asked her (I had no excuse for it) whether she would consent to go to Edbury again, she reddened and burst into tears. I cursed my brutality. 'Let her cry,' said Captain Welsh on parting with us at his street door. 'Tears are the way of women and their comfort.'

To our astonishment he told us he intended to take her for a voyage in the Priscilla. 'Why?' we asked.

'I take her,' he said, 'because not to do things wholly is worse than not to do things at all, for it 's waste of time and cause for a chorus below, down in hell, my young friends. The woman is beautiful as Solomon's bride. She is weak as water. And the man is wicked. He has written to her a letter. He would have her reserved for himself, a wedded man: such he is, or is soon to be. I am searching, and she is not deceitful; and I am a poor man again and must go the voyage. I wrestled with her, and by grace I conquered her to come with me of a free will, and be out of his snares. Aboard I do not fear him, and she shall know the mercy of the Lord on high seas.'

We grimaced a little on her behalf, but had nothing to reply.

Seeing Janet after Mabel was strange. In the latter one could perceive the palpably suitable mate for Edbury.

I felt that my darling was insulted—no amends for it I had to keep silent and mark the remorseless preparations going forward. Not so Heriot. He had come over from the camp in Ireland on leave at this juncture. His talk of women still suggested the hawk with the downy feathers of the last little plucked bird sticking to his beak; but his appreciation of Janet and some kindness for me made him a vehement opponent of her resolve. He took licence of his friendship to lay every incident before her, to complete his persuasions. She resisted his attacks, as I knew she would, obstinately, and replied to his entreaties with counter-supPLICATIONS that he should urge me to accept old Riversley. The conflicts went on



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between those two daily, and I heard of them from Heriot at night. He refused to comprehend her determination under the head of anything save madness. Varied by reproaches of me for my former inveterate blindness, he raved upon Janet's madness incessantly, swearing that he would not be beaten. I told him his efforts were useless, but thought them friendly, and so they were, only Janet's resistance had fired his vanity, and he stalked up and down my room talking a mixture of egregious coxcombry and hearty good sense that might have shown one the cause he meant to win had become personal to him. Temple, who was sometimes in consultation with him, and was always amused by his quasi-fanfaronade, assured me that Herriot was actually scheming. The next we heard of him was, that he had been seen at a whitebait hotel down the river drunk with Edbury. Janet also heard of that, and declined to see Heriot again.

Our last days marched frightfully fast. Janet had learnt that any the most distant allusion to her marriage day was an anguish to the man who was not to marry her, so it was through my aunt Dorothy that I became aware of Julia Bulsted's kindness in offering to take charge of my father for a term. Lady Sampleman undertook to be hostess to him for one night, the eve of Janet's nuptials. He was quiet, unlikely to give annoyance to persons not strongly predisposed to hear sentences finished and exclamations fall into their right places.

Adieu to my darling! There have been women well won; here was an adorable woman well lost. After twenty years of slighting her, did I fancy she would turn to me and throw a man over in reward of my ultimate recovery of my senses?—or fancy that one so tenacious as she had proved would snap a tie depending on her pledged word? She liked Edbury; she saw the best of him, and liked him. The improved young lord was her handiwork. After the years of humiliation from me, she had found herself courted by a young nobleman who clung to her for help, showed improvement, and brought her many compliments from a wondering world. She really felt that she was strength and true life to him. She resisted Heriot: she resisted a more powerful advocate, and this was the princess Ottilia. My aunt Dorothy told me that the princess had written. Janet either did or affected to weigh the princess's reasonings; and she did not evade the task of furnishing a full reply.

Her resolution was unchanged. Loss of colour, loss of light in her eyes, were the sole signs of what it cost her to maintain it. Our task was to transfer the idea of Janet to that of Julia in my father's whirling brain, which at first rebelled violently, and cast it out like a stick thrust between rapidly revolving wheels.

The night before I was to take him away, she gave me her hand with a 'good-bye, dear Harry.' My words were much the same. She had a ghastly face, but could not have known it, for she smiled, and tried to keep the shallow smile in play, as friends do. There was the end.



We saw them off from the waterside.

'Were I to leave that young woman behind me, on shore, I should be giving the devil warrant to seize upon his prey,' said Captain Welsh, turning his gaze from the boat which conveyed Kiomi and Mabel to the barque Priscilla. He had information that the misleader of her youth was hunting her.

He and I parted, and for ever, at a corner of crossways in the central city. There I saw the last of one who deemed it as simple a matter to renounce his savings for old age, to rectify an error of justice, as to plant his foot on the pavement; a man whose only burden was the folly of men.



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I thought to myself in despair, under what protest can I also escape from England and my own intemperate mind? It seemed a miraculous answer:— There lay at my chambers a note written by Count Kesensky; I went to the embassy, and heard of an Austrian ship of war being at one of our ports upon an expedition to the East, and was introduced to the captain, a gentlemanly fellow, like most of the officers of his Government. Finding in me a German scholar, and a joyful willingness, he engaged me to take the post of secretary to the expedition in the place of an invalided Freiherr von Redwitz. The bargain was struck immediately: I was to be ready to report myself to the captain on board not later than the following day. Count Kesensky led me aside: he regretted that he could do nothing better for me: but I thought his friendliness extreme and astonishing, and said so; whereupon the count assured me that his intentions were good, though he had not been of great use hitherto—an allusion to the borough of Chippenden he had only heard of von Redwitz's illness that afternoon. I thanked him cordially, saying I was much in his debt, and he bowed me out, letting me fancy, as my father had fancied before me, and as though I had never observed and reflected in my life, that the opportuneness of this intervention signified a special action of Providence.

The flattery of the thought served for an elixir. But with whom would my father abide during my absence? Captain Bulsted and Julia saved me from a fit of remorse; they had come up to town on purpose to carry him home with them, and had left a message on my table, and an invitation to dinner at their hotel, where the name of Janet was the Marino Faliero of our review of Riversley people and old times. The captain and his wife were indignant at her conduct. Since, however, I chose to excuse it, they said they would say nothing more about her, and she was turned face to the wall. I told them how Janet had taken him for months. 'But I 'll take him for years,' said Julia. 'The truth is, Harry, my old dear! William and I are never so united—for I'm ashamed to quarrel with him— as when your father's at Bulsted. He belongs to us, and other people shall know you 're not obliged to depend on your family for help, and your aunt Dorothy can come and see him whenever she likes.'

That was settled. Captain Bulsted went with me to Lady Sampleman's to prepare my father for the change of nurse and residence. We were informed that he had gone down with Alderman Duke Saddlebank to dine at one of the great City Companies' halls. I could hardly believe it. 'Ah! my dear Mr. Harry,' said Lady Sampleman, 'old friends know one another best, believe that, now. I treated him as if he was as well as ever he was, gave him his turtle and madeira lunch; and Alderman Saddlebank, who lunched here—your father used to say, he looks like a robin hopping out of a larderquite jumped to dine him in the City like old times; and he will see a great spread of plate!'



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She thought my father only moderately unwell, wanting novelty. Captain Bulsted agreed with me that it would be prudent to go and fetch him. At the door of the City hall stood Andrew Saddlebank, grown to be simply a larger edition of Rippenger's head boy, and he imparted to us that my father was 'on his legs' delivering a speech: It alarmed me. With Saddlebank's assistance I pushed in.

'A prince! a treacherous lover! an unfatherly man!'

Those were the words I caught: a reproduction of many of my phrases employed in our arguments on this very subject.

He bade his audience to beware of princes, beware of idle princes; and letting his florid fancy loose on these eminent persons, they were at one moment silver lamps, at another poising hawks, and again sprawling pumpkins; anything except useful citizens. How could they be? They had the attraction of the lamp, the appetite of the hawk, the occupation of the pumpkin: nothing was given them to do but to shine, destroy, and fatten. Their hands were kept empty: a trifle in their heads would topple them over; they were monuments of the English system of compromise. Happy for mankind if they were monuments only! Happy for them! But they had the passions of men. The adulation of the multitude was raised to inflate them, whose self-respect had not one prop to rest an, unless it were contempt for the flatterers and prophetic foresight of their perfidy. They were the monuments of a compromise between the past and terror of the future; puppets as princes, mannikins as men, the snares of frail women, stop-gaps of the State, feathered nonentities!

So far (but not in epigram) he marshalled the things he had heard to his sound of drum and trumpet, like one repeating a lesson off-hand. Steering on a sudden completely round, he gave his audience an outline of the changes he would have effected had he but triumphed in his cause; and now came the lashing of arms, a flood of eloquence. Princes with brains, princes leaders, princes flowers of the land, he had offered them! princes that should sway assemblies, and not stultify the precepts of a decent people 'by making you pay in the outrage of your morals for what you seem to gain in policy.' These or similar words. The whole scene was too grotesque and afflicting. But his command of his hearers was extraordinary, partly a consolation I thought, until, having touched the arm of one of the gentlemen of the banquet and said, 'I am his son; I wish to remove him,' the reply enlightened me: 'I 'm afraid there's danger in interrupting him; I really am.'

They were listening obediently to one whom they dared not interrupt for fear of provoking an outburst of madness.



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I had to risk it. His dilated eyes looked ready to seize on me for an illustration. I spoke peremptorily, and he bowed his head low, saying, 'My son, gentlemen,' and submitted himself to my hands. The feasters showed immediately that they felt released by rising and chatting in groups. Alderman Saddlebank expressed much gratitude to me for the service I had performed. 'That first half of your father's speech was the most pathetic thing I ever heard!' I had not shared his privilege, and could not say. The remark was current that a great deal was true of what had been said of the Fitzs. My father leaned heavily on my arm with the step and bent head of an ancient pensioner of the Honourable City Company. He was Julia Bulsted's charge, and I was on board the foreign vessel weighing anchor from England before dawn of Janet's marriage-day.

CHAPTER LVI

CONCLUSION

The wind was high that morning. The rain came in gray rings, through which we worked on the fretted surface of crumbling seas, heaving up and plunging, without an outlook.

I remember having thought of the barque Priscilla as I watched our lithe Dalmatians slide along the drenched decks of the Verona frigate. At night it blew a gale. I could imagine it to have been sent providentially to brush the torture of the land from my mind, and make me feel that men are trifles.

What are their passions, then? The storm in the clouds—even more short-lived than the clouds.

I philosophized, but my anguish was great.

Janet's 'Good-bye, Harry,' ended everything I lived for, and seemed to strike the day, and bring out of it the remorseless rain. A featureless day, like those before the earth was built; like night under an angry moon; and each day the same until we touched the edge of a southern circle and saw light, and I could use my brain.

The matter most present to me was my injustice regarding my poor father's speech in the City hall. He had caused me to suffer so much that I generally felt for myself when he appealed for sympathy, or provoked some pity: but I was past suffering, and letting kindly recollection divest the speech of its verbiage, I took it to my heart. It was true that he had in his blind way struck the keynote of his position, much as I myself had conceived it before. Harsh trials had made me think of my own fortunes more than of his. This I felt, and I thought there never had been so moving a speech. It seemed to make the world in debt to us. What else is so consolatory to a ruined man?



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In reality the busy little creature within me, whom we call self, was digging pits for comfort to flow in, of any kind, in any form; and it seized on every idea, every circumstance, to turn it to that purpose, and with such success, that when by-and-by I learnt how entirely inactive special Providence had been in my affairs, I had to collect myself before I could muster the conception of gratitude toward the noble woman who clothed me in the illusion. It was to the Princess Ottilia, acting through Count Kesensky, that I owed both my wafting away from England at a wretched season, and that chance of a career in Parliament! The captain of the Verona hinted as much when, after a year of voyaging, we touched at an East Indian seaport, and von Redwitz joined the vessel to resume the post I was occupying. Von Redwitz (the son of Prince Ernest's Chancellor, I discovered) could have told me more than he did, but he handed me a letter from the princess, calling me home urgently, and even prescribing my route, and bidding me come straight to Germany and to Sarkeld. The summons was distasteful, for I had settled into harness under my scientific superiors, and had proved to my messmates that I was neither morose nor over-conceited. Captain Martinitz persuaded me to return, and besides, there lay between the lines of Ottilia's letter a signification of welcome things better guessed at than known. Was I not bound to do her bidding? Others had done it: young von Redwitz, for instance, in obeying the telegraph wires and feigning sickness to surrender his place to me, when she wished to save me from misery by hurrying me to new scenes with a task for my hand and head;—no mean stretch of devotion on his part. Ottilia was still my princess; she my providence. She wrote:

'Come home, my friend Harry: you have been absent too long. He who intercepts you to displace you has his career before him in the vessel, and you nearer home. The home is always here where I am, but it may now take root elsewhere, and it is from Ottilia you hear that delay is now really loss of life. I tell you no more. You know me, that when I say come, it is enough.'

A simple adieu and her name ended the mysterious letter. Not a word of Prince Hermann. What had happened? I guessed at it curiously and incessantly and only knew the nature of my suspicion by ceasing to hope as soon as I seemed to have divined it. I did not wrong my soul's high mistress beyond the one flash of tentative apprehension which in perplexity struck at impossibilities. Ottilia would never have summoned me to herself. But was Janet free? The hope which refused to live in that other atmosphere of purest calm, sprang to full stature at the bare thought, and would not be extinguished though all the winds beset it. Had my girl's courage failed, to spare her at the last moment? I fancied it might be: I was sure it was not so. Yet the doubt pressed on me with the force of a world of unimagined shifts and chances, and just kept the little flame alive, at times intoxicating me, though commonly holding me back to watch its forlorn conflict with probabilities known too well. It cost me a struggle to turn aside to Germany from the Italian highroad.



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I chose the line of the Brenner, and stopped half a day at Innsbruck to pay a visit to Colonel Heddon, of whom I had the joyful tidings that two of his daughters were away to go through the German form of the betrothal of one of them to an Englishman. The turn of the tide had come to him. And it comes to me, too, in a fresh spring tide whenever I have to speak of others instead of this everlastingly recurring I of the autobiographer, of which the complacent penman has felt it to be his duty to expose the mechanism when out of action, and which, like so many of our sins of commission, appears in the shape of a terrible offence when the occasion for continuing it draws to a close. The pleasant narrator in the first person is the happy bubbling fool, not the philosopher who has come to know himself and his relations toward the universe. The words of this last are one to twenty; his mind is bent upon the causes of events rather than their progress. As you see me on the page now, I stand somewhere between the two, approximating to the former, but with sufficient of the latter within me to tame the delightful expansiveness proper to that coming hour of marriage-bells and bridal-wreaths. It is a sign that the end, and the delivery of reader and writer alike, should not be dallied with.

The princess had invited Lucy Heddon to Sarkeld to meet Temple, and Temple to meet me. Onward I flew. I saw the old woods of the lake-palace, and, as it were, the light of my past passion waning above them. I was greeted by the lady of all nobility with her gracious warmth, and in his usual abrupt manful fashion by Prince Hermann. And I had no time to reflect on the strangeness of my stepping freely under the roof where a husband claimed Ottilia, before she led me into the library, where sat my lost and recovered, my darling; and, unlike herself, for a moment, she faltered in rising and breathing my name.

We were alone. I knew she was no bondswoman. The question how it had come to pass lurked behind everything I said and did; speculation on the visible features, and touching of the unfettered hand, restrained me from uttering or caring to utter it. But it was wonderful. It thrust me back on Providence again for the explanation—humbly this time. It was wonderful and blessed, as to loving eyes the first-drawn breath of a drowned creature restored to life. I kissed her hand. 'Wait till you have heard everything, Harry,' she said, and her voice was deeper, softer, exquisitely strange in its known tones, as her manner was, and her eyes. She was not the blooming, straight-shouldered, high-breathing girl of other days, but sister to the day of her 'Good-bye, Harry,' pale and worn. The eyes had wept. This was Janet, haply widowed. She wore no garb nor a shade of widowhood. Perhaps she had thrown it off, not to offend an implacable temper in me. I said, 'I shall hear nothing that can make you other than my own Janet—if you will?'



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She smiled a little. 'We expected Temple's arrival sooner than yours, Harry!'

'Do you take to his Lucy?'

'Yes, thoroughly.'

The perfect ring of Janet was there.

Mention of Riversley made her conversation lively, and she gave me moderately good news of my father, quaint, out of Julia Bulsted's latest letter to her.

'Then how long,' I asked astonished, 'how long have you been staying with the princess?'

She answered, colouring, 'So long, that I can speak fairish German.'

'And read it easily?'

'I have actually taken to reading, Harry.'

Her courage must have quailed, and she must have been looking for me on that morning of miserable aspect when I beheld the last of England through wailful showers, like the scene of a burial. I did not speak of it, fearing to hurt her pride, but said, 'Have you been here—months?'

'Yes, some months,' she replied.

'Many?'

'Yes,' she said, and dropped her eyelids, and then, with a quick look at me, 'Wait for Temple, Harry. He is a day behind his time. We can't account for it.'

I suggested, half in play, that perhaps he had decided, for the sake of a sea voyage, to come by our old route to Germany on board the barque Priscilla, with Captain Welsh.

A faint shudder passed over her. She shut her eyes and shook her head.

Our interview satisfied my heart's hunger no further. The Verona's erratic voyage had cut me off from letters.

Janet might be a widow, for aught I knew. She was always Janet to me; but why at liberty? why many months at Sarkeld, the guest of the princess? Was she neither maid nor widow—a wife flown from a brutal husband? or separated, and forcibly free? Under such conditions Otilia would not have commanded my return but what was I to imagine? A boiling couple of hours divided me from the time for dressing, when, as I



meditated, I could put a chance question or two to the man commissioned to wait on me, and hear whether the English lady was a Fraulein. The Margravine and Prince Ernest were absent. Hermann worked in his museum, displaying his treasures to Colonel Heddon. I sat with the ladies in the airy look-out tower of the lake-palace, a prey to intense speculations, which devoured themselves and changed from fire to smoke, while I recounted the adventures of our ship's voyage, and they behaved as if there were nothing to tell me in turn, each a sphinx holding the secret I thirsted for. I should not certainly have thirsted much if Janet had met me as far half-way as a delicate woman may advance. The mystery lay in her evident affection, her apparent freedom and unfathomable reserve, and her desire that I should see Temple before she threw off her feminine armour, to which, judging by the indications, Ottilia seemed to me to accede.

My old friend was spied first by his sweetheart Lucy, winding dilatorily over the hill away from Sarkeld, in one of the carriages sent to meet him. He was guilty of wasting a prodigious number of minutes with his trumpery 'How d' ye do's,' and his glances and excuses, and then I had him up in my room, and the tale was told; it was not Temple's fault if he did not begin straightforwardly.



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I plucked him from his narrator's vexatious and inevitable commencement: 'Temple, tell me, did she go to the altar?'

He answered 'Yes!'

'She did? Then she's a widow?'

'No, she isn't,' said Temple, distracting me by submitting to the lead I distracted him by taking.

'Then her husband's alive?'

Temple denied it, and a devil seized him to perceive some comicality in the dialogue.

'Was she married?'

Temple said 'No,' with a lurking drollery about his lips. He added, 'It 's nothing to laugh over, Richie.'

'Am I laughing? Speak out. Did Edbury come to grief overnight in any way?'

Again Temple pronounced a negative, this time wilfully enigmatical: he confessed it, and accused me of the provocation. He dashed some laughter with gravity to prepare for my next assault.

'Was Edbury the one to throw up the marriage? Did he decline it?'

'No,' was the answer once more.

Temple stopped my wrath by catching at me and begging me to listen.

'Edbury was drowned, Richie.'

'Overnight?'

'No, not overnight. I can tell it all in half-a-dozen words, if you'll be quiet; and I know you're going to be as happy as I am, or I shouldn't trifle an instant. He went overnight on board the barque Priscilla to see Mabel Sweetwinter, the only woman he ever could have cared for, and he went the voyage, just as we did. He was trapped, caged, and transported; it's a repetition, except that the poor old Priscilla never came to land. She foundered in a storm in the North Sea. That 's all we know. Every soul perished, the captain and all. I knew how it would be with that crew of his some day or other. Don't you remember my saying the Priscilla was the kind of name of a vessel that would go down with all hands, and leave a bottle to float to shore? A gin-bottle was found on our East coast-the old captain must have discovered in the last few moments that such



things were on board—and in it there was a paper, and the passengers' and crew's names in his handwriting, written as if he had been sitting in his parlour at home; over them a line—"The Lord's will is about to be done"; and underneath—"We go to His judgement resigned and cheerful." You know the old captain, Richie?

Temple had tears in his eyes. We both stood blinking for a second or two.

I could not but be curious to hear the reason for Edbury's having determined to sail.

'Don't you understand how it was, Richie?' said Temple. 'Edbury went to persuade her to stay, or just to see her for once, and he came to persuasions. He seems to have been succeeding, but the captain stepped on board and he treated Edbury as he did us two: he made him take the voyage for discipline's sake and "his soul's health."' "

'How do you know all this, Temple?'

'You know your friend Kiomi was one of the party. The captain sent her back on shore because he had no room for her. She told us Edbury offered bribes of hundreds and thousands for the captain to let him and Mabel go off in the boat with Kiomi, and then he took to begging to go alone. He tried to rouse the crew. The poor fellow cringed, she says; he threatened to swim off. The captain locked him up.'



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My immediate reflections hit on the Bible lessons Edbury must have had to swallow, and the gaping of the waters when its truths were suddenly and tremendously brought home to him.

An odd series of accidents! I thought.

Temple continued: 'Heriot held his tongue about it next morning. He was one of the guests, though he had sworn he wouldn't go. He said something to Janet that betrayed him, for she had not seen him since.'

'How betrayed him?' said I.

'Why,' said Temple, 'of course it was Heriot who put Edbury in Kiomi's hands. Edbury wouldn't have known of Mabel's sailing, or known the vessel she was in, without her help. She led him down to the water and posted him in sight before she went to Captain Welsh's; and when you and Captain Welsh walked away, Edbury rowed to the Priscilla. Old Heriot is not responsible for the consequences. What he supposed was likely enough. He thought that Edbury and Mabel were much of a pair, and thought, I suppose, that if Edbury saw her he'd find he couldn't leave her, and old Lady Kane, who managed him, would stand nodding her plumes for nothing at the altar. And so she did: and a pretty scene it was. She snatched at the minutes as they slipped past twelve like fishes, and snarled at the parson, and would have kept him standing till one P.M., if Janet had not turned on her heel. The old woman got in front of her to block her way. "Ah, Temple," she said to me, "it would be hard if I could not think I had done all that was due to them." I didn't see her again till she was starting for Germany. And, Richie, she thinks you can never forgive her. She wrote me word that the princess is of another mind, but her own opinion, she says, is based upon knowing you.'

'Good heaven! how little!' cried I.

Temple did me a further wrong by almost thanking me on Janet's behalf for my sustained love for her, while he praised the very qualities of pride and a spirited sense of obligation which had reduced her to dread my unforgiveness. Yet he and Janet had known me longest. Supposing that my idea of myself differed from theirs for the simple reason that I thought of what I had grown to be, and they of what I had been through the previous years? Did I judge by the flower, and they by root and stem? But the flower is a thing of the season; the flower drops off: it may be a different development next year. Did they not therefore judge me soundly?

Otilia was the keenest reader. Otilia had divined what could be wrought out of me. I was still subject to the relapses of a not perfectly right nature, as I perceived when glancing back at my thought of 'An odd series of accidents!' which was but a disguised fashion of attributing to Providence the particular concern, in my fortunes: an impiety and a folly! This is the temptation of those who are rescued and made happy by



circumstances. The wretched think themselves spited, and are merely childish, not egregious in egoism. Thither on leads to a chapter—already written by the wise, doubtless. It does not become an atom of humanity to dwell on it beyond a point where students of the human condition may see him passing through the experiences of the flesh and the brain.



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Meantime, Temple and I, at two hand-basins, soaped and towelled, and I was more discreet toward him than I have been to you, for I reserved from him altogether the pronunciation of the council of senators in the secret chamber of my head. Whether, indeed, I have fairly painted the outer part of myself waxes dubious when I think of his spluttering laugh and shout; 'Richie, you haven't changed a bit—you're just like a boy!' Certain indications of external gravity, and a sinking of the natural springs within characterized Temple's approach to the responsible position of a British husband and father. We talked much of Captain Welsh, and the sedate practical irony of his imprisoning one like Edbury to discipline him on high seas, as well as the singular situation of the couple of culprits under his admonishing regimen, and the tragic end. My next two minutes alone with Janet were tempered by it. Only my eagerness for another term of privacy persuaded her that I was her lover instead of judge, and then, having made the discovery that a single-minded gladness animated me in the hope that she and I would travel together one in body and soul, she surrendered, with her last bit of pride broken; except, it may be, a fragment of reserve traceable in the confession that came quaintly after supreme self-blame, when she said she was bound to tell me that possibly—probably, were the trial to come over again, she should again act as she had done.

Happily for us both, my wits had been sharpened enough to know that there is more in men and women than the stuff they utter. And blessed privilege now! if the lips were guilty of nonsense, I might stop them. Besides, I was soon to be master upon such questions. She admitted it, admitting with an unwonted emotional shiver, that absolute freedom could be the worst of perils. 'For women?' said I. She preferred to say, 'For girls,' and then 'Yes, for women, as they are educated at present.' Spice of the princess's conversation flavoured her speech. The signs unfamiliar about her for me were marks of the fire she had come out of; the struggle, the torture, the determined sacrifice, through pride's conception of duty. She was iron once. She had come out of the fire finest steel.

'Riversley! Harry,' she murmured, and my smile, and word, and squeeze in reply, brought back a whole gleam of the fresh English morning she had been in face, and voice, and person.

Was it conceivable that we could go back to Riversley single?

Before that was answered she had to make a statement; and in doing it she blushed, because it involved Edbury's name, and seemed to involve her attachment to him; but she paid me the compliment of speaking it frankly. It was that she had felt herself bound in honour to pay Edbury's debts. Even by such slight means as her saying, 'Riversley, Harry,' and my kiss of her fingers when a question of money was in debate, did we burst aside the vestiges of mutual strangeness, and recognize one another, but with an added warmth of love. When I pleaded for the marriage to be soon, she said, 'I wish it, Harry.'



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Sentiment you do not obtain from a Damascus blade. She most cordially despised the ladies who parade and play on their sex, and are for ever acting according to the feminine standard:—a dangerous stretch of contempt for one less strong than she.

Riding behind her and Temple one day with the princess, I said, 'What takes you most in Janet?'

She replied, 'Her courage. And it is of a kind that may knot up every other virtue worth having. I have impulses, and am capable of desperation, but I have no true courage: so I envy and admire, even if I have to blame her; for I know that this possession of hers, which identifies her and marks her from the rest of us, would bear the ordeal of fire. I can imagine the qualities I have most pride in withering and decaying under a prolonged trial. I cannot conceive her courage failing. Perhaps because I have it not myself I think it the rarest of precious gifts. It seems to me to imply one half, and to dispense with the other.'

I have lived to think that Otilia was right. As nearly right, too, in the wording of her opinion as one may be in three or four sentences designed to be comprehensive.

My Janet's readiness to meet calamity was shown ere we reached home upon an evening of the late autumn, and set eye on a scene, for her the very saddest that could have been devised to test her spirit of endurance, when, driving up the higher heath-land, we saw the dark sky ominously reddened over Riversley, and, mounting the ridge, had the funeral flames of the old Grange dashed in our faces. The blow was evil, sudden, unaccountable. Villagers, tenants, farm-labourers, groups of a deputation that had gone to the railway station to give us welcome; and returned, owing to a delay in our arrival, stood gazing from all quarters. The Grange was burning in two great wings, that soared in flame-tips and columns of crimson smoke, leaving the central hall and chambers untouched as yet, but alive inside with mysterious ranges of lights, now curtained, now made bare—a feeble contrast to the savage blaze to right and left, save for the wonder aroused as to its significance. These were soon cloaked. Dead sable reigned in them, and at once a jet of flame gave the whole vast building to destruction. My wife thrust her hand in mine. Fire at the heart, fire at the wings—our old home stood in that majesty of horror which freezes the limbs of men, bidding them look and no more.

'What has Riversley done to deserve this?' I heard Janet murmur to herself. 'His room !' she said, when at the South-east wing, where my old grandfather had slept, there burst a glut of flame. We dove down to the park and along the carriage-road to the first red line of gazers. They told us that no living creatures were in the house. My aunt Dorothy was at Bulsted. I perceived my father's man Tollingby among the servants, and called him to me; others came, and out of a clatter



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of tongues, and all eyes fearfully askant at the wall of fire, we gathered that a great reception had been prepared for us by my father: lamps, lights in all the rooms, torches in the hall, illuminations along the windows, stores of fireworks, such a display as only he could have dreamed of. The fire had broken out at dusk, from an explosion of fireworks at one wing and some inexplicable mismanagement at the other. But the house must have been like a mine, what with the powder, the torches, the devices in paper and muslin, and the extraordinary decorations fitted up to celebrate our return in harmony with my father's fancy.

Gentlemen on horseback dashed up to us. Captain Bulsted seized my hand. He was hot from a ride to fetch engines, and sang sharp in my ear, 'Have you got him?' It was my father he meant. The cry rose for my father, and the groups were agitated and split, and the name of the missing man, without an answer to it, shouted. Captain Bulsted had left him bravely attempting to quench the flames after the explosion of fireworks. He rode about, interrogating the frightened servants and grooms holding horses and dogs. They could tell us that the cattle were safe, not a word of my father; and amid shrieks of women at fresh falls of timber and ceiling into the pit of fire, and warnings from the men, we ran the heated circle of the building to find a loophole and offer aid if a living soul should be left; the night around us bright as day, busier than day, and a human now added to elemental horror. Janet would not quit her place. She sent her carriage-horses to Bulsted, and sat in the carriage to see the last of burning Riversley. Each time that I came to her she folded her arms on my neck and kissed me silently.

We gathered from the subsequent testimony of men and women of the household who had collected their wits, that my father must have remained in the doomed old house to look to the safety of my aunt Dorothy. He was never seen again.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Absolute freedom could be the worst of perils
Add on a tired pipe after dark, and a sound sleep to follow
Allowed silly sensitiveness to prevent the repair
As little trouble as the heath when the woods are swept
Bade his audience to beware of princes
But the flower is a thing of the season; the flower drops off
But to strangle craving is indeed to go through a death
Is it any waste of time to write of love?
Not to do things wholly is worse than not to do things at all
Payment is no more so than to restore money held in trust
Self, was digging pits for comfort to flow in
Tears are the way of women and their comfort



The love that survives has strangled craving
The wretch who fears death dies multitudinously
There is more in men and women than the stuff they utter
Those who are rescued and made happy by circumstances
To kill the deer and be sorry for the suffering wretch is common
Twice a bad thing to turn sinners loose
What a man hates in adversity is to see 'faces'
What else is so consolatory to a ruined man?
Who shuns true friends flies fortune in the concrete
Would he see what he aims at? let him ask his heels
You may learn to know yourself through love