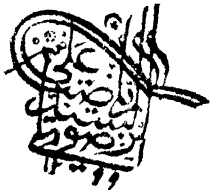
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MINE IS THINE

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MINE IS THINE

A NOVEL



BY

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AUTHOR OF 'FAIR TO SEE,' ETC.

SEVENTH EDITION

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TO

HIS OLD BROTHER OFFICERS

OF THE

92D GORDON HIGHLANDERS

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR

MINE IS THINE.

CHAPTER I.

I HUMBLY desire, dear readers, to please you if I can, and therefore hasten to gratify an aspiration which lurks in all novel-readers' hearts—to "get into the thick of the business at once." So come with me and be summarily introduced to one or two principal personages of this little drama. Let us take them unawares, let us surprise them while they sit at meat,—eating, drinking, and (some of them, at least) making merry, on the margin of the Lake of Como, in one of the pleasantest hotels in Europe, the "Bellevue," at Cadenabbia. And do thou, old Time, turn back in thy flight a few short years, and suffer us to enter the *table-d'hôte* room of the hotel in question, on the bright evening of an early summer day in 18—.

The banquet is spread. The guests are assembled or assembling. They are of many nationalities, of diverse ranks, of most ages; each of the three sexes is represented, for more than one palpable curate bows his meek head over the flesh-pot. The noise *is* a little trying at first. The crockery *does* seem to be possessed with devils, and every glass in the room must have St Vitus's dance. Every one seems to be impatient at first—hungry, angry, vociferous. What tempers these waiters must have! Outside the window a string-band is playing a selection from the 'Barbiere.' Could anything be more appropriate? "*Figaro quà, Figaro là!*" shrieks the band. "*Kellner!*" "*Garçon!*" "*Cameriere!*" "*Waiter!*" shout the guests; and, through all the crush and the bustle, these admirable men glide about—here, there, everywhere, breathless and perspiring, but full of polyglot politeness and attention. The only calm,

still, cool-looking object in the room is that tremendous head-waiter in the buff waistcoat, standing near the door, in Jove-like serenity. The guests, as they enter, pause before him to ask where they may place themselves. In that august presence, they appear to peak and dwindle. He is too great to speak, but waves them off to their destinations, exact and unerring as omniscience. His whole air seems to say—"A good man struggling with difficulties *may* be a sight for the gods; but how much grander this, the spectacle of a great man overcoming every difficulty *without* a struggle, with a bosom as unruffled as the buff garment which envelops it!" The diapason of discord has achieved itself in the sudden collapse of that mottle-faced waiter, involving in his ruin thirteen plates, a dish of potatoes, and a bottle of Medoc; and now that the yells of yonder German have caused the last window in the room to be closed, things begin to settle down into a little more quiescence. Come, then, and let us thread the hall. Don't look at that indigestive spinster unless you wish to be petrified. Don't waste a thought upon that glorious-looking old man with the dome-like head and long white moustache. He is *not* a very distinguished general of division. He is a City man—probably a stockbroker—and it is quite conceivable that his name is Crump. Never mind the *brunette*—beautiful as a star, but nothing to *us*. Let us go on. Eat with their knives? Of course they do. The only Russian princess whose confidence I have enjoyed, ate with *her* knife—quite a trifle when you're accustomed to it. You see that old lady dwelling in the fool's paradise of an auburn "front" and immense gutta-percha teeth? Well, next her are two men. *Voilà notre affaire.* These are my hero Cosmo Glencairn, and his friend Tom Wyedale. Yes, the fair one *is* Cosmo. Why not? Heroes ought to be dark? I deny it—not English heroes. They ought to be buff men, with blue eyes, like the Vikings. Well, there they are. Draw near to them, and listen to them, and look out for new arrivals. And now I leave you to find your way through the labyrinth of this tale, from which the gods give you and me a safe and happy deliverance.

"The menagerie seems to be fuller than usual to-night, Cosmo," said Tom; "the roaring is louder, and there seem to be several new varieties. I see a new skunk, and a chimpanzee, and a sun-fish, and a hippopotamus."

"And all that being interpreted?"

"And all that being interpreted means that we have a considerable increase in the number of our co-diners, and that the new-comers are rather a shady lot to look at."

"Not very distinguished-looking, certainly. What is the meaning of it, I wonder? It isn't near the tourist's season, and yet many of the new arrivals look like the ideal tourist—not the least like returning swallows from the Riviera or Rome."

"Not a bit of it; but, perhaps, something has been taking place in England—the Whitsuntide holidays or something."

"You pagan! we are still a fortnight from Whitsunday."

"Are we? I apologise. One forgets everything in this Sleepy Hollow. But, Whitsunday or not, if Mr Cook had shot a whole caravan into the district, we couldn't be richer in his typical followers."

"Yes, I've seen the kind of people before, in connection with a 'conductor.' It's the old problem of the flies in amber."

"Seen them before! By George, they're all here! There's the 'expansive' Briton—that underdone-looking man. See how he talks at, through, up against, down upon, everybody and everything! He has a joke for every one. He chaffs them all round, waiters included. He is button-holing the whole table with his eyes. Listen to the monster! How he laughs! You can hear nothing else. What a fearful thing is vulgar geniality! That fellow would chaff the Pope if he could get at him.

"Then there are two or three specimens of the 'reticent' Briton. That pock-marked fellow staring so fiercely at four inches of the table in front of him, is one of them. Doesn't he look as if his pockets were full of Orsini bombs? as if he were making up his mind to let them off at once, and blow us all to smithereens? And there's another—that hectic man in the white tie, looking as if he had just picked a pocket. They are both in a white terror of being addressed in a foreign tongue; for, behold, beside one sits a restless-looking Frenchman, and by the other an affable Muscovite. Hence their woe. And there is the archæological female Briton—she may be in some other 'ology' perhaps, but she certainly goes in for 'mind' and science of some sort. They're all the same. You can't mistake them. Limp, and with that mysterious top-knot of scraggy hair gathered together from the uttermost parts of the head. She looks as if a savage had tomahawked her, and, finding the scalp unsatisfactory, had hurriedly replaced it. Doesn't she, Cosmo? Oh, how I suffered from one of the tribe at Eleusis last year! The sun was raging, but she seated herself on a

fallen capital and held me, like the Ancient Mariner, while she lectured for half an hour on the spirit of Greek Art. She had come from Athens without an escort, braving the brigands with no protection save her awful virginity; and I fear there is no doubt it got her safe back. And ah! I thought we should find him here; and there he is, sure enough, up at the end of the opposite table—and a fine specimen he is, too, of the 'domestic' Briton. You can see through all that fellow's dodges, and read him like a book. These two girls are his daughters, and he trembles for them. Every well-looking individual of the opposite sex is a hawk, ready to swoop upon his dove-cot. You, Cosmo, are a hawk."

"Thanks; I fear your definition won't permit a *tu quoque*."

"You are, as I say, in this man's perverted vision, a hawk. His mind is full of hawks and foreign counts. The foreign count is his *bête noire*, and every well-dressed foreigner is a count 'within the meaning of the Act.' Observe how he has strategised against hawks and counts. He has thrown out a flanking party on either side of the dove-cot,—that tough-looking spinster on the left, obviously an aunt—the hobbledehoy on the right, clearly a brother; and he himself is a big gun of position in the centre, ready to go off with fearful detonations."

"The doves are rather pretty, Tom; the blue one is really a charming little *ingénue*."

"Passable—passable; and indeed I find the pink sister not without attraction. Impossible head-gear, though."

"Oh, *cela va sans dire;* at present all head-gears are impossible. Now, if you were to tilt back that terrible erection on the girl's head till it sloped from the sky-line of the head, over the neck, you would——"

"Steady, Cosmo! outlying picket alarmed and signalling to the main body. Look at the weather. Opposite window; charming evening, isn't it? What a bloom there is on that hill opposite! How the last rays of the sun are bringing out the tints of everything!"

"Including that bottle of 'Gattinara,' which has been with *you* ever since we sat down. Pass it, before it is quite empty. I'll tell you what it is, Tom, it is not a remunerative system going shares in wine with a talkative fellow like you. You don't give yourself time to eat much, but you do contrive to drink like a whale."

"Do I? The action is quite mechanical, I assure you."

"Very likely, but it empties the bottle quite as effectually as if it were deliberate."

"After all, what is there in *one* bottle of 'Gattinara'?"

"Precisely what I wish to discover. Pass it."

"Cornish men? No, surr; I never fouled a Cornish man—not to know him." Thus spake a cadaverous American gentleman, who sat opposite the two friends, addressing an English neighbour, and splitting up his remarks into short, irregular sentences.

"They are splendid men, I can tell you," said the neighbour; "they're descended from the ancient Britons, you know."

"Are they, now? Well, I niver met an ancient Briton. But if any of them were to give a look down Texas way. They'd keep quiet about their descendants when they went back, I guess. They've got a kind of a man down there, surr, that mostly runs seventy-three to seventy-seven inches. That's good enough, ain't it? You've heard of William G. Howkins?"

"I think not."

"Ah! that was a kind of a man that stood ninety-two inches. And a fraction. And when he killed the grizzly that ran to 900 pounds in its skin and claws. You've heard of *that* bear?"

"No, I can't say I have."

"Wall, he took and carried that thar grizzly, and went browsin' all around the town with that thar carcass on his back. To show him. That's the kind of man William G. Howkins was. And that's the kind of man they raise down Texas way. I guess an ancient Briton would feel rather mean and skinny down there. I guess he'd feel downright d——d ashamed of his descendants. When he saw them again."

"Howkins must have been a Goliath."

"Wall, he *was* above the middle height. But he ain't the size now. Not since the war."

"How do you mean?"

"Wall, there was a cannon-ball that was a trifle quick for him at Gettysburg. He got his legs chipped. And shortened up, at that time, seven or eight inches. But, I guess, they'd still show the balance of him in Cornwall. For money. W. G. H. wasn't descended from nobody. You bet."

"A've harrd ov a Glasca man——" began another gentleman, in the solemn doric of North Britain.

"Be japers!" interrupted a sprightly-looking neighbour—"be japers! Mr Howkins must be own brother to Larry O'Toole's aunt,

> 'That had niver a father,
> And sorra a mother,
> But jist poured herself out from a jug of potheen.'"

"A racklack a Glasca man—u'm thinkin' his name was Fechnie——" Interruption, however, again befell the Scot, for an excitable-looking Frenchman, who had been intently listening to the dialogue, suddenly gave tongue.

"Messieurs," he exclaimed, "comment cela s'explique-t-il? Moi, je comprends parfaitement l'Anglais, mais il n'y a pas moyen de vous comprendre, vous autres. Vous parlez trois—mais, oui!—quatre langues, entre vous, tout à la fois. Que veut dire ce 'Larree O'Toal'? Qu'est ce que c'est que ce 'Glass Cow'? Comment expliquez vous cet abominable 'Racklaxe'? Dites donc, je vous en prie, comment——" But here a shout of laughter reduced the Gaul to foaming silence.

The meal went bustling on. The blended tumult of a hundred voices rose and fell, as interval and onset relieved each other; but at every revival the pitch of voices seemed higher, and the laughter more strenuous than before,—save where, like veritable "Towers of Silence," the types of reticence sat wrapt in a taciturnity that seemed to become palpable—to make itself felt—even amid that human Babel, with its crashing symphonies from delf and metal. All round the table quaint idiosyncrasies progressively evolved themselves before the laughing eyes of Cosmo Glencairn and his loquacious friend. About a third of the dinner had been achieved. The American Eagle was soaring sublime, on reckless wings of hyperbole and myth. The Scotchman, who had failed to find a single taker for some creaking observations on the bothy system, as pursued in Rossshire, was watching the Eagle, with the intention of a trapper in his eye. His French neighbour continued to mutter, "Il n'y a pas moyen de comprendre ces gueux d'Anglais." One female representative of British mind, thinking entomology to be a good light dinner subject—safe to draw—had plunged into the habits of the "Death's-head moth," and secured, for a time, the sympathy of several people in her vicinity, including a curate, a governess, with two female charges, a broken-English German, and a highly-intelligent-looking old gentleman, whose eye seemed to blaze with unqualified appreciation, but who, as it afterwards transpired, was deaf and blind. But suddenly another of the sisterhood, who sat opposite, unsuspected up to this time and *incog.*, unmasked herself and came into action, opening fire with an "ichthyosaurus," and following it up with "flint-headed weapons," which staggered the curate, demoralised the pupils, and elicited a long-drawn "So!" from the German. Number One, finding the Death's-head moth altogether unequal to the position, withdrew it in favour of "greywacke," which,

to a certain extent, rallied confidence, until "Primeval Man," "the Moabite Stone," and "the Panathenaic Frieze," fired off by Number Two in rapid succession, left Number One without any following, save the appreciative old man. But Number Two did not long continue the heroine of the occasion; for the expansive Briton, expanding theologically, laid an irreverent paw upon the Pentateuch, which roused the meek but true-hearted curate, and, in a pause of silence and expectation, all the table awaited the encounter between Christian and Apollyon. During this pause, when dinner was half achieved, a new arrival again diverted public attention, and concentrated it on very different objects.

The new party was preceded by a gaudy and corpulent courier, who, after questioning the buff-cinctured Jove with an air of impious equality, marshalled his *protégés* to their seats, with looks of scorn and menace, cast on either side, as who should say, "Tremble, O ye base groundlings! the social Juggernaut is upon you." The public, however, paid small attention to this tremendous personage, for all eyes were more pleasantly attracted to the lady and gentleman who followed him. The lady was beautiful. It is a bold assertion, an apple of discord, which we should hesitate to hurl into any assembly on the entrance of any living woman. Did its sculptor succeed in expressing a true ideal of Beauty, or did he only immortalise the Insipid, in the Venus dei Medici? Are Rubens's often-painted wives glorious types of vigorous and beautiful womanhood? or are they only two naked Flemish fishwomen, wallowing in a superabundance of garish flesh? Specimens these, selected at random, of the diversities of opinion upon all questions as to beauty depicted by human hands; and how much greater are the diversities when the claims of this, or that, living woman are *sub lite!* I make, then, a bold assertion; but as the lady is invisible to the reader, I make it boldly, not fearing contradiction, unless, indeed, some may take exception to certain features which I may state to have been distinctive of the fair entrant—sea-grey eyes, to wit,—grey or blue, I know not which, but the colour of the Mediterranean when the sun has just gone down, and left upon calm waters a *look*, between the blue of noontide and the steely sheen that comes on them with the gloaming,—sea-grey eyes and bronze-brown hair, a pure complexion, a nose delicately *retroussé*, a mouth like the bow of Cupid, and a figure slight, but genuine and complete—not that composition of door, hay-truss, and pillow, with which art, supplementing natural deficiencies, contrives nowadays to make

a travesty of the "human *form* divine." All these were attributes of the young lady in question; and I trust that, on these simple data, no reader will be captious enough to found a theory that she was not (what I distinctly assert she was and is) beautiful. It is a goodly thing to be beautiful; it is a glorious thing to be young, (dwell upon this, rejoice in it, revel in it, O ye young, in the days of your youth!)—but to be both young and beautiful is to be twice blest; and this fortunate lady enjoyed that double beatitude. And besides all this—an attribute more exquisite still—she possessed that subtle, magical charm which words cannot define nor art imitate, but which nature, culture, and association, all three, combine to produce, weaving it out of movement, manner, expression, carriage, and I know not what besides, and which can only, but most feebly, be expressed in words by the commonplace phrase, "a thoroughbred air." Many of the guests at the *table d'hôte* might have been indifferent to her beauty, or denied its existence altogether; but the *air noble* reached them all: so that every eye was turned admiringly in her direction, and the duty of eating strenuously up to a rather high contract price was pretty generally suspended for at least five-and-twenty seconds. Certain eclipses took place. The charms of half-a-dozen pink-and-white damsels, who looked but now so fresh and bright and pretty, vanished abruptly, just as one has seen a bunch of comely village-garden flowers grow coarse and gaudy when placed near some exotic, exquisite in its simple purity of form and hue. As she passed up the hall, the sun offered an inspiration which Raphael might have prized; for the last rays, streaming through the windows, smote upon the deep masses of her burnished hair, and seemed to set a glory round about her small and shapely head.

"A burning beauty!" whispered Tom Wyedale.

Cosmo said nothing, but the thought written in his face was "Oh! dea certe!"

"And," said the American, following up a commendatory remark of his own—"and, I guess, the old hoss looks like blood and bone, and beans into the bargain."

These irreverent remarks were applied to the gentleman who followed the beautiful apparition. He was a tall, old man, with features patrician rather than handsome, and an expression well-bred rather than courteous; in carriage upright, in movement deliberately angular; clear of complexion, with cold blue eyes, and slight but emphatic whiskers; highly collared, amply

neckerchiefed; tightly buttoned up, as to his olive frock-coat,—his *ensemble*, in a word, recalling the now extinct, grand air of the old school.

His temper was not in a satisfactory condition. He had a grievance, which exploded every now and then in far-reaching fragments of angry sentences, and which proved to be that he was very late for dinner, but by no fault of his own; and the difficulty of bringing the blame home to the real delinquent was that which now exercised his mind. Some men—nurses of their wrath—cannot be satisfied until they get it into the concrete. They can't say, "Confound *it!*"—they must be able to say, "Confound *him*, *them*, or *you!*" The old gentleman was of this nature, and he was hunting for a personality wherewith to connect his grievance. Every one, from his courier and his daughter's maid, had, of course, shifted the blame to some subordinate, so that half the household were implicated, even the hall-porter being entangled in the affair. Several of these officials were brought up for examination in the *table-d'hôte* room, and a sort of running court of inquiry occupied the old gentleman in the intervals between each tepid *plat*. It ended by the summary conviction of the head-waiter, whose lofty bearing had at once inflamed the spirit of the old gentleman, and pointed him out, without further evidence, as the guilty person. So the case was closed by a few powerful observations addressed to that astonished magnate.

"Don't answer me!" cried the angry guest; "it is, as I say, all owing to your abominable carelessness."

"Beg your pardon, my lord; every one knows that the *table-d'hôte* hour——"

"Every one, sir, is a *very* different person from me and my daughter. I know nothing about your *table d'hôte*, except that I never saw a worse dinner or more execrable attendance. I shall report this to the direction, and also about your manner, which is distinctly offensive. Go away."

"Beg pardon, my lord——"

"Go away, sir! get out of my sight!"—whereupon the man went, crestfallen; and the American, regarding the old peer with a curious veneration that could hardly have been surpassed on his lordship's own domain, muttered—

"Darned if it ain't *something* to be a lord! A real English lord! They all knock under to *that*. That all-mighty waiter would have laughed at any of your counts or barons. Or even a duke. If he spelt himself D-U-C. But the real article kicks 'em all about."

"After all," smiled his English neighbour, "you see something in our aristocracy."

"Yes, surr. Something to be ashamed of. I see something in human natur', too. And I'm ashamed of *that*. Human natur', surr, is a born toady. I ain't proud of *that* fact. But that don't prevent me seeing that while it *is* sich, it ain't a bad thing to be a lord. Like the old crocodile over the way. It's better to kick than to be kicked—ain't it? That's sense, I guess. Holloa, waiter! who's the lord?"

The waiter didn't know, and was despatched to the bureau to bring the required information in writing—which being done, the Yankee read the name, and said—

"Wall, I hope Lord Germistoune's property's big. He wants elbow-room. It would take about four of our parishes, I guess, to let him turn in. Without grazing."

The tedious dinner came to a close at last, and the company melted gradually away, to take their coffee *al fresco* while listening to the band; or to be rowed about upon the lake, in the dreamy twilight between sunset and moon-rise. As Cosmo and Tom left the room, they passed close by Lord Germistoune and his daughter, just as his lordship, still unappeased, was remarking—

"The whole thing is distinctly monstrous. They have only now brought me these letters and papers, which have been awaiting us here since yesterday."

"How very tiresome and stupid!" said the young lady; "but I daresay it won't happen again, now they know you."

"I shall take uncommon good care it does not have a chance of happening again, for I will leave the house."

"Dear papa, there is no other hotel."

"Not on this side; but two, at least, at Bellaggio. Now, I propose to be rowed over there this evening, and secure rooms for to-morrow. If I sent that idiot Stefano, he would be sure to make mistakes. Would you care to come? It is a lovely evening, and but a short row. Perhaps you are too tired, though?"

"Not at all; I should like of all things to go with you."

"Very well: if you are ready in half an hour, that will do. The moon is nearly full now, and we need not hurry. In the meantime I will try to get a cup of coffee outside."

CHAPTER II.

The two friends passed an hour or so lounging by the lake, till the moon began to rise over the hills, and then Cosmo said—

"Behold the hour, and the boat of Pietro! Let us hail him, and get afloat. That little breeze, just beginning to arrive from the Engadine, is a godsend, after the stifling heat of the day. Let us get right out into the middle of the lake, and meet it and make the most of it, and see the moon rising. The moonlight effects here are superb; and there is something in this air that makes one appreciative. The moon makes poets of us all down here—the moon and the lake, between them."

Cosmo was right. Surely his must be a rusty soul that takes no gleam of radiance and delight from the beautiful communion of the two! Beautiful! There is no word in any language good enough, beautiful enough, to describe it. The moon must be in love with Como. Fancy-free for all the world besides, the "imperial vot'ress" must have bestowed upon that favoured lake the solitary passion of her mysterious heart. Is not this why her countenance changes as she passes over these enchanted and enchanting waters? Is not this why the fashion of her beauty there grows softer, tenderer, dreamier? Is it not for this that there she moves with such slow and lingering languor, as all those who, with seeing eyes, have beheld her, will attest? Yes, she is in love with Como; and as lovers' faces change at meeting the adored, so is she transfigured when she looks over the hills that shelter the object of her devotion. Lover-like she comes, making the most of her own charms. Lover-like she glorifies the beauties of the beloved with her idealising light. And oh! most lover-like she moves in that dear presence, slowly, rapt, concentrated—piercing with her glances the solemn depths of the enamoured lake, which lies gazing up at her, earnest and silent, needing no voice for a reply; for she can see into that clear, deep heart, and there behold the transcript of her pure and holy flame. Though "Adam lost Paradise—eternal tale!"—there have still been left to us—few, indeed, and far between—scattered over the face of mother earth, certain spots of heavenly beauty and repose: Edens, the gates of which no flaming swords nor "watch of winged Hydra" guard; where the flowers are not too obviously disfigured by the serpent's trail; where even the spirit of man, if not divine, at least possesses some of the calm, suave

attributes of divinity. Surely Lake Como and its margin are of these. The day had been one of sultriest heat, and a kind of thundery silence had brooded over the water, and over all the country round about. Closed jalousies had darkened the faces of the beautiful villas on the lake. The luxuriant creepers, clothing their terrace-walls, hung down limp and dejected, as though trying to reach the water, and find coolness or death therein. The fountains in the gardens seemed to send up languid and unwilling jets, dim to the eye, and with no joyous music for the ear. From Tremezzo to Menaggio, from Bellaggio to Varenna, you might have counted the visible population on your fingers—a few languid forms, motionless for the most part, or only moving a few unwilling paces, to subside again into inevitable stagnation. Not a boat to be seen on the lake save one—a large *contadino* barque, laden with market-produce, which put off early from Varenna, but soon gave up the business as hopeless, and lay all day at the opening of Lake Lecco, the motionless cradle of its slumbering crew. A terribly hot and breathless day it had been; so that when the breeze sprang up at sunset, it was like Nature's sigh of relief after a long ordeal of *ennui* and fatigue—as who should say, "Gone at last!" and then everything awoke and was changed after that. The moon came up and gave her light. The darkened eyes of the villas opened and sent forth their light. The spray of the fountains leaped gaily up and caught the moonbeams and tossed them about, like genii playing with handfuls of diamonds. And the flowers, instead of closing their petals, like conventional flowers, must have opened them for the first time that day—so sweet became the night with their breath, so rich with all the fragrances of summer. And from either shore floated tempered strains—the sounds of all manner of musical instruments; and on the lake came airy-looking boats, many gaily illuminated with coloured lamps and torches—all vocal, some with melodious laughter, some with the voice of singing. Even the big *contadino* barque, under way again with sail and oar, stole picturesquely and harmoniously along, and the gentle plash of the oars acted as a pleasant symphony to the well-worn, but captivating Neapolitan ditty which the rowers sang, to the worship and the wooing of the much-hymned "Marianina"—

"Marianina! Marianina!
Cambia, cambia tuoi pensiere,
Non andar coi bersagliere,
Se ti vuoi maritar!

Se ti vuoi maritar !
Se ti vuoi maritar !
Marianina mia ! carina mia !
Dammi un bacio o mi fai morir ! "

Upon these waters bathed in the dreamy lovelight of the summer moon, and into this scene, worthier of dreamland than the workaday world, the two friends put forth, with no special object to decide the direction of their little boat, save only to get into the middle of the lake. Once there, the breeze met, the point of view reached, Tom Wyedale, who was by no means of a contemplative turn, demanded of his friend whither he should order the boatman to shape his course. Tom, by the by, who erroneously believed himself to know a little Italian, had stipulated that, for practice' sake, he should be allowed on all occasions to act as spokesman.

"It does not matter," said Cosmo—"anywhere."

"That's rather vague."

"Yes, but vagueness is the very thing for a night like this, which would be outraged by anything so prosaic as the definite. Tell the old man to move vaguely and promiscuously about."

"Rather trying to my stock of Italian, which is rather for solid, than fancy purposes. *Avanti*, Pietro !"

"*Si, signore !*" cried the old boatman, plunging his oars with alacrity into the water, and heading away for Bellaggio at racing-pace.

"Too fast — too fast," cried Cosmo. "The old rascal is thinking of that wine-shop under the colonnade. He has arranged our programme and his own. We are to hang about and listen to the Bellagian band for an hour, while he devotes himself to the dismal wine of the country and that mysterious game of fingers. Stop, stop !"

"*Fermatevi*, Pietro !" cried Tom ; "and now whither ?"

"Everywhere."

"*Da per tutto*, Pietro."

"*Si, signore ;*" and interpreting his instructions to perfection, he subsided into a slow, monotonous stroke, and shaped a serpentine course.

"What fellows these Italians are, to be sure !" said Cosmo, as a boat-load of minstrelsy passed at a little distance, and filled the air with strains that seemed to interpret the very spirit of the hour and scene. "What an instinctive taste they have ! Your English musician would have destroyed everything here by something horribly jerky and jigging. But these men have woven into their music the moonlight and the orange-trees and

the sweetness of orange-blossoms, the bright villas, the pleasant vineyards, the deep woods, the gardens, the sprightly fountains, the melancholy lake, and the happy languid *far niente* that suits a midsummer night."

"Holloa! I say——"

"This is the very music of a midsummer night's dream. Titania might have been lulled to sleep by it on that delectable bank of wild thyme."

"Come, Cosmo, this is all very hard upon me."

"Yes, to be sure, my dear fellow; a thousand apologies! I was thinking aloud. Pearls are an offence to swine. I'll change the subject."

"It strikes me—all this is very fine, of course,—but it strikes me that this same sentiment of yours is rather of a sensual kind. I'll call it sensuous, if you like. You're a sensuous fellow, Cosmo—that's the word."

"Well, I don't object. I quite believe that the great thing in life, so as to get the most out of it, is to be thoroughly adaptive; in a scene like this to be *able* to be 'sensuous,'—a sybarite, if you please, without prejudice to my being metaphysical, spiritual, stoical, realistic, positive, and practical—each on the fitting occasion. There is a time for all things. A one-sided man must be constantly out of tune with his surroundings. Life has so many phases, and such incessant changes. Therefore, to-night, let me be sensuous—if you please."

"A versatile man never comes to anything."

"An old parrot-cry—and not true; but even if it were true, he would come to nothing, happily—and happiness is the *summum bonum* of my to-night's philosophy, which also forbids me to indulge in prosy speculation; so don't go on with it, you Philistine!"

"You began it."

"Argument of any sort is also impossible, or I would deny it."

"Well, philosophy or not philosophy, it is very jolly out on the lake to-night. I wonder what that pretty girl thinks of it! also, I wonder if her papa has got over the coldness of the soup and the lukewarmness of the attendance!"

"Pretty? do you call her *pretty?*"

"Yes, I do, most emphatically. What! you don't mean to say that you don't admire her?"

"No, I mean to say nothing of the sort—but *pretty!* How like you that is, Tom! I would not insult beauty of that type by calling its possessor pretty. There is an elevation, a soul, a

purity in her beauty that I have seldom, if ever, seen before, in a human face. I know a picture for which she might have sat. I have not seen it for years, but it has always haunted me. It is, or was, in an obscure little Italian village perched away up in the hills above the Riviera. Some old cardinal, who was born there, left it with the rest of his collection to his native place. It is a Madonna, by Sasso Ferrato; not a replica of any of his well-known pictures, but an unique original—different altogether from any of his other Madonnas, yet authentic, and of extraordinary beauty and grace. The moment I saw this young lady I was reminded of it. It is my beau-ideal of female loveliness. When I first saw the picture I was reminded of the verse—

"The star-like beauty of immortal eyes."

When I have thought of the picture, I have always thought of the phrase. To-night I have seen the conception of the painter realised; and in mortal eyes I have beheld the star-like beauty of which the poet dreamed."

"My dear Cosmo, this is a very desperate state of things. You must really take more exercise, and get up early in the morning. I have been suspecting for some time that there is a slight tendency to hepatitis. Do you remember poor Oliver Lee? He died of it, you know, and was really comforted for his mortal sickness by its big name. He insisted on it always, and was continually checking off his symptoms — 'clouded vision, morbid fancies, loss of appetite, noises in the head, insomnia,' &c. These were some of them; and I do think, Cosmo, that the vision must be clouded and the fancy morbid which transforms the *beauté de diable* into divine loveliness."

"*Beauté de diable!* I suppose you think you've achieved a neat antithesis, but you're wrong; for between the *beauté de diable* and divine beauty there is the same connection as there is between the beauty of innocence and the beauty of holiness."

"Oh, this is terrible! Pray be sensuous again; it's better than being metaphysical after a *table-d'hôte* dinner. I suppose, then, you have fallen in love with the Madonna at first sight?"

"The reasoning of a chambermaid! Well, even if I *had* fallen in love with her, it would not be at first sight; for in seeing her to-night, I only see the figure of the picture in a new *pose*, with a change of drapery, in a different light. Perhaps I *am* in love with the ideal which the picture suggests; if so, I shall certainly be faithful to it, for the ideal never disappoints, and the real generally does so. Therefore I would rather avoid this young lady."

"Ha, ha, ha! ho! he!—also hum!"

"If she were to fulfil the promise of the picture, it would be something like the story of Pygmalion and Galatea coming true. That is not a likely occurrence. No; were she never so charming, she would fail to reach the perfection which Sasso Ferrato has helped me to conceive. It would be impossible not to associate her real qualities with my ideal; and since, as I say, the real almost inevitably disappoints, my beautiful illusion would be dissipated and my idol shattered. I shall be careful not to come in contact with the young lady."

"Well, I am sure I have no objection; and, to tell you the truth, it just occurs to me that I may as well fall in love with her myself. I have not adventured in that line as yet; but I daresay I might succeed, because I am so 'adaptive,' as you call it; and there would be a dramatic propriety in being in love on Lake Como, which I am not insensible to. Besides, there's nothing else to do here but smoke and loll about on the lake; and I daresay both these occupations would gain by a flavour of the tender passion. Yes, Cosmo, consider me in love, until further instructions, and respect me accordingly—no *brusquerie*, no roughness with the blossom which now begins to expand before your eyes."

"You in love? You?"

"I—even I. You ought to be immensely obliged to me. You're out of the running, you know, and evidently developing into a bard. It will be a godsend to you to watch the affair. Besides, you will be of serious service in gooseberry-picking; and you are just the man to *intriguer* that combustible old gentleman—you're so 'adaptive' and 'many-sided,' don't you see?"

"Well, I can conceive many things, but not Tom Wyedale as the hero of a love-romance."

"Nothing happens but the improbable, my boy; and if there are a few deficiencies in my composition, you can idealise me, you know. With your talent, I think you ought to turn out of this material a very first-class sort of hero."

"Somehow I don't see it."

"Ah! you do us both injustice."

"I could hardly give romantic attributes to a round of beef or a pot of porter."

"You wrong me, Cosmo—you wrong me; but it is the old story. A great man's school-fellows are notoriously the last to recognise his great qualities. The school-dunce develops into an intellectual giant, but his early brother-dunces can never

forget the fool's-cap which he shared with them. I forgive you, old man."

"Very good of you; but I can't say I remember that interesting bond between you and me."

"Likely enough; memory plays sad pranks in such matters."

"I can remember, however, that *you* were the biggest dunce in your form."

"Imagination in fault this time; it constantly clouds the memory."

"I don't think I require to call upon my memory, or use the past tense, in speaking of your dunceship."

"Hepatitis! hepatitis! Clouded vision, morbid fancies, noises in the head. We must have you overhauled. There is a manslayer in the hotel; consult him."

"Hang it, Tom, what a bore you are! I feel so tired of you sometimes, it appears to me a mystery how we are such friends."

"Candid friend! it *is* difficult to say how it should be so. The general rules are horribly contradictory. Like draws to like; but then, contrasts fascinate each other. Perhaps the endearing ties in this case are gratitude on your part, and a sense of protectorship on mine—continued from earliest youth until now."

"As how?"

"How? Why, who licked Jack Falls for bullying you?"

"I don't remember; probably I licked him myself."

"You! Why, Jack could have eaten you. Who supplied you with cricket-bats, like a brother?"

"No one did. I remember your giving me a bat for my silver chain and my white mouse that had one eye pink and the other green—but the handle of the bat turned out to be sprung."

"Well, hang it! I gave you back the mouse, although I was devoted to it."

"Yes, you gave it me back to avoid a swishing, when white mice were forbidden under penalties. And then, when the holidays came—although I had run the risk of keeping it all the half—you pretended you had only lent it to me, to oblige me, and wanted to take it back."

"Oh, I can't go back upon all these trumpery little details. I only remember that I was excessively generous to you about a mouse or mice and cricket-bats."

"Generous?"

"Yes; and then the verses."

"I suppose you'll say next that you wrote mine for me?"

"By no means; that would have been a doubtful kindness. No; I frequently allowed you to write mine for me, which was glorious practice for a little fellow—upon my word, it was quite fatherly of me. And then that row about Mother Willet's orchard, when I saved you—and—and—these and a hundred other little kindnesses, I suppose, must have stamped themselves into the plastic nature of your youth, and have been confirmed in manhood by the sense of protection which an unpractical (shall I say a weaker?) nature derives from association with one which is practical and philosophically robust. That, I take it, is the explanation from your point of view; and from mine, it is, of course, not wonderful to find a generous spirit attaching itself to the object of its protection and generosity."

"And looking out watchfully, no doubt, for fresh opportunities of exercising these qualities?"

"Most distinctly. I will be true to my mission, Cosmo. Lean upon me; I won't desert you."

"Now, Tom, you villain, I don't like this vein at all. I seem to remember similar flourishes in connection with certain financial embarrassments, which always ended in being rather embarrassing to myself. Upon my honour, now, I shouldn't be a bit surprised to find that there was a temporary difficulty about an hotel bill, or a temporary but equally pressing necessity for two or three hundred pounds."

"My dear Cosmo, nor I! What intuitions the fellow has at times, to be sure! To tell you the truth, my banker is not a very good fellow."

"No?"

"No, not at all. I may say I'm ashamed of him. He can never see more than one side of a question, and his view of that is limited and groovy. Now a banker ought not to be groovy; ought he?"

"Perhaps not."

"No. Grooviness is inconsistent with the elevated intelligence which one has a right to expect in a banker. Just listen to a case in point. I——"

Tom's statement, however, was interrupted by a shout from a boat at a little distance. The two friends had been rowed down near to the Isola di San Giovanni; there they had turned, and, after sweeping close in to the Bellagian shore, were now slowly heading for home. The boat which hailed was behind them, motionless, and no other boats were in the neighbourhood.

"They must be hailing us," said Cosmo.

"Tourists full of new wine," replied Tom. "Let them howl."

The shout was repeated. Cosmo was for returning. "Something may be wrong," he said.

"Let them rave. *Avanti!*" quoth Tom.

Then, as they got under way again, the cry was repeated with such energy that it became clear that something was the matter; and they turned back. As they approached the boat, a sharp English voice upbraided them, in fierce, broken Italian, for their tardiness; but as they were all still under the shadow of the hills, the speaker was unrecognisable.

"*Subito! subito!*" replied old Pietro, leisurely paddling along.

"*Subito!* D——n it! do you call *that subito?*" cried the voice.

"*Subito! subito!—pazienza! pazienza!—che va piano va lontano,*" said, or rather sang, the grinning boatman, as though soothing an impatient child; and then, easing his oars as he ran alongside, "*Eccoci, signore!*"

"It is the '*beauté de diable*' and her papa, as I am a living, loving sinner," whispered Tom. "How prompt is the arrow of Fate!"

"You are English gentlemen, I presume," said Lord Germistoune—for it was he—"and I do think you might have been a little readier to answer my cry for assistance."

"But what is the matter, sir?" asked Tom.

"Matter, sir? Drowning's the matter—that's all." He then explained that the boatman had snapped one of his oars, and in jumping up to try to rescue the half which fell into the water, had sent "his great blundering foot through one of the rotten planks; and the boat's filling—that's all."

"We had no conception that there was anything seriously wrong," said Tom.

The old lord then tartly suggested transhipment instead of conversation. "If you will put us on shore anywhere at Bellaggio, we can get another boat. Our destination is Cadenabbia; but don't let us inconvenience you."

"Our way would be yours in any case," said Cosmo, addressing the lady; "but, as it happens, we also are bound for Cadenabbia."

The transhipment then took place, and the damaged boat was taken in tow, her boatman continuing in her, and indignantly denying any danger. Tom contrived to dispose the new guests so that he sat between the young lady and her father. And now he began to play off a little comedy for the amusement of

his friend; and falling into the *rôle* which he had prescribed for himself in his farcical conversation a few minutes before, proceeded to dramatise the part of the "aspirant" who, in "sapping up to a position," makes almost as much love to the lady's belongings as to herself. Cosmo, who knew the "devilry" of which his friend was capable, feared he might overdo the part. The gravity of his face and manner were, however, unimpeachable; and all his attentions, divided pretty equally between father and daughter, passed muster in the most creditable way. Cosmo was very far from approving of a joke of the sort, and he soon had fresh cause for disapproval and annoyance; for Tom, out of pure wantonness, began to drag his name in, in such a way as to throw discredit upon him, and in such a way as, antithetically, to suggest his own superior merit in all respects.

"I cannot," he said to the young lady, "sufficiently blame myself for not insisting on our immediate return. My friend is a little obstinate, but I ought to have combated him. He *would* have it that the cry came from some party of tourists who had been—had been—a—dining somewhere. The tone of voice ought to have been sufficient for him. To *me* it was unmistakably the cry of a gentleman in distress. I ought to have been firm with him."

This spirited perversion of facts brought Lord Germistoune into the field at once. "Your friend's scepticism," he said, with a very grim look at Cosmo, "might have had disastrous results for us. He might have been willing to give us the benefit of the doubt, I think."

Cosmo was about to reply, when the young lady interposed. "I am sure," she said, "that you came as quickly as possible. Papa, you are really too *exigeant*. The accident seems scarcely to have happened, and here we are, safe and sound, on board another boat. Papa is too *exigeant*," she continued, with a laugh, "but you must make allowance for him. He has had a sad chapter of accidents to-day. Have you not, papa?"

"Accidents? I don't call them accidents," snorted the old lord; "downright, deliberate insolence and mismanagement—these are not accidents. Would you believe it, sir, I was made twenty-five minutes late for dinner to-day by false information?"

"Yes, I observed that you came in late for dinner," said Tom, in a voice of sweetest sympathy; "and I feared there had been some of the usual negligence. In fact, I think I said to my friend, 'Here is the old, old story again; it is really getting too insufferable.'"

"Ah! you confirm me?"

"Indeed I do."

"And then, that head-waiter!"

"Oh! *he?*—he is notoriously an impostor."

"And his insolence!"

"Insolence! Now, I daresay he answered you?"

"Ah! that he did, and most improperly."

"There, Cosmo!" said Tom, turning to his friend with the air of a man who, after a protracted controversy, at length finds an argument which gives him the victory beyond dispute—"there, Cosmo! I suppose you won't support your friend after *that;*" and then, before Cosmo had time to say anything—"to *me*, that man is the incarnation of stupid impertinence. If it had not been for my friend here, I would have brought the matter to a point long ago, by going frankly to the direction, and simply saying, 'Either that head-waiter is dismissed, or I leave the hotel.'"

"Quite right—quite right!" cried the old gentleman; "and I'd have done it myself—I'd have done it myself. Then, they keep back the letters, and have no excuse to make. The porter——"

"Oh, the porter! simply a *cretin.*"

"And what business have they to employ *cretins?*"

"Part of the system—part of the system."

'So it would seem; and it's no better over here. I have just been over to the 'Serbellone' to look for rooms; and there, I protest to you, I was treated like—like a scavenger. I said the rooms smelt of rats. The manager denied this brusquely; said it had been the chateau of a *grand seigneur*, and *couldn't* smell of rats. I told him that I believed the walls were lined with dead rats; that the floors and the roofs were full of them; and that if there were no living ones there, it was simply because the house was crumbling to pieces with dry-rot, and going to fall. The manager then requested me to leave the premises—*me*—actually—in so many words, and stated that in no case should I have rooms. I gave him my name, which produced no sort of effect. I said I would expose him. He replied that that was my affair, and a matter of complete indifference to him; and I was, as nearly as possible, hustled out of the house. Now, did you ever hear anything half so monstrous? —did you ever? did you ever? did you ever? Eh? hum? what?"

Tom received this tale of wrong with immense sympathy, interjecting little groans of indignation at critical parts.

"I think," continued the old gentleman, "the whole place seems to have changed. Twenty years ago it was charming; but there is a sort of an infernal democratic twang about it now, that upsets me—upsets me. Don't you see a change?"

"Oh, certainly; nothing could be more marked," replied Tom, who had seen the lake for the first time one week before. "It's all deteriorated—sadly deteriorated," he added, with a comprehensive wave of his hand, which appeared to include the whole district, and even the lake and the sky, in the condemnation of being rat-eaten and of having a democratic twang.

The old gentleman was greatly mollified by all this sympathy; but addressed himself exclusively to Tom, who had contrived, out of sheer wanton fun, to put his friend in the light of a malefactor.

"It is very disappointing," said the young lady; "we intended to enjoy ourselves so much here, and now all these *contretemps* have darkened our prospects."

"You are not disappointed in the beauty of the lake, I am sure?" said Cosmo, who had hitherto kept silence, and was now immediately rewarded by a furtive kick from his friend, meant to imply that he must not trespass on another man's preserves.

"No, indeed," was the reply; "I never, even in my dreams, saw anything half so lovely."

Tom made rather a floundering attempt to construct a gallant speech on these premisses, and the lady went on—

"One could not say too much in its praise; or rather, perhaps, one cannot say too little. There are some things that seem to be above the power of words."

"Things that ought only to be painted, you mean," said Tom; "and you are an artist, without doubt?"

"Oh, in a very, very humble way; but papa *really* is."

"Oh, how I envy him!" cried Tom, with rapture; "this must be an artist's paradise—points of view from land and water at discretion, unrivalled effects of light and shade, *and*—and—all that sort of thing," including another kick for Cosmo. "You won't allow these mishaps to drive you away *immediately?*" he continued, with much earnestness.

"Ah! I don't know; papa *must* be comfortable, and——"

"And *will* be so, my dear," interposed her father; "and is certainly not going to be hunted out of the place by a pack of innkeepers. No, no."

"Bravo!" murmured Tom.

"I'm situated in this way," continued Lord Germistoune—"Gull has ordered me to the Engadine. Why Gull has ordered

me to the Engadine, I daresay Gull doesn't know himself—I don't; but doctors are tyrants, and these are my tyrant's orders. Now, it seems one can't go up there for a month to come, on account of the hard weather in the mountains, and I had decided to spend that month here—and *here* I *will* spend it; and I'll tell you what it is, since there is no hotel fit for a gentleman to live in, I'll take a villa. That will be a lesson for them. Yes, I'll take a nice little villa to-morrow morning,—eh? hum? what?"

"I fear," said Tom, "it may be rather difficult to find one for so short a time, and at such short notice."

"Excuse me, I think not. There may, perhaps, be difficulties; but they shall be overcome. I'll take a nice little villa to-morrow morning. What?"

"Papa is a most determined character, you must know; he would rather buy a villa or build one than be beaten."

"I generally contrive to have my own way, Esmè, as you know."

"Oh yes, dear papa, I *do* know; only too well sometimes," she added, with a laugh. "You are a most formidable person when thwarted; but on this occasion I applaud your firmness—a little selfishly, perhaps—for I am so glad we are to stay on in this lovely place."

"It will be an example to them," chuckled Lord Germistoune; "I'll take a nice little villa in the morning." He gloated over the idea which had only occurred to him in the course of the conversation, and which seemed to offer a pleasant salve of vengeance for his outraged dignity.

"You must immortalise the lake with your pencil," said Tom to the lady.

"Oh no; but papa may. Indeed he has a large portfolio of sketches done here years ago. They first made me wish to come here."

Then Tom fell to cunning questioning as to the views selected, expressing a burning curiosity to know how this and that subject had been treated, the conditions of light at the time, and so forth, invariably pronouncing the old gentleman's artistic selection to have been precisely what it ought to have been, and generally surrounding him with such a comfortable atmosphere of appreciation and applause, that, when the boat reached the shore, he was in high good-humour. "Most agreeable, gentlemanlike fellow," he murmured to his daughter; "must make his acquaintance formally." Then turning to the two friends, he thanked them very courteously for the service they had ren-

dered, and even went so far as to hint at a vague regret for having been betrayed into impatient language at the moment of rescue. "Let me offer you my card," he said, in conclusion; "I am Lord Germistoune." The friends having duly handed over theirs in return, were presented, with considerable pomp and ceremony, to "My daughter, Miss Douglas." It then occurred to Lord Germistoune that Mr Wyedale's name was familiar to him. "It reminds me," he said, "of one of my oldest and dearest friends. We sat in the House of Commons together for years, when he was member for ——shire. Was he a relation of yours?"

"He was my uncle," said Tom.

"Indeed! Then I am doubly pleased to make your acquaintance. Poor Tom Wyedale! what a witty dog he was, to be sure! Quite one of the best of us. And ah! what a Tory! He would have had Peel hanged for his Corn-law treachery, if he could. Ah! a fine fellow, Tom. He left no children, I think?"

"No, his only son died."

"And Lady Mary?"

"She is very well, thank you."

"And the Abbey?—Wyedale Abbey?—that went to—to—not to you?"

"Alas! no; a brother darkened my life, by getting into the light in front of me."

"Ha, ha! Well, we can't *all* hope to be eldest sons. What?"

"No; my aspirations would have been much more easily satisfied."

"That reminds me of poor Tom. Well, shall we say 'Good night,' or will you come up to our quarters and have a cup of tea, and take a look at these sketches we've been talking about?"

Tom gladly assented, and the old lord led the way to his apartment, explaining that the rooms (which were really the best in the house and entirely charming) were detestable; but that, after to-morrow, he hoped to receive his friends more becomingly. "For"—and here he repeated the formula about the nice little villa, which seemed to have captivated him like the refrain of a pleasant song.

CHAPTER III.

Tom's conduct in the boat was, of course, merely meant to amuse his friend, as the dramatic sequel of their previous conversation, by a representation, as has been said, of the crafty approaches of a politic lover. As far as his friend was concerned, however, the humour of the caprice had missed fire. Cosmo was anything but pleased with it. Punctiliously polite to strangers himself, his temper had been somewhat ruffled by the brusqueness of Lord Germistoune's first greeting; it had been progressively disturbed by Tom's persistent method of dragging him forward in a false light, and by the distinct manner in which Lord Germistoune seemed to ignore his existence. Moreover, this poking of fun at total strangers (one of whom was a lady), all unwitting though they were, appeared to him improper and impertinent; and the poking of fun at himself, except in private, was by no means to his taste. From all this it resulted that Cosmo had fallen into a very considerable state of dignity, and would have excused himself stiffly from accepting the invitation to the Germistoune apartment. Miss Douglas, however, divining, with feminine tact, that something was amiss, and attributing it to its true cause, or partly so, seconded the invitation with a simple heartiness that made refusal impossible, and Cosmo followed her.

And now came Tom's retribution. The portfolio of sketches was his Nemesis—a huge portfolio filled to overflowing with indifferent performances, through which he had to wade at solemn pace and slow. For the artist stood by him, and saw that there was no evasion—haranguing upon each "bit," bewildering his victim with strange art-jargon, and keeping him alert by sudden appeals and subtle pauses for notes of admiration. There was no escape for poor Tom, who knew as much about water-colours as a Choctaw Indian, and was wont to confess that he liked to take the beauties of nature "with an object," and with special reference to Epsom, Ascot, and Goodwood. But, with a desperate resignation, he went manfully through to the end of a long hour and a half. Anathemas rose in his heart, mingled with poignant yearnings for tobacco and cool tankards: but he suppressed them all, and sat yawnless and smiling, and the winner of golden opinions from his host—richly deserved, indeed; for he who can drink to the dregs that "drowsiest syrup of the world"—the prosings of an egotistical dilettante—and,

drinking, seem to like it, has fortitude enough to win a martyr's crown. Meantime, and thus, it so fell out that Cosmo was exemplifying the vanity of human wishes. Scarcely two hours before, he had expressed a resolution to avoid contact with Miss Douglas, and now he was involuntarily engaged with her in a *tête-à-tête* of formidable length. The situation might have been decidedly romantic — ought, indeed, so to have been. The coincidence of the picture's resemblance—*there* was a romantic element; and, coupled with it, the virtual saving of the young lady's life—*there* was another. Then, her extreme beauty would have shed a halo over circumstances infinitely more prosaic; and what stage, what *mise-en-scène*, could surpass the Lake of Como, with all its accessories of night, summer, and the moon? But alas! "the *romantic*" visits us only as the angels of the proverb do. Too seldom does it drop on our daily lives; and though, like some gossamery woof of magic tints, it then draws over every rugged angle the "softening folds of gracious drapery," it remains but for an instant, and vanishes so abruptly that we scarcely wot of the beauty that has been on us and about us, till the glory has departed. It is dissipated by a breath, and by none more surely than the whisper of an incongruous association; and, by some psychological law, those who are most susceptible of a romantic impression have also usually the keenest perceptions of the incongruous. Thus, Tom Wyedale's rollicking conversation in the boat, and his Philistine tone about the young lady herself, had brushed away, for his friend, all romance from the events of the evening. To Cosmo the little drama presented itself in no ethereal aspect. The whole thing had simply irritated him. Sensitive by nature, and somewhat shy, his manner to strangers was marked at best by a certain reserve and stateliness that were scarcely prepossessing; and at present he was angry with Tom, offended with Lord Germistoune, vexed with himself, and almost displeased with Miss Douglas herself—though why, it would have been difficult to say, except, indeed, for bringing him, against his will, into that contact with herself which, perhaps in scant earnest, he had announced his intention of avoiding. This complication was certainly not likely to subdue his natural characteristics; so that Miss Douglas might have been pardoned if, at first, she had rather repented the warmth of her invitation, and felt that the task of entertaining the guest who fell to her charge was more formidable than pleasant. At first it certainly appeared to be so, for Cosmo seemed to be bereft of all power of conversational initiative, and even in response he was sluggish

and frozen. Miss Douglas, as the daughter of Lord Germistoune, a wealthy and well-known peer, was presumably of the London world; Cosmo himself was more or less of the same world,—and that two such people should be together in a *tête-à-tête*, and be in want of topics of conversation, even for a minute, might well seem an unaccountable phenomenon. The mere routine work of each season produces, for a certain class of society, topics enough to supply with the materials of many hours' dialogue, the most brainless he or she who drifts through the regulation amount of duty or pleasure prescribed by the rubric of fashion. The veriest parrot, from the blessed iteration of the same phrases (if not ideas), heard hourly, for three or four solid months, can scarcely fail to have glibly on the tip of his tongue sufficient small-change of talk to pay his way, without difficulty, among the initiated. And, then, there are always one or two great salient events in the history of each season, which, independently of the smaller gossip, fend off from the talker the necessity of plunging, without a cork-jacket, into the hopeless waters of originality. Let us cast back an eye over the last few seasons; at once it is struck by a dozen things of the sort. For instance, a royal savage—the blacker the better—visits the country, and reduces the nation to a state of infantile imbecility. In his honour there are court entertainments, where he is puzzled; and municipal banquets, where his inner man is compromised; a review at Windsor, where he is again puzzled; an exhibition of ironclads, where he is frightened and again sick. What a fund of topics in all this! What possibilities of earnest question and response! Were *you* there? *Were* you? Had you the *entrée* to the privileged places? Did you see *him?* Is it true that he was sulky and rude? Can it be conceivable that his teeth chattered? Then the Duchess of ——, in giving a fancy ball, supplies another fertile theme. It was beautiful, but she gave it too late or too early. It clashed with the *festa* of some other potentate. Such a pity! And was royalty *really* offended or not? If so, why?—if not, why not? Then the Prince's garden-party,—if you were at it, it is well; if not, still it is well, for much time can be consumed in giving every reason, but the true one, for your absence. The Academy has a sensation picture, painted by a girl blind from her birth. Here art-talk *à discrétion*. She is equal to Salvator Rosa, or Horace Vernet, or Paul Potter, or any other painter—no matter whom—to whom the *vox populi* has taught you to liken her. There is a new reading of Hamlet by a Hindoo, which (in Hindustani) edifies society. Such

a mellifluous language Hindustani! So perfect a vehicle for Shakespearian thought! Some curled darling of society cheats at cards or helps himself to his neighbour's wife. Here is breathless interest! Why did he do it? When? How? Where? What *does* Sir John say to it? Will the countess *ever* get over the shock? Moral—how *can* people do such things? Some one else, who ought to have known better, commits some other *faux pas*, scarcely discussible, but which can be sniffed round, with titillating innuendoes, and low, confidential murmurings. Burnand has a new farce, the scream of which has been loud enough to cross the Channel and be echoed in Paris. Doubtless you have heard it in both languages? Offenbach outdoes himself in a new opera-bouffe—'Suzanne et les Vieillards.' A little shocking, is it not? but then so bright and clever! That atones for most things. And then comes the "music of the future," and sets the whole queer jumble to appropriate strains. You heard 'Lohengrin'? You *did!* It was a perfect enigma to you—or entirely comprehensible. You sat through the *whole* of that first suffocating night? to the end? and wished for more? No wonder! Or wished yourself dead? How natural!

People who have these and a hundred kindred, and equally welcome topics, freely at command, ought not to be in much danger of having to hazard an original thought, or of having to pause in an unbroken stream of well-worn, but still serviceable platitudes. And then there is in reserve the gossip of "Prince's," "Hurlingham," and Cowes; the ordinary *on dits* about ordinary marriages, scandals, scrapes, flirtations, and what not. So that, altogether, there is surely more than enough, when the season is over, to carry one on from August till April—provided, of course, there is an occasional change in the scene of one's platitudinising. Cosmo, however, availed himself of none of these resources. He had entered the room, as we have seen, with ruffled plumage; but surely his good-breeding could not possibly permit him to sulk in a *tête-à-tête* with a lady who was doing her best to entertain him? No. Well, he was not sulky, but he was sombre; and that, with his natural shyness, had dammed up his ideas. Then, every moment he was with Miss Douglas deepened his impression of her wonderful resemblance to the Sasso-Ferrato Madonna, preoccupying him at first, and then making him feel—fancifully enough, to be sure—that ordinary topics of conversation were unsuitable in the presence of one about whom clung so many suggestions far removed from the *banalité* of common life. Miss Douglas,

on her side, bravely struggled with difficulties; but neither did she avail herself of the dreary reserve of London small-talk. She had in truth been but one season—that of her *dêbut*—two years before, in town; so that her resources in that respect could neither have been many nor recent. Had it been otherwise, perhaps Cosmo's tongue would have been earlier untied, because Sasso Ferrato's Madonna would have ceased to embarrass him.

She and her father had been great travellers; for the old lord—being half invalid, half valetudinarian—required perpetual change of scene, and frequent visits to those numerous health-resorts, scattered all over that large portion of Europe which is now included in the map of the invalid. In this way there were few places in Europe of great interest which she had not visited; and a splendid collection of photographs which lay on the table, contained souvenirs of everything beautiful and noteworthy which she had herself seen. Upon this book, as an aid in her difficulty, she fell back; and, since Cosmo had also travelled much, she was able for a time, without seeming to lecture, to carry on a tolerably one-sided conversation.

Her manner was singularly unaffected and simple; and a certain freshness of appreciation made her remarks, on what she had really liked and admired, original and striking. By degrees Cosmo was thoroughly thawed; and catching the infection of an enthusiasm which was by no means foreign to his own nature, he began to exchange experiences and sentiments with her, with an earnestness and volubility which, if they had suddenly broken forth from the iced man of half an hour ago, would have suggested magical transformation. But he, indeed, must have been of the earth earthy, who could have recalled, in company with a sympathetic spirit, yet without some enthusiasm, the memories which this book awakened. For there was the Parthenon, shattered, despoiled, but peerless still in its beauty, and glorious in its suggestions of a panorama instinct with the genius of the Golden Age. And there were the Pyramids, from which even the tourist cannot hunt the mystery and awe of the early world. The Mount of Olives, where Reverence feels that, in no language, it dare utter its emotions. The Pincian Hill, where History seems to stagger under the burden of its records. The Golden Horn and the Golden Shell. The beautiful illusions of Stamboul, the wondrous realities of Syracuse, the weird resurrections of Pompeii, and the sunny life of Sorrento. From one to the other they

passed, and through the quaint portals of many a rare old town of Germany and Holland, and by many a venerable monument of pious art, and up the castled Rhine, through the land of legendary lore, and on into the splendid wilderness of Alp and glacier. People who had beheld such scenes with seeing eyes—who had thought in them, felt in them, received some of their inspirations, and learned a few of their myriad lessons—and who had before them such aids to memory as this book contained, had assuredly small need to fall back for topics upon the dwarfed and dwarfing life of modern society. The photograph-book proved an entirely successful stratagem of despair, which very soon changed into lively pleasure and interest, so that all sombre clouds were dissipated. But the conversation was by no means all pitched in a transcendental or earnest key. It was constantly relieved by humorous reminiscences, which this or that scene recalled. Esmè proved to be full of fun; she was as eager and fresh in that respect as in more serious matters, and passed from one phase to the other with a certain quaint *naïveté* which ought to have been wholly captivating to Cosmo, had he not been a little doubtful as to the fitness of such characteristics in one who wore the outward semblance of his idealised Madonna.

The time began to pass quickly—even too quickly.

At last there was but one more photograph to look at.

"There!" she said, as she turned it over, "the last of my photographs, but to me the most beautiful—at least I am bound to say so; that is my home."

"It is beautiful," replied Cosmo, "and a capital photograph, for I know the place well. I can't be mistaken. It is Dunerlacht Castle?"

"Yes. I think it is very good; even papa is pleased with it. The old part of the house comes out wonderfully; and the shadow on the water is so natural, is it not? And your travels have actually carried you up to our fastnesses?"

"Yes. I had to pass Dunerlacht pretty often a year or two ago. I had a shooting in ——shire, not very far from you—Finmore."

"Oh, we know it very well! Some friends of ours used to have it. It is a charming little place. How lucky you were to have Finmore! How did you like it?"

"I was delighted with it."

"And you like Scotland?"

"Yes; indeed, very much more than most other places."

"Now I am quite sure that your taste is admirable, although

I don't the least agree with you about Interlachen or the Giessbach."

"Are *you* as enthusiastic about Scotland as about Switzerland?"

"Oh yes—more so; but it is a different kind of enthusiasm—just as I might be very enthusiastic about a friend, but still more so about papa, you know."

"Yes—the fatherland, of course, ought to be before all others; and, indeed, I suppose I ought to have the same sort of filial feeling to Scotland."

"What! are *you* a Scotchman?" cried Esmè.

"Perhaps I should rather say of Scotch descent," replied Cosmo, with some embarrassment.

"Oh, your family have deserted the beloved country!—long ago?"

"I—I—really don't quite know—some time—a generation or two, I believe."

Not to know the history and movements of one's ancestors for several hundred years struck Esmè as astonishing in one of gentle blood; but there was something in Cosmo's manner which told her that the subject was unpleasant to him, although he had himself introduced it, and so she abandoned it, merely asking him if he had given up his visits to Scotland as a sportsman.

"No," replied Cosmo, "not in theory, although in practice, since the year before last: but I am half thinking of going back this year; and, indeed, I have been in treaty for another moor—in a different county, however. But I scarcely think it will suit."

"I hear your friend talking about Scotland," said the old lord, who had by this time come to the end of his art-treasures; "and, by the by, who *is* your friend? His name puzzles me. It is Scotch, and it isn't Scotch. That is, it is the name of a locality, and the title of a dormant Scotch peerage; but there is certainly no *gentleman's* family of that name in the country. Where does this gentleman come from?"

"Well, do you know, it *is* odd, but I can't tell you, except in a very hazy way. Cosmo and I were at Eton and a private tutor's together, and then at Cambridge, and we have been fast friends all our lives; but, as we used to say at school, I don't 'know him at home.'"

"Ah! by the by, there is a Glencairn, the great capitalist and speculator. I know a good deal about him—a rough, vulgar dog; but I believe he is unmarried. You don't know who your friend's father is?"

"Well, I know one excellent trait in his father's character—he is immensely rich. I believe he made his fortune in the City; but he retired from business long ago (which is also to his credit), and lives in the wilds somewhere in the west of England. Glencairn has never asked me there, although I constantly go to his own shooting. I fancy his father is peculiar,—probably mad or something of the sort. He seldom speaks of him, although I know he goes to see him regularly. That's about all I know of his father's family. I knew an uncle of his, though, by the by, a brother of his mother's—a capital fellow—Colonel Wildgrave. As to Glencairn's nationality, I never thought of that, except, of course, I supposed he was an Englishman; but he might have been a Kaffir by extraction, for anything he has ever said to me on the subject. He is rather reserved on some points, although the best fellow in the world, when you know him, and immensely clever. His regiment used to swear by him, and a mess is generally not far wrong about a fellow's character."

"Oh! he was in the army?"

"Yes; he was a Captain in the —— Dragoon Guards."

"He doesn't strike me as exactly one's idea of the 'darling of the mess.'"

"Ah, well, but he was."

"The —— Dragoon Guards, you say?"

"Yes."

"Hum! I think I have heard that that regiment recruits its officers in the City, very much."

"Oh no. There are some rich fellows in it of that sort; but, City or not City, I don't know a better lot in the service. They used to be, at least, when Cosmo was in them."

"Well, I should have thought he was rather conceited and stiff to be a regimental favourite in a first-class corps. Only my own impression—only my own first impression. You are not in the service?"

"No; I am a retired diplomatist," replied Tom, with a grin.

"Rather an early retreat, is it not?"

"Yes, perhaps: but I wanted a career; and if a fellow wants a career, F.O. is not likely to give it him—either at home or abroad."

"And so you left it?"

"And so I left it."

"And the career?"

"Ah! the career?—well, I begin to think a career is a mistake. I see fellows with careers not half so jolly as I am.

There's Gerald St Clair—now, there's an example. That fellow was always talking about it. He had career on the brain, I believe, and he put a lot of that sort of stuff into my head at Cambridge. 'You must have a horizon,' he used to say. Well, there he is in the House—has been in it for five years—and he has done nothing. On committees all day, and in his place all night, with lots to say, but never allowed to say it. I don't call *that* jolly. His time, he says, hasn't come. He must walk to his career over the dead bodies of a score or two of second-rate prosers, who won't die for thirty years. An obstruction like that prevents one from seeing much horizon. I think Gerald has put his foot in it. That's my idea."

"If every one thought as you do, we should be rather short of Ministers."

"Oh no; you can always get lots of 'middling seconds'—quite good enough for the business nowadays."

"Ha! ha! you take a low view of Ministerial qualifications. Perhaps you don't know that I have been in office myself?"

"Oh! of course I do. Who doesn't? But that was in the good times. Yet even *you* left it, though you had everything before you—something like a career indeed!"

"Health, health," said the old gentleman, greatly delighted; he had once been, for six months, an under-secretary in an asthmatic coalition Government, which had been born moribund and expired within a year. "Health is a worse obstruction than a phalanx of prosy seniors. But then you had the Church or the bar, fairly unobstructed for a young fellow of talent and interest."

"No, I didn't fancy the bar, and I'm pretty sure the Church would not have fancied me—a case of mutual incompatibility, probably."

"And so," said Lord Germistoune, blending the elements of a yawn with a look of amusement—"and so here you are."

"And so here I am; but I am certain I ought not to be here any longer—it is fearfully late. We are keeping you out of bed most unconscionably."

"Don't mention it—don't mention it. Ah! dear me, it *is* late. Well, I hope you'll come again and help me to kill an hour or two as pleasantly."

"Thanks. Can I be of any use in helping you in your hunt for the villa?"

"Oh! thank you, no; much obliged to you, though—much obliged."

The party then broke up; and Cosmo, at least, left the room

with very different feelings from those which he had brought into it, notwithstanding that his lordship bade him good-night with a stately frigidity, which was amply responded to in kind. The fact was, either that something in Cosmo's air or manner had piqued the old gentleman, who was pleased with little short of a slavish deference, or perhaps he had been seized with one of those unaccountable prejudices by which we are sometimes so unreasonably set against strangers, or—well, he did not love Dr Fell, though the reason why may have been as unexplainable as that in the proverb.

Cosmo's wrath against his friend had evaporated. "I daresay you were bored, Tom," he said, as they were separating for the night. "The noble lord was not too lively, I can imagine."

"Oh yes, I was bored, of course; but I rather like the old fellow; and I improved the shining hour, I think. I always cotton to swells, you know, because swells generally have shooting; and, by the by, I made quite a little programme for us both, while he was bragging about his confounded daubs. It was this: You to close with the Finmore shooting, and I to shoot with you there from the 12th to—say the 28th—as long as dogs are practicable, in fact; and then go on to Dunerlacht after the black game begins, and the driving. What say you?"

"Very jolly for you."

"How cold you are! Now a good fellow would have added 'rapture for myself and luck for Lord Germistoune.' Your manners are far from nice, Cosmo. By the by, how do you like the Madonna?"

"I think Miss Douglas is extremely agreeable."

"Indeed!—and 'the contact'? was it not too intolerable?"

"What contact?"

"Oh! you've forgotten our little dialogue in the boat. Well, well, never mind. By the by, I withdraw from my position as swain and suitor. Her hands are too large."

"I didn't observe it."

"I did, though; I shouldn't know what to do with them. I'm going to stick to her parent instead. I know there ought to be a tremendous show of birds this year at Dunerlacht. They had a jubilee last year, and Snowie tells me there's not a scrap of disease in the district. Good-night, Cosmo. I suppose we may consider Finmore a fixture?"

"I don't know."

"Come now, captain, make it a fixture, and I'll stay with you till the 31st. I can't say fairer than that."

"It certainly is most liberal."

"And I'll even return for a week or two at the finish, if I can manage it."

"Provided no better billet offers itself."

"Well, hang it! I'm only a mortal after all. Come, now, 'parole Dunerlacht,' as you bloodthirsty mercenaries say in the army; bring the parable home and add, 'countersign Finmore—pass Thomas Wyedale, and all's well.' Come now, out with it."

"I never talked shop, even when I was in the service."

"An excellent rule; but the necessary exception would sound well in this echoing corridor. Now, then, in a deep, soul-stirring baritone, 'countersign Fin——'"

"Parole 'Slumber,' countersign 'Bed,'" said Cosmo, entering his room, and shutting the door.

"Diplomacy retires before the brutalities of War," shouted Tom, going on his way.

"Will Diplomacy have a liquor before he turns in?" said Mr Cass, the American hero of the *table d'hôte*, looking out of his door.

"Sir," said Tom, "between 'diplomacy' and 'dipsomania,' the English language marks a distinction which is probably not preserved in the American dialect. Nevertheless, what is the creature?"

"Bourbon whisky. Drinks short. Clears the eye."

"That's conclusive. I'm on. We can only die once," said Tom.

Echoes of his laughter, long and loud, came, for an hour and more, from Mr Cass's room, and reached Cosmo, who, turning angrily on his pillow, muttered, "Confound the fellow! he's got hold of some one else now. I believe he'd rather sit up all night with a Trappist than go to bed at a reasonable hour." And, indeed, Tom would have found talk and laughter enough to supply the deficiencies of twenty Trappists, for a thousand and one nights, if necessary.

CHAPTER IV.

There are three influences which generally carry their point in this sinful world—violence, obstinacy, and money. Men, as a rule, hate a row, and either knuckle under to violence or get quietly out of its way. Obstinacy wears out the resistance of indifference and laziness, which, in nineteen cases out of twenty,

are its only opponents; and as for money, the consciences of all intelligent readers tell them what *it* can do, so that the author need not commit himself to a misanthropical axiom.

Lord Germistoune, enjoying the advantage of all these forces in combination, generally contrived, as he said, to get his own way; and, in this wrathful freak about the villa, he was successful. The hotel authorities, warned by the courier of his master's indignant resolve, tendered every sort of salve, in the way of excuse and apology, which Italian amiability, sharpened by self-interest, could devise; but in vain. Violence gave way, indeed; but obstinacy stepped into the breach.

"I never," said Lord Germistoune to the excellent and most courteous manager—"I never go back from my word. All you say may be true, and indeed your tone is proper—very proper; but I have made up my mind. You may go."

Then the courier was despatched post-haste to "find a villa." Under ordinary circumstances, to find a villa ready, then and there, and available for so short a term, would have been out of the question and not to be dreamed of. But Lord Germistoune being violent, obstinate, and rich, the necessary dwelling was at once procured. The favourite maid of an Italian *marchesa* who was occupying the Villa Bianca for the season, had been accidentally drowned in the lake two nights before, and her mistress had received such a shock from the occurrence that she was anxious to leave the place at once. And thus, by paying her a double rent, and taking over the establishment as it stood, on condition of *instant* possession, the noble lord was able, literally, to carry his point. His new landlady went to the hotel for the night; and he, sending his courier in the forenoon to order dinner, took his daughter over in the evening, in time to avoid the *origo mali*—the *table d'hôte*.

"It is too large," he said, "and the rent is distinctly monstrous; but it will be a lesson to them. The money is well spent."

And perhaps it was. "What!" you cry, "in such sinful extravagance? in such a shameful indulgence of temper?" Yes; but the money went to the marchioness, who may have been an angel of charity, who may have fed the hungry and clothed the naked with the *lire* of the angry man, and who at least took from bloated England a crumb or two for starveling Italy. There is an unction, drawn from philanthropy and political economy, which the angry pauper may lay to his soul when he is glaring with fiery eyes at the profligate

majority of cases, the rich man, by his self-indulgent frailties, even though he fool it to the top of his bent, does infinitely more good than harm to the world at large. He may damage himself, to be sure; but what of that? He is in an infinitesimal minority. The greatest good of the greatest number is what we have to consider.

If the indulgence of bad temper be criminal, the beauty of the Villa Bianca involved a certain miscarriage of political justice. A little below Cadenabbia, the lowest spur of a thickly-wooded hill, projects a promontory into the lake; and on the centre of this the villa stood, somewhat higher than all its neighbours, and with a clear prospect up, down, and across the water. A pleasant confusion of garden and grove and shrubbery clothed the little peninsula with luxuriant wealth of flowers and foliage, and made the air about the house rich with the perfumes of rose and violet, of citron, jessamine, magnolia, and myrtle. Much taste and ingenuity had been displayed in laying out, adorning, and giving variety to this little territory. A labyrinthine path traversed it in all directions, and wound up with a gentle ascent to the summit of the hill behind. There, there was a circular summer-house, open all round, and commanding views in every direction. Besides this, divers tributary paths led to a variety of well-chosen points of view, while the prospect might be enjoyed in shady solitudes. Esmè was enchanted with her new abode; and the favour with which her father first regarded it, as a kind of moral beacon for refractory hotel-keepers, was soon confirmed by its own charms. They began, at once, to live in the open air; and, small though their domain was, it contained so much variety in itself, and enjoyed so unlimited a command of the scenery round about, that they seldom went beyond their own boundaries till evening, when, if the coolness of the air tempted them out on the lake, they were rowed about in a pretty boat, manned by rowers in a picturesque costume, which belonged to the establishment. Esmè, who had a keen eye for all kinds of beauty, and who was very susceptible of impressions from external nature, was never tired of wandering from point to point of the pleasaunce and the hill. To her it was a fairy-land, through which she moved amidst constant transformations, finding in every mood a congenial resting-place, and even being able, as she said, to alter her mood at will by a change of scene that could be effected in a few seconds.

"If I wish to be 'sublime.'" she wrote to a friend, in

describing the place, "I have only to climb to the top of our 'Muses Hill,' and gaze at the splendid mountains of the Engadine, far away, and watch the shifting lights on the eternal snow, and the weird effects of the whirling mists and vapours that hang about the boundary line between the heat of Italy and the cold of the Alps and the glaciers; or if I desire to be gently poetical, I look down upon the sunny lake; or if a dark spirit possesses me, we have a grotto, all overshadowed by a gigantic ilex, where the world may be comfortably forgotten. If I wish to sketch, there is a subject everywhere ready to my hand, and I have only to sit down and begin. In our Helicon we have natural music always, for a most harmonious little spring bubbles out near the top, and goes singing down among the silent trees, and through the gardens, and into the lake. As for poetry, we have it here at first-hand. We see it and breathe it; there is no need of books."

Her father, without taking such a transcendental view of the place, was thoroughly contented with it. Nothing jarred on his irritable nerves. He worked away in the open air with his pencil and brush, read his papers *al fresco*, and composed weighty contributions to the literature of a "ganging plea," which still seems to constitute, in some Scottish families, a necessary condition of landed state and dignity.

Two days after his establishment in the villa, he paid a formal visit to the two friends at their hotel. They had met on the lake, and had a few minutes' conversation, on each of the previous evenings; and on this, as on all other occasions, his manner was especially cordial to Tom Wyedale, whose jovial humour had taken his fancy, none the less that its joviality was tempered with a careful deference to his opinions and prejudices. His manner to Cosmo, on the other hand, was markedly cool, stiff, and distant. He seemed to have a difficulty in realising the fact that Cosmo existed and was present. He had certainly taken a violent dislike to the young man; to all which Cosmo, not slow to observe and swift to resent it, responded with an equal *hauteur* and reserve. Nevertheless, he accompanied Tom on the return visit the following day. They found Lord Germistoune sitting in the open air. He had just finished his correspondence for the day, and his letters lay on the table before him, sealed and ready for despatch. Esmè was with him, but just about to start with her drawing materials for the top of the hill; and on the friends begging that their visit might not detain her, she suggested that the whole party might transfer them-

selves to the summit, where she could promise a magnificent view; "and," she added, "I shall send you all away when I am going to begin my work."

Lord Germistoune and Tom having mutually button-holed each other, Esmè again fell to the lot of Cosmo, and she led the way with him.

"We are very proud of our realms," she said, "and I am going to take you all through them before we begin the ascent. Prepare yourself to be surprised and delighted."

Their pride was thoroughly justifiable. Cosmo was much struck by the ingenuity with which the labyrinthine path had been contrived; for, turning and winding, backwards and forwards, here, there, and everywhere, it led them past an astonishing variety of features, and gave the wanderer the impression that he was traversing a most spacious and variegated domain, though the whole was probably included within two hundred square yards. Here they came upon a grotto; there upon a fountain. Now they plunged into a bosky dell, all gloom and tangle; or passed under bright arcades, where the sunbeams glanced through leaves of the vine and the passion-flower. Now they emerged on the emerald sward of a miniature glade, or were met by gorgeous flashes of colour from exquisite parterres. Everywhere marble fauns and nymphs peered forth from bowery ambushes of bay and acacia, taking a semblance of life and movement from the quivering streamlet that washed their feet, and from the boughs and leaves that cast down upon them the shimmer of green-gold shadows. At the upper end, a pretty group of Nereids received a tiny cascade in a glittering shell, and let it escape, a meandering rivulet, to water the whole pleasaunce. At the other extremity, the daughters of Danaus caught it again in a bottomless *amphora*, and gave it to the lake in its original form. All around, the descent to the water was steep and craggy; but flowers nestled among the rocks, creepers festooned the ledges, willows drooped their tremulous sprays over them. Whatever was harsh or rugged wore a brave mantle of bloom and greenery, and none but fair images fell upon the dreamy lake. At last it was all explored, and they began the ascent.

"Well," said Cosmo, "you are indeed to be congratulated. The contriver of all this must have been a genius. Of his one talent he has made at least ten, and he has done it all with such perfect taste. We have seen much in the small space, but there is no jumble or crowding. One little *morceau* of scenery seems to lead naturally to the next."

"It must have been a delightful amusement laying it out," said Esmè.

"Yes; I think there can be nothing more fascinating than landscape-gardening."

"Oh, that must be delightful! like painting, with trees, and lakes, and rivers, and meadows for one's materials."

"And then the contriver of these grounds had, besides all the difficulties and charms of the art, the triumph of concocting a sort of Chinese puzzle; a subtle delight for a mathematical mind, I suppose."

"You will see that he had quite as true an eye for grand scenery; all the points of view on the hill are perfectly chosen."

"There he excels his Italian ancestors. I was thinking, down in the garden, that it might all have existed in the old Roman days. Horace would have delighted in just such a place. One can imagine him reclining on that beautiful bit of turf beside the cascade, passing the flask of Chian wine to a circle of companions, pouring a libation to Bacchus, and making the company laugh with quaint conceits about the Nereids and all the mythological statuary."

"But then he would have changed his mood up here. Look at that glimpse, through the trees, of the high peak—the Bernina, I think it is."

"Magnificent! but Horace would simply have wrapped his toga round him, shivered, and proposed an immediate return to the 'Chian.' He would certainly have changed his mood, but it would not have been for one of fine frenzy."

"And yet he was the most popular poet of his time, was he not?"

"Certainly — the most popular; but if he had gone into ecstasies over sublime scenery, he would not have been so; men would not have understood him. A poet sings with the voice of his age, or he does not sing to *it* at all."

"Well, but they were immensely cultivated and civilised in those days."

"Yes, they were, of course; but their culture did not develop the love of natural scenery to any great extent. They liked pretty scenery certainly, but they looked upon the Alps with horror, and the magnificence of a stormy sea was only a thing to be shuddered at. After all, this real love of scenery is quite modern."

"Then, has all this beautiful world been wasted for thousands of years upon eyes that might as well have been blind?"

"'Wasted' is a strong word. Its beauty and grandeur may

have produced all sorts of other valuable effects upon men's minds before it woke up what may almost be called a new passion."

"How *did* it come at last?"

"Ah, I am afraid that is getting rather beyond my depth. But I suppose, for one thing, it would begin to grow steadily as people began to travel."

"One does often notice that people who remain always in one place, even though it be beautiful, take its beauties as a matter of course, and don't seem to observe them or to be aware of them."

"But, as they begin to move from place to place, they naturally begin to compare one scene with another. The habit of comparison increases the habit of observation, and produces the idea of excellence. Art takes hold of this idea, develops it, paints it, teaches men to think of it, helps them to compose from their own experiences an ideal standard. By degrees, poetry recognises the fitness of surrounding romantic action with picturesque scenery, and suggests the sympathy of external nature with men's emotions. This is almost altogether modern. The ancients have, indeed, beautiful flashes of it; but they are few and far between. One of the most perfect gems of modern poetry is Tennyson's 'Œnone.' You know it, of course. The same story is beautifully told by an old Latin poet. But compare the ancient with the modern, and it appears cold, sunless, and dead. The ancient relies upon the human *pathos* almost exclusively; the modern poet draws within the circle of his drama, as a most sympathetic audience, and almost as active participants, everything in external nature that made the Idalian glen beautiful and impressive. The deep, solemn pine-wood—the light of the 'solitary' morning touching the far-away snow-peaks—the bewildered cloud seeking its lost way among the tree-tops—the silence, the shadows, the distant murmur of the cascade,—all in perfect harmony with the sorrow that is wringing Œnone's heart. And then the burst of life and joy when Aphroditè appears—the upspringing of the violet and the crocus, the lotus, the lily, the amaracus, the asphodel, to do her honour;

> 'And a wind uprose,
> And overhead, the wandering ivy and vine,
> This way and that, in many a wild festoon
> Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs,
> With bunch, and berry, and flower, thro' and thro'.'

Even history at last begins to chronicle events with an eye to the scenery in which they are enacted, and delights to point to

harmonies and discords between the former and the latter. Look at Macaulay, Froude, and Kinglake, and then turn to Hume and Smollett. And——" but here Cosmo broke off with a laugh, and said, "A thousand apologies, Miss Douglas, for prosing and lecturing to you, and for what is perhaps, after all, mere solemn nonsense. What I mean to say is, simply, that when this educational system has once been set in motion by the arts, or what not, every sort of other influence co-operates, and helps to clear our perceptions of that to which the old world was nearly blind."

"You spoke," said Esmè, after a pause, "of 'a poet singing with the voice of his age;' and I remember now that there is nothing worth speaking of, in the way of landscape, among the early painters. It had never occurred to me before that the love of scenery was a modern invention, and I don't think I had thought about the blank in early art. Now I understand the reason."

"Ah! an analogy. Well, I suppose the artist ought to give expression, in every age, to that with which the more ideal side of human nature is mainly occupied in his time. It was the aspiration of the ancient Greeks to reach, by moral and physical discipline, an ideal standard of beauty in the human form. How splendidly this is expressed in their sculpture! In the dark ages, art, in any true sense, all but slumbered, because in the dark ages its occupation was all but gone. Then, at the revival of art, we find religion altogether the predominant subject. The painters, to be sure, were generally, if not monks, under monkish influence; but, in fact, religion was in these days almost the only outlet which men had from their lower nature. As the outlets were multiplied, the field of art was extended. You couldn't have a better proof of this than by going direct from the Florentine galleries to the annual exhibition of the 'Salon' in Paris, or of Burlington House in London. Outlets there, with a vengeance. No one artist, nowadays, could represent his age as one of the great old masters represented his; he would require to have a thousand minds. Forgive all these truisms."

"But they are not truisms to me. Though I have seen many of the best pictures in the world, I am afraid I have not thought about them—beyond, of course, immensely admiring what appeared to me to be beautiful."

"And I am sure you could not meet with any one less competent than I am to hold forth on the philosophy of art. I know nothing, except that I know nothing."

"Oh, but you have both seen and thought; and that at least gives you knowledge enough for yourself—enough to make you enjoy art thoroughly."

"But not enough to entitle me to lecture you as I have been doing. Now, tell me which of all the pictures you have seen is your favourite?"

"What a formidable question! If I knew anything about painting, I might be able to say which, in my opinion—*my* opinion! how grand that sounds!—is the most admirable as a painting. But I know nothing of technicalities. I only know the pictures that please me, and impress me, and touch me the most; and there are so many that seem to do all these things the *most*. No, I could never say which was my greatest favourite; I have so many. Every mood has its greatest favourite; and each mood is *me*, I suppose, for the time being. So I can have no one *constant*, greatest favourite. That sounds dreadfully fickle, does it not?"

"Not at all. If we had no change of moods, life would be monotonous indeed; and if in each mood you felt the same appreciation of the same picture, it might only show that you were not really touched by it at all. A connoisseur, of course, can have a constant favourite, because his judgment as to the mechanical part of the work will not vary; but when it comes to be a question of sentiment, everything is changed."

"There is one painter, by the by," said Esmè, "though not one painting, whom I sometimes fancy I prefer, on the whole, to all the others. Of course, you will think me a barbarian; for he is, I suppose, what you would call a painter of the darker age: but I must be honest—I mean Perugino."

"Perugino?"

"Yes; you are horrified, are you? Well, I like him for one quality, and that is the beautiful, pure, innocent expression which he gives to all his figures. That, of course, would not make him a *great* painter, but it makes all his works lovable. I don't think he could paint a bad man. It does one good to look at the faces he has painted. I don't think they are often to be seen in the real world, although they are real men and women. But there they are, always in his pictures, saints and angels, and holy men and women, such as they should be. There is a St John in the 'Belle Arti' museum at Florence which makes one think of man as he may have been before the Fall. One must delight in goodness and innocence in every mood, and so I am always delighted with Perugino."

"You prefer him to his immortal disciple?—to Raphael?"

"Well—no; I won't answer that question. Of course, even *I* know how much the disciple excels the master in many things, and in none more than in the power of painting varieties of expression. Raphael can paint every human emotion. Perugino is always expressing the same, but it is one that delights me more than any other."

"Of course, then, you have the same feeling for Fra Angelico?"

"Oh, I don't know. Yes, I have; but not nearly to the same extent. I think his holy faces are the faces of holy people who have never had any temptation. Perugino's are quite as holy; and I think one has more sympathy with them, because they are the faces of people who have thought, and struggled, and suffered—who have come out from many trials and temptations, saddened but purified and pure. Do you not like them? I hope you do."

"Indeed I do. I have always been a great admirer both of Perugino and Fra Angelico, and for *your* reason; but the distinction which you draw between them never occurred to me. It is excellent. I shall remember it when I am among pictures again: and, really, it is natural; for Angelico lived his holy life in the convent, and Perugino lived *his* life in the world."

"Yes, Angelico's saints are certainly convent-bred saints. Perugino's have had sad experiences in the outer world."

"I see you *have* thought about pictures, notwithstanding your humble disclaimer."

"No, I don't know how to think; do you believe that any woman does?"

"If I had ever doubted it, you would have satisfied me that my doubt was groundless."

"Oh, Mr Glencairn, you must not laugh at me! I can only think, and then only in a very dim way, when I am talking. One's silent thoughts are so vague and shifting."

"The complaint is fully as much male as female, you may be sure. I suspect that the thoughts of most men are seldom quite completed till they are being expressed in some shape or other. But the remedy is simple, is it not?"

"What is it? Oh, I see!—to talk."

"Is that not simple? or do you repudiate all the brutal proverbs about the fair sex on that score?"

"Of course I repudiate them, as in duty bound. But I am not really qualified to be a champion of my sex. I know so little of it: papa and I have been such wanderers since I was grown up, and we have so few neighbours in Scotland. Then

papa's health has prevented us, almost entirely, from having visitors at home, so that my acquaintances are very limited indeed. I have a great many dear friends by hereditary right; but they are really strangers to me, and shadows, more or less. Have you a great many friends?"

"A great many acquaintances, certainly; but the friends are, like yours perhaps, rather shadowy. But you have been in London some seasons, have you not?"

"Only one—the year I was presented; and that was such a whirl! People were very kind to me; but one does not get to know people in that kind of life: do you think so?"

"Men's lives are so different, but there is certainly little time for any one thing."

"No, there is no time to make friends. I possess one real female friend in the world—the funniest, quaintest, cleverest, kindest, best creature—my old governess, my beloved Fraülein. I don't think she is in the least like any one else; and if I were to form my ideas of women from her—the *only* one I know really—and act on my ideas, I suspect I should pass my life in a comedy of errors. A whole world full of Fraüleins! It would be a very nice world, to be sure, and a very good one, but too funny."

"Did you enjoy your season?"

"Some of it, very much; but there was too much of the same thing every day."

"I should have thought you would have found variety enough in London."

"Oh! one certainly did a great many different things every day; but every day was very like yesterday, and I was always tired. Papa thought I was not enjoying myself if I was not *always* doing something, and my *chaperon* was full of energy, and I could get no holidays. I wonder, now, what you would say—is quiet monotony or bustling monotony the more disagreeable?"

Cosmo laughed, and said, "Miss Douglas, I am getting quite afraid of you—you are so philosophical!"

"Oh, please don't think me 'strong-minded'!—it is only a little question I was constantly asking myself during that season. And oh! I must tell you, one night it got me into a dreadful scrape. I was dancing with a very pleasant partner—exactly like every other partner I had danced with every night for a month—and he was making himself very agreeable, exactly as they all had done, with the same ideas, and almost the same words, as they all had used; and I was tired, and I

became a little absent, as one does when one is tired, and this unlucky problem came into my head. Well, I mixed it up with what my partner was saying, and when he asked me, 'Which will you say?'—meaning which of two dances he knew I was disengaged for—I answered, 'I think, for the less of two evils, I would like to choose quiet monotony.' Then he was really very angry, and said, 'The quadrille, I suppose you mean;' and the more I tried to explain, the less he seemed to understand, and became silent and sulky; and he didn't come for the dance. Was it not dreadful?"

"The loss of the dance was so serious?" laughed Cosmo.

"No, of course not; but his feelings were so much hurt—and he was really kind, and trying to amuse me. *That* was serious."

"Oh, Miss Douglas, I could tell now, that you had not been many seasons in London."

"From my want of manners?" asked Esmè, simply.

"No, no; from thinking so much of the gentleman's feeling."

"Do you think a few seasons in London would make me careless about people's feelings? I don't think I should care to go to London again if that were to be the result."

The words were simple enough, and spoken without any *arrière-pensée;* but sometimes the simplest words, illustrated by a tone or a glance, offer a magical revelation of character to a sympathetic nature, and ever thereafter the voice that spoke them has a different sound. Even so was it now. "The Madonna!" said Cosmo to himself—and then aloud, after a long pause, "No, Miss Douglas, I am perfectly certain that no number of London seasons would produce that effect upon *you.*"

Esmè changed colour a little and looked at him inquiringly; but his eyes were cast down, and she said nothing: and though she wondered how he could answer for her with so much confidence, she never for a moment suspected that he was using words of idle compliment. Here was an instance of the sudden, and, so to speak, unconscious but mutual insight of nature into nature, upon which one might expand psychologically; but fear not, watchful reader!

While the dialogue just recorded was in progress, the speakers had pursued the path in all its windings, stopping mechanically here and there, where a terrace and an artificial opening in the woods invited the passer-by to pause and admire. They had left all these, however, without comment, engrossed in other

topics; and, as the last words were spoken, they reached the summit.

It would be difficult to conceive a more varied or beautiful prospect than that which here met them; and they enjoyed it, for a time, in silence. A scene of immense variety indeed, full of contrasts, with every feature of marked individuality, each full of individual suggestiveness, but associated by a series of delicately-graduated tones of light and colour which bound the complex whole together in a sort of ethereal federation. Thus the distant Alp was brought into communion with the vine-clad slopes, the bowery gardens and waving woods, and the grand expanse of the blue lake, with its images and shadows, and flying gleams from snowy sails and fluttering pennons. It was not a scene the beauties of which could be catalogued glibly off, as Milton's "Allegro" catalogues the items of *his* panorama. The delight of it would have exhaled in minute examination. The mind would have become wearied and paralysed under so many and such various calls on its exertion. The *coup d'œil* was sufficient. It was one which words could never do justice to. This was one of the occasions when "silence is golden." Esmè, without speaking, merely turned on her companion a look of confidence in his appreciation, and then both were silent for some time. At last Cosmo said—

"Have you seen it by moonlight?"

"Yes," replied Esmè, "but it is a complete transfiguration. Nothing could be so changed by the absence of the sun. The colour is the life of it. It is only a spectre by moonlight—beautiful, but with all its glory gone. It almost saddens one."

"I should like to see it."

"Oh, pray come and see it! I should like to hear what you think of it."

"But the moon becomes late of showing herself—too late to allow me to invade the villa."

"But, if you wish, we can have the gate left open for you, and you know your way up here now."

"Thanks," said Cosmo; "it is very good of you:" but perhaps he felt that he would rather contemplate the beautiful spectre in some other company than his own or Tom Wyedale's. This must have been his thought, otherwise his next sentence would have had no reasonable connection with the last—for, "At any rate," he said, after a pause, "I consider myself very fortunate to have made acquaintance with this splendid view, by daylight, and in your company."

"I consider that very flattering, Mr Glencairn; because, in

nine cases out of ten, one would rather be alone in looking at fine scenery. In nine cases out of ten, people either talk too much, or they say something jarring, or they are cold and indifferent."

"That is true; but it does not make what I say *flattering*. In all respects, this is one of the *tenth* cases."

Esmè looked at him quickly. Even in her short experience, she had had, no doubt, many gallant speeches made to her; but the judicial gravity of this method of making her pleased with herself, was new, forcible, and gratifying. She laughed gaily, however, and said—

"Well, Mr Glencairn, I feel as if I had talked a great deal too much; but you must blame yourself—you know it was your own prescription."

"To follow your metaphor, yours was one of the cases where the physician is called in, and finds the patient to be merely a *malade imaginaire*, but is forced to prescribe something to humour him."

"Oh, now you really are flattering me!" cried Esmè; "but, not to let you monopolise all the fine speeches, let me say that invalids sometimes find the doctor's visits more beneficial from his conversation than his prescriptions. But that, by the by, is not paying you in kind; for what I say *is* true—for once you have really made me think."

"Who speaks of *malades imaginaires?*" here broke in the voice of Lord Germistoune, who, having once been thus described by a brusque London doctor, was jealous of the phrase.

"It was only in a parable that such a person was mentioned," said Esmè.

"Ah! in a parable? the only proper place for him. No such person really exists. There's any quantity of imaginary health in the world, but no one needs to imagine himself sick. Every one *is* sick, more or less." Then, turning to Tom, he went on—

"As I was saying, these Lowland farmers are the most confounded fellows in Europe. I'll tell you what they are; they're Communists—that's what they are. The last time I was at Ferniehall—my place in the Lowlands—two of these pirates came to me 'to remonstrate,' as they said, about the state of the game.

"'I presume you mean rabbits?' I said.

"'Rabbits, hares, and winged game too, particularly wood-pigeons,' they answered.

"'Well,' I said, 'why don't you add crows, magpies, and sparrows, and slugs, and snails, and everything that eats anything on a farm? But what *do* you want?'

"They said that their crops were being eaten, and they wanted the game to be killed down to a reasonable limit. I told them that the game *was* within a fair limit, and not more than enough for the sport which I had a right to expect for myself and my friends, on my estate, which, I begged to remind them, was my own.

"'But our crops are being eaten,' they said.

"'And so they ought to be,' I replied, 'in a fair proportion.'

"'Game,' I then explained to them, 'is placed on a property by Divine Providence—just as wind blows on it, sun shines on it, rain and hail fall upon it, by the decree of Providence. The crops suffer a little from all these things, by the decree of Providence—and, by the same decree, the game eats the crops in a fair proportion. Great heavens!' I said, 'are you going to fly in the face of Providence?'

"They declined to fall in with this view of the matter, and I then remarked—

"'When you became farmers you knew what you had to expect; when you signed your leases you knew all these things; and what the devil do you mean by trying to squeeze me for more than your covenant gives you?'

"'We want justice,' they said.

"'No,' I replied, 'you want injustice—injustice for me;' and then I gave it them hot.

"'I'll tell you what it is,' I said; 'if you think I'm going to be harried and bothered by a lot of malcontents, you're mistaken. I'll make you an offer; it is a good deal more than just—it is foolishly generous. I'll cancel your leases, if you like, and all the leases on the estate, and turn it all into a game-preserve. There! I believe there is a good market for game, and I daresay I should not lose much by the transaction. But I'm indifferent to that. One thing is certain, I am not going to be the servant of my own tenants, cost me what my freedom may.'

"Then I bowed them out, and told them to send their decision to the factor."

"Admirable!" cried Tom; "that is the way to deal with them. What did they do?"

"Do? stuck to their farms, of course. One of them made £70,000 out of my land in thirty years; I know that for a certainty: and he was only paying me a rent of £600. And what did this fellow do? started against *my* man as candidate for *my* boroughs—on the game-laws 'platform,' of course. Fortunately I was able to take advantage of a technical flaw in the lease, and send him to the right-about."

"Ha, ha, ha!—bravo! I daresay there was a considerable fuss about that."

"I believe there was; but I never read the Radical papers, so it didn't even reach me. In any case, the anger of pick-pockets against a man for looking after his own watch and purse is not likely to affect him much. The Lowland tenant-farmer is the most confounded fellow in Europe. There is no one so greedy and selfish."

"I believe," said Cosmo, "that the great irritation of the farmers about game is owing not altogether, nor perhaps even so much, to over-preservation, as to the fact that the game is very generally sold; and another thing they dislike is, that it isn't even shot by the gentlemen of the neighbourhood. The farmers, of course, have some sort of neighbourly feeling for them, which they can't possibly have for the strangers who are invited to the *battues* simply because they are crack shots, able to swell the grand total of the bag. All this looks to the farmer like a mere mercantile transaction. I confess I am not surprised at it. What they wouldn't grudge to the landlord for his own and his neighbour's amusement, they do grudge when it appears to be simply another rent to be taken off the land at the expense of the rents which they have to find."

"You defend them?" cried Lord Germistoune, with a rising crest.

"Not entirely, by any means; but I can quite understand their point of view, and to some extent sympathise with it."

Cosmo was resolved to be calm, firm, and judicial, though greatly irritated by the domineering tone of the noble lord, and smarting under previous impertinences.

"Then, pray, sir," said Lord Germistoune, "may I ask, has a man, or has he not, the right to do with his own as he pleases?"

"Unquestionably, so long as it *is* his own exclusively; but it seems to me he limits his rights of proprietorship when he admits another by contract, and for a consideration, to share in the proceeds of his property: by so much he lessens his right to do as he pleases with what is *then*, only *nominally*, his own property."

"This is rank communism!"

"Excuse me, my lord," said Cosmo, angry, but with a laugh, "I entirely decline to plead guilty to that. 'Communism' is a word that at present is very lightly used, and very loosely. But as to the game question, after all, the grievance is, as I say, very much a sentimental one, which the tact and good-feeling

"By giving up all their rights?"

"By no means; simply by exercising them with fairness and discretion."

"I see, sir, that you are one of the 'new lights.' When you have an estate of your own, you will find your theories change marvellously."

"I don't pretend to any elaborate theories; any acquaintance I have with the question is a practical one. As a game-tenant myself, I have come a good deal into contact with agricultural tenants, and have never had the slightest difficulty with them."

"Ah, that is beside the question altogether. I decline to consider sophisms. I distinctly beg to be excused from argument with a sophist. The Lowland tenant-farmer is the most confounded fellow in Europe. If you want to find Belleville and Montmartre done into Scotch, go to Forfarshire, and Aberdeenshire, and the Lothians, and you will find them." Saying this, he glared at Cosmo with a *sic volo, sic jubeo* air, as though he were one of the agriculturists in question, cast out of court and in outer darkness for the future.

"Poor Cosmo!" said Tom, as though his friend's logical annihilation were complete, "you'll never make much of politics. You had better stick to your moonlight, and music, and pictures, and leave politics to practical men like Lord Germistoune, or even my humble self."

"A nice business you'd make of them!—I mean you, of course, Tom," said Cosmo; "but this is *not* a political question. It is extremely mischievous and wrong to try to make it one."

"I think," said his lordship, loftily, "we have quite exhausted the subject."

"If it is not politics, it is quite as unpleasant," laughed Esmè; "and therefore I am glad it is exhausted. Papa, Mr Glencairn has given me so many new ideas!"

"They appear to be his *forte*," growled her father.

"Oh, but not stupid, prosy ideas about game, and farmers, and rents; but about art, and pictures, and the spirit of the age—what you never *will* answer my questions about, or talk about."

"I don't want you to be a 'new light,' my dear. I had rather not see you lecturing on a platform. Pray confine yourself to your own subjects. What?"

"But, papa, what *are* my own subjects?"

"There, there! don't tease," snapped her father, with a pettish little stamp of his foot.

over to Cosmo said, "There is a view to the back you ought to see. Shall we go?" and they began to move.

"Where are you going?" cried Lord Germistoune, sharply.

"Only to the other side of the plateau, papa, to look at the inland view."

"I wish you to go down with me now, at once, Esmè. There is something I wish to have copied," and he turned in the direction of the villa. His lordship's temper was evidently broken, and his company manners all but evaporated; and so the descent was made in haste, and almost in silence. Even Tom Wyedale's rattling power of talk was not exercised. Tom felt by instinct that it was not his hour. Cool adieux on the part of his lordship, even to Tom; more than cool—stiff and grim—to Cosmo. A laughing whisper from Esmè to the latter, "Shall we have the gate left open? Will you visit 'the spectre' to-night?" A gay reply from Cosmo that it would "hardly be safe, in the present state of the game-laws and the penalties against night-poaching;" and so the visit ended.

"What were you saying to that puppy, Esmè?" snarled Lord Germistoune, when the friends had gone.

"What puppy, dear papa?" asked Esmè, with demure innocence.

"You know who I mean; that priggish fellow with the theatrical name—Glencairn."

"Oh, Mr Glencairn! I could never have recognised him under all these wonderful epithets."

"You're a little imbecile. I hate giggling. You distinctly giggled with him just now. I abominate giggling. Get ink."

"You're ruining all my plans for the autumn, Cosmo," said Tom as they strolled homewards.

"What do you mean, Tom?"

"Mean? I mean that you're getting that old man's back up mountains high; and he's just the sort of fellow to visit your sins upon your associate. You'll cut me out of my Dunerlacht shooting, to a moral certainty. Why do you beard him? Why do you run against his hobbies?"

"Do you suppose *I* am going to cry 'Amen' to every pompous old autocrat who chooses to talk nonsense to me? I wouldn't do it to get all the shooting in Scotland for myself; and I'm not likely to do it merely to let your 'programme,' as you call it, fulfil itself."

"It's deuced selfish of you, then. There is no place in Scotland where you can make so mixed a bag, or so big a one,

as Dunerlacht—*that* I am sure of. There's a lake, and a marsh, and the moor, and a good lump of forest, and A1 partridge-ground—all convenient to each other. It's unique—that's what it is; and I've set my heart upon it. And now I'm to lose it, all because of your conceited, stiff-necked temper! What *does* it matter what the Lowland tenant-farmer thinks, or does, or says, or suffers? Confound the Lowland tenant-farmer! For a day's good shooting I would agree to swear him anything from an angel to an imp of darkness; and, for the same consideration, I'd include in the same category every agriculturist, from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same! Hang it all! what can it matter to *you?* But I've no patience with you."

"There's an effrontery about your selfishness, Tom, which is almost magnificent, from its expanse. However, you're not a humbug—not to *me*, that is to say—which is so far well. And now, for your comfort, I may tell you that I shall spare your prospects any further jeopardy by having nothing more to do with Lord Germistoune. His manner to me is nothing short of insolent. So be of good cheer. A little of your unadulterated blarney will soon set matters right for you and your unique mixed bag."

"What! you'll cut the connection altogether."

"Yes, I will."

"And Miss Douglas?"

"Well, what of her? Of course I can't meet her if I don't meet her father."

"That's a pity; you seem to pull well: but I suppose it can't be helped. After all, there's a good deal of common-sense, Cosmo, in what you say. There's an incompatibility between your temper and that old patriarch's that would lead to nothing pleasant for either of you. Your absence will certainly help my autumn scheme. On the whole, I have no objection. It won't be so pleasant, of course, going by one's self; but I can make a sacrifice for a friend at a time, I hope."

"*Of* a friend, at least, beyond any sort of question."

"That's right; have a good sneer. Don't mind me. It will do you a world of good, after bottling up so much dignity with his lordship. By the by, you've decided, I suppose, to close with Finmore?"

"No; and I don't think, on reflection, that I'll go to Scotland this autumn. I think I may go to the Dolomites, perhaps, or try the fishing in Bohemia, or make the tour of the Crimea—one ought to do that—and perhaps work through the islands of the Ægean afterwards, or——"

"Why not do the Andamans, or the Fijis, when you're about it? or, say the Antarctic Circle? Well, you *are*—— Then, one way or other, you're determined to ruin my autumn—that's about it. So there's no good my hanging on *here* to make up my book. I'll be off. I say, by the by"—here Tom lowered his voice to a confidential tone—"do you remember what I was saying about my banker the other night?"

"No, I can't say I do, particularly; he is so often under discussion, you know."

"Why, I told you, didn't I, of his heathenish conduct about that over-draft? and you very kindly said——"

"Did I?"

"That is, you were just going to say, when that old ass began to shout for assistance——"

But here again Tom was interrupted. "Lady and gentleman anxious to see you, sir," said a waiter, for they had now reached the hotel.

"Who are they?" said Tom.

"Don't know name, sir."

"Where, then?"

"No. 26, sir. Just arrived from Milan. Maid and courier, sir."

"Do *they* want to see me too?"

"No, sir," grinned the waiter.

"Show me up, then." And off he went, all excitement, forgetful of his budget, and his autumn, and everything else.

"What a weathercock the fellow is!" muttered Cosmo. "No doubt his finances are in an awful state, and some one will certainly have to suffer. Just as certainly, however, Tom won't be the sufferer."

CHAPTER V.

Tom Wyedale was not again visible to his friend that evening. Apparently the anonymous party in No. 26 had proved amusing; and thus Cosmo was left to his own society. An occasional respite from Tom's eternal flow of mirth and *badinage* was not unwelcome to him, and on this afternoon it was a positive relief. Cosmo was in a thoughtful mood. He indulged it in a long saunter along the shores of the lake; and at

night, when the moon rose, he went out upon his balcony overlooking the lake, and again took up the thread of his reverie.

At certain stages of life, people of a certain temperament and cast of thought seem to become suddenly conscious that their relations with the past are altogether altered—that what seemed, but yesterday, good and pleasant and fitting, must, or ought to, cease to be so any longer. Such minds do not appear (though the process, if unconscious, must be gradual) to arrive gradually at a conviction of change, but to reach, with a bound, each new standpoint, from which the necessities of the actual present and the things of the immediate past are instantaneously discovered to have no relation to each other, but to be separated by an impassable gulf. To such, even at the outer confines of childhood, its toys become in an instant despicable. At the next stage, the delights and ambitions of adolescence are discovered, by a *coup d'œil*, to be paltry and insufficient. Later on, the goodliness of pleasure, scanned in the musings of a single night, seems in a night to pale and wither—exposed by a sudden vivid light, in which life's realities flash upon the vision, or in which duty unmasks itself and emerges from the luminous mists of illusion. And so on, doubtless, to the end; for these are only, in a more defined and emphatic form, that series of deaths and resurrections which, in ourselves, we all undergo, and which connects itself with the ultimate death which we all know we must die—with the ultimate resurrection, in which we hope to begin a new and higher life. The experiences of each past stage are the poet's "stepping-stones of their dead selves," by which men may rise to nobler things; and those to whom each stage is thus sharply revealed ought to have the firmest foothold for the ascent.

Cosmo Glencairn was of this temperament. In his case, one of these stages had been marked by his adoption of the army as a profession, and another by his retirement from it. To the first step he was lead, not merely by the natural attraction which the "career of arms" has for spirited youth, but, after the close of a studious and earnest career at the university, by a sudden reactionary feeling in favour of an active as against a studious and contemplative life. "I have learned my part for the drama of life, as much as books can teach it to me; and now I must play it. Life cannot be meant to be passed in literary *otium* or philosophical speculation. A true man's true mission is active exertion in the noblest sphere he can find. I have had enough of books. Let me act; let me be a hero!" Thus mused the young enthusiast; and his ignorance of that life in which, as he conceived, he had learned to play his part,

suddenly buried his aspirations in the bathos of a cavalry regiment. Noble lives are doubtless led, and noble aspirations fulfilled, in that splendid branch of a glorious service; but the aspirants are usually more patient, and have more definite and limited and less transcendental aims, than those professed by Cosmo Glencairn, who forgot that in actual warfare alone does the army offer a really exalted and heroic sphere for active exertion. But to lead an active and heroic life!—it was for this that he turned his back upon the Muses; and, after the pleasant novelty of the dramatic side of military life had worn off, he found that he was embracing a shadow where he had hoped to find a substance.

There was nothing heroic in the routine of "stables" and parades—nothing lofty in mounting guard over things that required no protection; and he was too much (or too little) of a philosopher, to like, or even venerate, the minutiæ of regimental organisation, and their liturgical observance, in consideration of that far-away end—efficiency before the enemy—which they are designed to subserve. The patience which does so consciously is eminently laudable, and may indeed be altogether heroic; but Cosmo's heroism was of a different stamp. Yet youth, however earnest and philosophical, is youth after all—Mr Stuart Mill's venerable infancy notwithstanding; and the weariness and disappointment which his mistaken choice of a profession entailed, were for a time neutralised, or at least quieted, by those first experiences of social pleasure which are so delightful when life opens in a burst of sunshine. Many of the best gifts of Fortune—youth, health, wealth, personal charms, gay surroundings, troops of pleasant friends, promotion coming quickly, as it often comes to those who care nothing for it,—all these were Cosmo's. It was a glittering life; and it was only at the end of five years that the conviction flashed upon him that the brightness was not the effulgence of sterling gold. But then it came suddenly, embodied in the following reflections: "It is all pleasure—nothing else. What we call 'duty' is simply mechanical, calling for nothing but the slightest physical exertion. I am doing nothing; I am thinking nothing; I am losing ground intellectually. The world is none the better for me. I am altogether deteriorating in the sphere which I have chosen: I must leave it at once. Nothing else seems open to me—no other field for high or even useful effort. After all, I am ignorant and uncultivated, and fit for nothing. I thought myself educated when I left college, but I find that I had only learned the alphabet, and I have been unlearning it ever since.

Self-culture—that must be my first business; when that is complete, the hidden uses of my existence may be revealed."

The immediate consequence of all this was, a few weeks later, the 'Gazette' announcement: "—— Dragoon Guards.—Captain Cosmo Glencairn retires from the service by the sale of his commission;" and the departure of the ex-dragoon shortly after, with a trunk full of promiscuous literature, science, art, and philosophy, to qualify for the discovery of the hidden uses of his existence, in a tour through Europe. Cosmo did not plunge haphazard into his travels, shaping and changing his course by passing caprice. He set about his educational pilgrimage in a most systematic way; and his appearance at any special place generally marked a stage of progress in some particular study. History, art, systems of philosophy, systems of religion, ethnology — such and suchlike — were the companions, the directors, the objects of his travel; and, since the strongholds of art and history lie for the most part in pleasant and romantic lands, his poetic fancy and his love for the beautiful were for ever receiving fresh delights and new instruction. His tour was by no means a continuous one; it was regularly broken every year by a return home for several months, which were spent in visiting his friends, and in that Highland sport which he loved almost as well as did the feverish intriguer—his friend Tom Wyedale.

Thus had passed more than three years; and the years of Cosmo's life were eight-and-twenty—a great age, as it appeared to him—a great many years to have been passed in receiving seed, without the issue of a single grain of harvest crop. And on this night, looking down from his balcony upon the still and moonlit waters, this conviction—the spirit, perhaps, of another stage—fell upon him. Deep was his depression, deep his self-dissatisfaction, as he reviewed his own career and the process of his own self-culture. He came to the conclusion that, after all his pains, he was still but at the threshold of knowledge, and as far removed as ever from achievement of any sort. "Born to be a cipher, a dreamer, at best a *dilettante*." Such was his despairing verdict on himself, as it well may be that of others who, however cultivated, neither test nor utilise their acquirements, by carrying them into the field of active competition with other men. And what then? The future seemed to be a blank. Was this another recoil from the contemplative to the active life, destined to mark the commencement of a new phase in his history? He certainly believed it to be so. Of one thing he was convinced—that from his

wandering life all the good, if any, that could be derived from it, had been already extracted, and that it ought to cease. But in the future there was a blank; and even for the time, in his own consciousness, all onward impulses to effort and achievement seemed to be paralysed. The darkness of soul which falls at times so overwhelmingly upon the children of genius, fell down upon him—that darkness which permits the sufferer to see nothing save his own impotence, the incompleteness of the highest human effort, the shortness of life and the narrow limits of human power in comparison with the magnitude of human aspiration,—these, and, written everywhere and standing out in letters of fire on the walls of this mental prison-house, a mournful inscription declaring that "all is vanity." The steps which led up to the conclusion that his wandering life must cease, had no doubt been many, though passed over all but unconsciously; but some proximate cause of especial energy there must have been to develop and unmask the conviction, and to bring about this state of despondency, from the midst of which it sprang into evidence. The task is not for us to grope through psychological labyrinths, and discover, for the concurrence of intellectual convictions and strange phases of moral consciousness, the explanation of a common cause. Suffice it to say, that something in the events of the day had produced the feeling of despondency; and the sentiment of self-dissatisfaction which usually accompanies it, had naturally issued in the conviction that a change of life was necessary. But what was that something which set the whole process in motion? Cosmo himself could not have told you. It certainly could not have been the disturbance of his equanimity by Lord Germistoune's unpleasant tone and bearing towards him. Certainly not. He could never have allowed himself to be more than irritated by any one whom he held in contempt. Was it in reality the discovery of a new want—the unconscious perception of a void in his life, in his being, revealed by the existence of that which might satisfy the one by filling the other? Well, but what was the want? and what could supply it? All was misty, dark, and perplexing, and Cosmo's cogitations brought no solution.

It was late when they came to a close, and he turned from the balcony. But as he turned, the moon, which for a time had been obscured, dropped, far away out upon the lake, a solitary circle of silver light. Complete and solitary, it gleamed for a moment with a weird effulgence—isolated in the darkness of surrounding waters—gleamed thus for a moment, then

slowly widened, and at last gradually broke into a thousand tremulous shafts, from the midst of which one broad smooth avenue of mellow fire went solemnly to landward. It crept up through the gardens of the Villa Bianca, and bathed its glittering walls; it stole over the exuberant foliage of the woods behind, and absorbed into its breadth of light the snowy glints that flashed from plumes of feathery blossom,—till, from the lake to the hill-top, it lay like the path of some blessed angel who paused a moment on his heavenward way and rested upon Esmè's home. Oh, mother Nature! beauteous and benign—mother that never yet deceived the heart that loved thee well—was this the mute response of thy tender oracle to the bewilderment of a spirit that dimly felt, but could not utter, its enigma?

CHAPTER VI.

Tom Wyedale was by no means a domestic character. So much may have already been surmised. His intercourse with his relations was intermittent and spasmodic, depending very often upon the state of his exchequer. Barometric pressure in that quarter was usually accompanied by a rise in the thermometer of his family affections, and *vice versâ;* and in the latter condition there generally intervened between him and his people a certain haze which concealed from either party the whereabouts and movements of the other. Tom was the kind of fellow whom one meets without surprise in any part of the habitable globe; lounging in the "Street of Hermes," or loafing in "Fifth Avenue;" swarming up the "Cordilleras;" in "the Corso," in "Rotten Row," in the "Maidaan;" punting at San Francisco or Monte Carlo; in the ring at Epsom, at Longchamps, or Deyrah Doon,—wherever men are conspicuous by their presence or their absence; and very especially where money is to be lightly made and lightly lost. His own appreciation of time and space being blunted by his erratic habits, he was prepared, in his turn, to meet any one anywhere without astonishment. Thus, when he walked into No. 26 and found his brother-in-law and his sister, Mr and Mrs Francis Ravenhall, his only emotion was one of slight regret that his summons had not come from a more interesting quarter.

"Oh, it's you, Lucy, is it?" he said, as he entered; "I

couldn't think who it could be. How are you, Frank? Well, what brings you Londoners here at this time of year, when the gay and voluptuous throng the haunts of folly? and how does the senator escape from the toils of lawgiving? How does the wisdom of the nation thrive without its mainspring?"

"Oh, Frank has been out of sorts—overworked; too many committees, and then the night-work. We have come away for a month's complete rest."

"As Frank's night-work usually consists of eating big, good dinners, and playing small, bad whist, I think we can promise him perfect repose down here. But is this your destination?"

"Well, we haven't quite decided on anything. As we were passing through Milan, we met the Phillipses, and heard a charming account of the weather here, and also that you were here; so we thought we might as well run down and try it: and here we are. What a time it is since we have seen you! Where have you been? What have you been doing with yourself? What can you be doing in this quiet place? Are you alone?"

"Too many questions, impetuous sister. *Commençons par le commencement.* Where have I been? I answer, like the wind, 'Where have I not been?' Well, I was in Albania February and a bit of March, with Bertie Radcliffe. We lived on board his yacht, you know, and landed to shoot. The shooting was fair, and the yacht well found, and the cook really quite a gentleman; but it was rather a sacrifice of time. However, I didn't mind. The fact is, Bertie's wife ran away from him, as I daresay you know, last winter, and my post is ever with the afflicted."

"Particularly when they have good cooks and good shooting."

"Providence has placed me in such a sphere that I am usually called to mingle my tears with those of affluence; but, had I been born in fustian, they would have been equally at the disposal of brother chaw-bacons. We all have our missions, Lucinda. We ought all to be thankful for such chances of sacrifice as come our way. We ought not to grudge to others the more delicious depths of self-abnegation and misery with which they may have been blessed."

"Well, well, Monsieur Tartuffe, and when did you leave Sir Albert?"

"As soon as I could, kindly and consistently. Bertie benefited immensely in spirits by the shooting; and when the best of it was over, he was quite another man, and I was able to

leave him. He went on to the Piræus: indeed he wanted me to go with him; and I might have done so, but unfortunately his admirable cook fell through a hatchway and broke three of his ribs, which put him *hors de combat*, of course; and then I felt that an extra mouth to feed, in a scratch sort of way, would be a burden—so I left him. After that, I went home for a week or two, and was at Newmarket for 'The Guineas.' By the by, Frank, didn't you dine with me in town one night about that time?"

"Certainly not."

"Quite sure?"

"I haven't set eyes on you for eight months."

"No? I fancied I remembered your making a row about a bad truffle at the Windham. I daresay, after all, it was old Jack Ruggles. He is just like you, you know—thinks of nothing but his grub. I believe it *was* old Jack."

"Much obliged to you for the compliment."

"Well, then, let me see, where was I? I really *was* very unfortunate at Newmarket, and my banker—you have no conception what a villain that man is, Lucy—behaved scandalously; and altogether, it was convenient to give up a summer campaign in town; and when I heard from my old crony, Cosmo Glencairn, that he was in Florence, and going to moon about in this part of the world for a bit, I thought I might as well join him. Cosmo and I hit it off exactly. He is a quiet, studious man. Our habits are similar, and we are mutually of use to each other in our pursuits."

"Pray what are your pursuits?" asked Mr Ravenhall.

"Severely intellectual, Frank. I am trying to solve as knotty a problem as ever knit the brows of thought."

"And what may that be?"

"I am haunted by the desire to disprove the Epicurean dictum '*De nihilo nihil in nihilum nil posse reverti*'—nothing from nothing is made, nothing to nothing returns. Do you know where the horrible hexameter comes from?"

"No, I don't."

"No matter. I can't remember; and of course, in a parliament of plutocrats, classic lore don't pay, and you're not likely to know. But the pith of it—the major proposition—can you disprove it?"

"I think so."

"Will you back yourself against Epicurus for six hundred sovereigns?"

"You know I never bet."

"I hate a fellow who hasn't the courage of his opinions. But never mind, disprove it."

"The world was made out of nothing."

"O Solomon! what a bold assertion! Nevertheless, *conceditur*. Well, but let us descend to humbler regions, and apply the case where it affects a man who hasn't the slightest desire to make a world."

"Well, well, well?"

"Well?"

"What are you driving at, man alive?"

"Man alive, I want to draw out of void a tangible something."

"Oh, you're getting beyond me."

"Exactly what my banker said when I stated this very case to him in a less abstract form—viz., that I wanted to overdraw my account, which was empty, by six hundred sovereigns. There was the void and the tangible something, all *en règle*. The fellow has no orthodoxy; when pressed, it turned out that he held with Epicurus obstinately. 'While you have no "effects,"' he said, in his hideous jargon, 'it is impossible for us to honour your drafts.' *Hinc illæ lacrymæ!*"

"O Tom, Tom, you are incorrigible!" cried his sister. "All this fine philosophy only comes to the old, old, tiresome story."

"No one can be more tired of it than I am, Lucy."

"Then why don't you do something?"

"I piped to promotion in the Civil Service of my country till I was short of breath, but it declined to dance. In an age of mediocrity there is no market for genius."

"What are you about, then?"

"I tell you, I have been trying to confute Epicurus without success, and it's getting serious, Lucy—I can tell you, very serious. It has been serious for certain people for a long time—so my creditors assure me; but now it's becoming grave for myself. In fact, Epicurus proving correct, my immediate future is, financially speaking, rather more than cloudy. Don't you think, now, that the squire might for once——"

"No, Tom; I'm sure he won't—not 'for once,' by the by, but for the tenth time. He becomes furious when your name is mentioned."

"That fellow has the soul of Cain. Well, then——" and here Tom's gaze rested mournfully on his brother-in-law.

"Don't look at me, Tom—don't look at *me!*" cried that gentleman hastily, and nervously buttoning his coat.

"Don't be afraid, Frank," said Tom, changing his look to

one of contempt; "if the man who fell among thieves were to be similarly unfortunate a second time, do you think he would waste a glance upon the Levite? Not a bit of him. No more do I."

"Very well, then—very well," gobbled Mr Ravenhall, with rising choler; "we're both satisfied."

"That I am satisfied, I deny; that you should be satisfied, is discouraging to one who hopes for the amelioration of the species."

"Well, now," cried Mr Ravenhall, addressing an imaginary audience—"well, now, here is a fellow who has wasted his patrimony, and thrown away his chances of getting on. Here is a fellow who is in debt—deeply in debt—for the twelfth time——"

"There have not been eleven liquidations, old man," interpolated Tom.

"A fellow, I say, who is in debt deeply, and who expects his friends to get him out of his scrapes, while he lives—lives——"

"Like a fighting-cock, you mean; but I don't—not at my own expense, at least."

"Lives, I say, a life of idle extravagance and pleasure; here is this fellow——" but here Mr Ravenhall's eloquence failed him.

"Well," said Tom, "errors excepted, here he is; *après?*"

"Well, hang me, if he oughtn't to feel his position!"

"He does, my boy: what he complains of is, that others don't."

"Why didn't you take the secretaryship to Mr Foozler when I got it for you?"

"I hate encouraging fraud. Mr Foozler would have started on my brains as a first-class parliamentary speaker. Besides, I decline to cram a politician to whom my principles are opposed."

"Principles! Pray what are your principles?"

"Patriotic (and personal) Conservatism."

"Patriotic fiddlesticks! They have their price, I'll be bound."

"So will I; but as yet, the price has not been offered. To return to Epicurus, I am that void out of which that nothing—radicalism—cannot be produced for nothing."

"And what the deuce does the man mean to do?"

"We go round in a circle, my legislator; the man solicits tenders of advice and assistance on that very point. The Epicureans——"

"Oh, d——n the Epicureans!" shouted Mr Ravenhall; and

clapping his hat on his head, he bounced out of the room. Tom threw himself into a chair with a shout of laughter.

"Frank," he cried, "is evidently not a Stoic, and he curses the Epicureans; what manner of philosopher, then, is Frank?"

"You ought not to vex and tease Frank."

"Why is he so confoundedly rusty, then?"

"He is not well, poor fellow; and then your light tone about money and your difficulties vexes him. He has a great regard for you, and believes you to have ability, and can't bear to see you waste yourself. Admit, Tom, that you *are* provoking, and reckless, and unsatisfactory, and——"

"Altogether charming. Yes, I will admit anything to your sisterly ear; but I say, Lucy, don't you really think you *might* draw the squire for me? I'll let him off as cheap as I can—upon my word I will; and you might even hint that if I have a good 'Leger' I might refund. I suppose, perhaps that *would* be too strong, though. At all events, you may use full discretion."

"No, Tom."

"Come, Lucy: appeal to his brotherly feelings; say I'm looking thin and wretched. How would it do to suggest that want of proper nourish——"

"No, no, Tom; there has been quite too much of that sort of thing already. He has never forgiven that mythical rheumatic fever in Bulgaria."

"Ah! that was awkward; but who could have expected him to turn up at Wiesbaden? What right had he to come to Wiesbaden?"

"No, Tom; there's nothing to be expected from him or any of us. You must really help yourself."

"But how?"

"Ah! that's the question. On the whole, I see nothing for it but to do as I have advised before. You must marry money."

Tom made a wry face.

"You *might* have married Miss Carter, you know; she had £130,000."

"Might I?"

"Every one said so."

"Except herself."

"Try to be in earnest for a moment."

"Well, failing Miss C.?"

"You must look about you."

"I can't look about me without money. Epicurus and the void meet us at every turn."

"You have seen no one suitable?"

"Not I."

"We must think."

"Well, that's cheap, at all events."

"By the by, Mrs Phillips said the Germistounes were here."

"They are."

"He is an old friend of mine; he was a great friend of poor uncle Tom's. By the by, the girl must be grown up, is she not?"

"By the by, how cunning we are! Yes, she is grown up."

"And you have met her?"

"Certainly."

"And—and——"

"No, Lucy; I'm not a marrying man."

"If it is between marriage and starvation?"

"*Quien sabe?*"

"Come, Tom, be sensible. Is she nice?"

"Yes."

"And pretty?"

"Cosmo Glencairn calls her a Madonna."

"Cosmo Glencairn! hem!—does *he* admire her?"

"As a sensible man may, who can afford to be jolly *without* marrying."

"Reprobates! Well, there is an heiress for you. It must be £20,000 a-year at least."

"Very likely; but there are three to a bargain in this case: self, first; damsel, second; last, but not least, angry father."

"Faint heart never won fair lady."

"I don't think it's in my line, Lucy. I don't know how to set about it; and I should get sick of the business before the climax. She is a nice girl, and pretty, and rich, and all the rest of it—but what am I?"

"Oh, you're good-looking, and clever, and can make yourself charming if you choose, and——"

"You sweet sister! and a younger son barnacled with debts, and perhaps not of the best possible reputation."

"Why, you've done nothing *very* wrong, have you?"

"No, no—nothing that every one else *doesn't* do; but 'every one else' is a little disreputable in the eyes of the old world. Ah, that old lord! I shudder to think of his imperial aspect when I proffer my suit and tell the unvarnished tale of my impecuniosity. Besides, an heiress of *that* sort, Lucy! Surely she is above my flight?"

"Nothing and nobody are above a man's flight, if he will only use his wings perseveringly."

"But an heiress, not merely of money, not merely of lands, but of territories, mountains in the Highlands, mines in the Lowlands, tracts of arable everywhere; and last, not least, a pedigree. Good heavens! a Scotch pedigree! going back to the period of the mastodon! That is a kind of heirloom which the old lord would not like to transmit to the keeping of a mere fellow like me."

"Our family is as old as most."

"Yes; but we have none of the thin blue blood of Caledonian thanes who lived and robbed long before the heptarchy. I suspect that would be a *sine quâ non* in this case. I don't remember that there is any larceny in our pedigree."

"How did you get on with his lordship?"

"Famously. I 'compassed him with observances,' having an eye to some shooting at his place this autumn. Shooting! —by heavens! that's something like a game estate. By heavens! Lucy, if the match *did* come off, I should have quite the best general shooting I know; and if I were to buy the next place, Pockmahalakin (pretty title, by the by, for an eldest son—'Baron Pockmahalakin!'), even the forest would be a good deal more than respectable. I'm not sure that I wouldn't drain the lake and plant it—part of it, at least; there's far more than enough now: part of it would be the very thing for a polo-ground. And then ponies from the Shetland Islands, crossed with Norwegian! By George! we'd have a kind of polo undreamt of at Hurlingham. We'd make it a national sport, and swear it a revival. With plenty of bagpipes and yelling, it would be accepted as the familiar recreation of Scottish royalty in the days of Kenneth M'Alpine. I myself, as 'The M'Wyedale,' in a suitable tartan invented by Poole—by that time appeased and an ally——"

"Oh, Tom, Tom! I begin to despair of you."

"Well, Lucy, enough of sorrow. Let us, for the moment, cast this matrimonial physic to the dogs. Upon my honour, I'm in a very ugly corner, and will place myself in your hands, and *will* follow your advice, if you think you see your way out of it; yea, though the gates of matrimony should have to open for me. But even for you, Lucy, my Lord of Germistoune will be a hard nut to crack. I tell him off to you, of course. Be mine the sweeter task to throw glamour over his 'Princess of Thule,' if I can; and so—

> All hail, M'Wyedale! hail to thee, Thane of Dunerlacht!
> All hail, M'Wyedale! hail to thee, Thane of Fernichall!
> All hail, M'Wyedale! that shalt be Pockmahalakin!—

and here comes Frank, *à la bonne heure*. Well, Frank, we've laid the ghost of Epicurus; and I've repented, reformed, and become practical. Lucy and I have been arranging a new scheme of life for your contrite brother-in-law. But of that to-morrow; and now let me have all the gossip. But first, by the by, about dinner?"

"We've ordered it here at 7.30. Will you join us?"

"I am here. *Quis separabit?* A capital speech, by the by, Frank, that of yours, on the Canadian Railway Guarantee business; quite to the point."

"Oh, you read that?"

"Read it? we all read it; for once your principles are mine."

"I'm glad you liked it."

"Oh, it was quite first-rate. By the by, about the wine here—avoid Rœderer's champagne. I hope you haven't ordered *that?* It's spurious, and they always try to force it."

"No, I hadn't ordered *any* champagne."

"Lucky, by Jove! Then—*experto crede*—order 'Pomery and Greno,' vintage '65; that's the stuff for a legislator—and his connections."

"You're an original, Tom, certainly," said Mr Ravenhall; but he was mollified by the compliment to his speech, and the 'Pomery' *was* forthcoming. Tom, thus fortified, was pleased to be extremely amusing, and the party broke up at last on the most amiable terms.

"I will call on the Germistounes to-morrow," said his sister to Tom as they separated.

"Good night, best of sisters! and, I am sure, of sisters-in-law to be," said Tom.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr and Mrs Francis Ravenhall were a childless couple, and having no offspring to expend their affections upon, they supplied the blank by adopting the world, and loving it with all their hearts and with all their strength. They had begun life poor, for the Ravenhall estate had been dipped by extravagant predecessors; but minerals and other wealth-bringing developments had progressively enriched them, and, at last, the splendid accident that a town required to be built on the property

had made them immensely wealthy. Mr Ravenhall had the narrow selfishness, the ignoble ambitions, and that earnestness in the *cultus* of wealth, rank, and success, which constitute a worldly man, without the redeeming *savoir faire* which distinguishes a man of the world. He was also stupid at all times, and arrogant on occasion. Altogether, he was of the earth earthy. His wife was also endowed with all the characteristics of worldliness; but this, which so deeply degrades the woman from the ideal standard of true womanliness, was qualified in her case by the charming attributes of a woman of the world. She had tact, adaptiveness, and a wonderful power of (spurious) sympathy. Clever and witty, she never said an ill-natured thing, or allowed her love of a *mot* to drown prudential considerations, or to betray her into wit at the expense of friends and acquaintances, actual or possible. "Speak nothing but fair words, and you will hear nothing but kind echoes." She laid the proverb closely to her heart. One half of her life she devoted to the acquisition of new acquaintanceships—"friendships" she called them; and the other half to sifting her acquisitions. The wheat were the people who could be of some advantage to her; the chaff were the hopeless ineligibles. The former were assiduously garnered: the latter were not brusquely cast into the fire; they were simply let alone, till the wind, blowing where it listed, gradually removed them from her orbit. The chaff often believed the act of separation to be due to their own carelessness or fickleness. Such is the power of tact. Morally speaking, the husband and wife were probably on the same level, and that a sufficiently low one; but he was detested —and she was universally *liked*, at least. Mrs Ravenhall, desiring to get on, had found herself heavily handicapped with such a husband; indeed, she would probably have been altogether overweighted—probably she would have broken down—but that the change of fortune which made them so rich came in time to save them. Nevertheless, she toiled and spun, and wheedled, and coaxed, and courted the world, so that it endured her, and almost tolerated the sight of her husband for her sake. And then, when prosperity came—wealth, great wealth —the world arose, and came forth, and took them both in its arms, and bore them up, and brought them in, and made as though they had been its favourites and darlings all along, instead of miserable, neglected, 'gnashers of teeth, standing at the gates, in the cold and dark, hungry for faint passing smiles and strangled recognitions. The world, having taken Mr Ravenhall into favour, at once decided that he should be a

legislator; and, since Radicalism was in vogue at the time, he became a Radical. Toryism was not a social necessity for him, since, though his family had been poor, it was very ancient, and had been eminent long ago; and he, or rather his wife, saw three things: first, that Radicalism was the winning side at the time; second, that a change from the creed of one's predecessors suggests individuality and a personal view; third, that the great programme of Radicalism was so cut and dried, and had been so reiterated and ventilated on platform and by press, that any one could, without any exertion, make an appearance on the programme without risk of blundering, and with some certainty of applause. To swim, as a Tory, against the tide, was a very different thing; and so Mr Ravenhall, with no principle save his own self-interests, which English Radicalism did not seem gravely to imperil, became a Radical. His wife then noted two other things: first, that her husband's intellectual defects put any sort of political success beyond his reach; and second, that there being thus no call for thorough-going partisanship, another kind of success was to be procured by occasional fits of recalcitrancy against the *mots d'ordre* of the party. Occasional rather eccentric junctions with the Opposition—not carried too far, of course, and always labelled "conscience"—made the leaders of both parties civil and considerate. Social advantages flowed from this; and the constituency, watching the division lists, were able, every now and then, to say that "whatever else their member was, or was not, he had views of his own, patriotic views, and the courage of his opinions. Moreover, that he was no time-server, that he had a strong fund of masculine common-sense, and was a bluff, straightforward Englishman." Men who have become rich—no matter how—*are* generally credited in England with "masculine common-sense;" and if their bluffness and straightforwardness are only the stupid, brutal perverseness and *brusquerie* of the plebeian and the pauper, with some gilding on it, what does it matter to any one save the ruffian, who is erroneously believed to be "bluff" rather than brutal? Altogether, Mrs Ravenhall made her husband's legislatorial capacity minister greatly to her social advancement; and with a talent for utilising everything to that end, she turned even his "bluffness" to account. Much expenditure of money was, however, necessary; and here she had a difficulty, for Mr Ravenhall was by nature close-fisted, and many of his wife's finest projects were often in danger from a threatened stoppage of the supplies. Yet, in the end, she usually prevailed; for she had gained an ascendancy

over him, founded, not on domestic love, but on the (unacknowledged) conviction that without her co-operation he would, in every department of life, be "lost to use, and name, and fame."

"Then I have done with the matter, Frank. Take your own way, and see what you can make of it."

These words, pronounced firmly, and a firm refusal to urge or listen to further argument, were generally effective, and, as time went on, had less and less to be put in requisition.

Grand were the entertainments of the member for the county of——. His country place became the centre of county life and fashion. Notable were his banquets in Belgrave Square. Great people were notoriously to be met there—ministers and diplomatists, strong men in finance, subtle men of law, mighty men of letters and of valour, poets, gastronomers, projectors, thinkers, and talkers; Haroun al Raschid, occasionally—and Ali Baba, from the Stock Exchange, pleasantly often. Nor was the more difficult sex deficient. There were ladies of the right sort, plentiful and cordial, stamping Mr and Mrs Ravenhall with the *cachet* of fashion. Social success is often stated to be of the nature of a fluke. One constantly hears it said that, to people of equal advantages, Fortune arbitrarily awards success or failure. This looks like the truth very often indeed; but examine more closely, and you will find at the bottom of success a subtle, unobtrusive, social talent, and the capability of a sleepless attention to the minutiæ of the code of *bienséances*, so that the candidate for success may not only not be guilty of offence against the same, but not even be brought, or bring others, into any sort of association with profane ideas.

This subtle talent and this capability Mrs Ravenhall fully possessed. If she had had daughters of even moderate attractions, it is scarcely doubtful that so admirable a priestess of Mammon, in placing them upon the altar of her god, would have managed to see that the temple supplied combustibles of the costliest and most distinguished description. Having none, however, her great faculties involved a certain waste of power. If she loved any one in the world, she really loved her brother Tom; and for him indeed she would have schemed matrimonially, and doubtless triumphed, if only he would have co-operated. But, even in these days, a courtship can hardly be carried on by one principal, however skilfully the missing party may be represented by his second; and Tom, regarding matrimony merely as a specific for the preservation of large balances in bank, his ideas and intentions thereon changed with the spasmodic rapidity of his financial condition.

As an instance, he was once on the very edge of the holy estate, but forty-eight hours' continuous rain immediately preceding the Derby Day, threw out the favourite, against whom Tom had gone heavily; and a golden shower absolving him for the time from matrimonial necessities, he disappeared abruptly, and wrote, shortly after, to his sister, under date, "Hombourg," to the effect that she must "square it somehow with Miss ——, seeing that, for the present, Providence had rescued him from the 'abyss.'" Under many such discouragements, Mrs Ravenhall, if she had relaxed her efforts, had not abandoned hope; and occasionally, when Tom was known to be in an unusual state of dilapidation, she advanced some new project, and never at least lost an opportunity of preaching her gospel to him. Mainly from personal motives, but partly, too, at the instance of his wife, Mr Ravenhall had inflexibly refused to assist Tom in his recurring crises; but as it was generally through his sister as mediator that he did, or rather attempted to do, what he called his "family financing," she was, as a rule, cognisant of the state of his affairs.

Now it happened that she was at this time, though indirectly, very well informed on the subject, and knew Tom to be in the deepest possible water. It also happened that she knew a great deal more of his whereabouts and surroundings than she pretended or he imagined. In fact, the sudden diversion from Milan was by no means the sudden, improvised raid she gave it out to be; nor was it by any means unconnected with the fact that, in addition to her brother, Miss Douglas, the heiress of Lord Germistoune, was domiciled by the romantic waters of Como. Here were golden opportunities! Here was a concurrence of circumstances that seemed to lend themselves to the consolidation of her scapegrace brother and his affairs. Propinquity, a monotonous life, with beautiful surroundings; the season of the year "when a young man's (or maiden's) fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love;" the opportunities of free country intercourse,—these, and many other points as favourable to the birth and growth of the tender passion, were noted by this practical observer of human nature. Then Tom's necessities being added to these, it appeared to her that his fascinations might safely be trusted to do the rest. She was not likely, therefore, to forget her resolution to open the campaign at once. But here Mr Ravenhall was a difficulty. She knew all about Lord Germistoune—his autocratic disposition, his fierce prejudices, his narrow Toryism; and she felt that, without both luck and management, things would not go smoothly

between the noble lord and the bluff member for ——shire. But, to suit her plans, things *must* go smoothly; otherwise the necessary intercourse would be impossible. To laugh off his lordship's attacks, which would certainly be forthcoming, and disarm him by good-humour, and even by playfully carrying the war into the enemy's camp—she saw that these were the only tactics; but how to have them carried out?—there was the difficulty: for her husband, though subservient enough to rank and wealth, was beginning to swell somewhat in his own esteem; and as for anything in the way of light and genial banter, that was not to be expected of him. He was bluff; and to ask him to be bluff and playful at once, was like inviting an elephant to get on its hind legs and conduct itself like a kangaroo.

Waking early on the morning after her meeting with Tom, she revolved all these considerations in her politic mind, and decided that Ravenhall must be drilled to play an entirely secondary *rôle*, in the first place at least—she herself proposing to receive the earliest shock of the noble Tory's attack. All she proposed for her husband, for the present, was that he should be silent; wear, if possible, a gay smile; shake his head in comic deprecation when Lord Germistoune was unusually violent; and honour anything approaching a *bon mot*, even at his own expense, with peals of frank laughter, which should imply that, in the presence of so much wit, even Principle was obliged to cover its face with its pocket-handkerchief and shake its sides in its own despite.

The "Pomery and Greno" of the night before had, however, settled the matter otherwise. It had disagreed with Mr Ravenhall; and he, awaking with a headache, proved to be entirely intractable. He used a good deal of rough language about Lord Germistoune, Toryism, Tom, love, debt, the champagne, even about his own head, and was clearly minded to be as bluff and bouncing and abominable as need be, against all comers, without respect to weight or age.

"Well, then, Frank," said his wife, at last, "we'll say no more about it at present. You have got a headache, and your headaches are always tragedies. You'll see things differently to-morrow. You'd better lie still in bed, and I'll take Tom with me instead. On second thoughts, I believe it will be every way the better plan. I'll take Tom."

Whereupon her lord freely assented that she should take Tom, and proceed with him into outer darkness, and even remain there permanently if so disposed.

Tom looked rather rueful when summoned by his sister to accompany her. He had pledged himself with a light heart the night before to follow his sister's guidance, with only the condition that she was to pilot him out of his difficulties—with a light heart, lightened by dry champagne, and with that recklessness, common to men of his character, which, to stave off a disagreeable subject for the immediate present, will discount even the immediate future, and purchase, with any sort of pledge, a hazy, temporary conviction "that all will come right somehow." His maxim was to keep the present "jolly," and let the future look after itself. "It is better," he would say, "to have lots of sun, with occasional violent thunderstorms, than to live always under a drizzle and a drab-coloured sky. I would rather have a good strong agony once in six months or so, and take it neat, than go on sipping agony-and-water all the days of my life." He hated the idea of the future. For him it was simply a dun with a bill, or a peremptory banker with an overdue acceptance—an undiluted "agony" in some shape or other. So that it was rather with a feeling of ill-usage and of being prematurely hustled that he found himself brought to book on his undertaking, not a day old, and compelled to open the distasteful campaign of love-making.

"Of course I'll go, Lucy," he said, "because I promised; but it's awfully sudden. I thought you were to feel your way a bit."

"There is no time to lose, Tom."

"Marriage is the very devil, Lucy."

Perhaps Mrs Ravenhall's experiences pointed to the same conclusion; but she, too, retorted that there were many other devils familiar to Tom, and feared by him, that were more formidable; and, silenced by this argument, he went meekly to the villa.

All Mrs Ravenhall's charms of manner and conversation—and they were many—were brought into requisition at the visit. She dug up her uncle—the "jolly Tom Wyedale" of Lord Germistoune's early friendship—a man who had been the privileged parliamentary humorist of his time, the Yorick in a circle of brilliant wits, the delight of clubs, of *salons*, of all "*quantum est hominum venustiorum*,"—she dug him up, and ventilated him and his epoch very thoroughly, adroitly reflecting his glory upon his ancient friend. She then proceeded to display the brilliancy which she had inherited from Uncle Yorick, and to captivate, as he had captivated, the old gentleman whom she was anxious to get into her toils. Her

success was complete. Lord Germistoune's conquest was absolute; so that, when he did get upon politics, he was graciously pleased to say that Radicalism could not be all bad if it found an adherent in Mrs Ravenhall. Whereupon she earnestly but playfully disclaimed the awful epithet "Radical," for self and even for partner.

"We are only progressive," she said—"gently progressive. We are not partisans; we have a conscience. Sometimes our conscience tells us to progress, gently; sometimes it bids us obstruct, firmly. But, *entre nous*, if things go much further, we *shall* have to shift our side—*entre nous*, very strictly, please, dear Lord Germistoune."

"The Irish Church——" began Lord Germistoune.

"Oh, please, pray don't talk of that most distressing subject. If you knew what we suffered, and suffer, about that hazardous measure, you would spare me."

"I am sure I have no wish to give you pain."

"It is the worst of following conscience, that it often misleads one, and then turns round and rebukes one, as if one had misled *it*."

"The only remedy is to be thoroughly partisan. The collective conscience of a party is more reliable than any individual one."

"One almost begins to despair of seeing any other remedy; but then to follow the conscience of the Liberal party *à outrance*, that would be simply imposs—— But you must not make me talk treason, my lord—while it *is* treason," she added, with a meaning smile; "and, *apropos*, may I beg you to be gentle with my husband on political matters when you meet him? He is much perturbed in mind just now; and I could wish none but calm influences to bear upon him while *the struggle* is going on."

Whereupon the lady was assured that her wish was his lordship's law in all matters, and that the wind of his noble logic and satire should be tempered to the Radical lamb, albeit still unshorn of his evil Radical fleece.

And then she changed the subject, and asked Lord Germistoune frankly, as an old family friend, what he thought of Tom, and if he did not find in that worthy strong traits of resemblance to Uncle Yorick. And his lordship's answer being very hearty and satisfactory on these points, she proceeded to dilate upon Tom's excellences of head and heart—his brilliancy, his shrewdness, his common-sense,—all wasted, however, for want of a career. "Can we do nothing for him, Lord Germis-

toune? Can we find no means of turning so much talent to account? He is a red-hot Tory, you know; and they say your party is to be in soon. The party ought to keep an eye on its brilliant young men."

"True, true—*very* true. We must see—we must see. I think there need be no difficulty about finding him a seat before long."

"The worst of it is, that poor Tom was extravagant at Cambridge—fell into bad hands—and he really wants money. Now a seat would hardly meet that difficulty, would it?"

Lord Germistoune feared not, but suggested that a likely young fellow such as Tom might very well feather his nest by matrimony, as a preliminary step to adorning the House, and eventually the Cabinet. Saul also was among the prophets.

Here Mrs Ravenhall shook her head. She was, she said, perhaps a little romantic, and could *not* pretend to like the idea of mercenary marriages. Still, of course, love and money *might* come together—might come together, very likely, with a little skill and management. But as for Tom, he was altogether impracticable on this point—quite foolishly Quixotic about it, the dear fellow was. The idea of marrying a woman *for* money was in his eyes such an abomination, that it was doubtful if he could be brought to marry a woman *with* money, even where his affections were strongly engaged. At all events, the attraction of the heart would require to be something out of the common run if it were to subdue this *idée fixe*.

Lord Germistoune, from the superior eminence of the worldling, laughed at all this; but was confiding enough to believe in Tom's sincerity, and to think it high-minded. "But mark my words, dear lady: let the chance come, and the love, and all the other things, and he'll reconcile himself to the hard fate of marrying a fortune—ha, ha!"

Mrs Ravenhall again shook her head, in denial of her devout aspiration; she shook it pretty firmly this time, for they were treading delicate ground, and changed the subject. She changed it, however, neatly, and to her brother's advantage. "Tom," she said, "is more wedded to sport at present than anything else, and his earnestness about it is quite too comic. This morning he is in a state of despair about his autumn plans. It appears that he and his friend Mr Glencairn were to have taken a shooting together somewhere in the Highlands—near your beautiful place, I think; and after it was all arranged, as I understand, Mr Glencairn takes it into his head that he will travel instead, and poor Tom is left in the lurch, with-

out his shooting. Is it not a shame? Poor Tom! he has so little amusement!"

"Ah! I don't fancy that friend of his. It is quite what was to be expected. Distinctly monstrous! But let him come to me instead—let him come to me. We have shooting enough at Dunerlacht to satisfy him, I'll be bound. Let him come, and stay as long as he likes. He's the best of company; he'll never wear out his welcome. I think he'll be better off with me than with that solemn fellow with the theatrical name. I say, Wyedale, I've just been saying to your sister that I hope you'll console yourself for the loss of your shooting-partner by coming to Dunerlacht for the 'Twelfth;' and the longer you can stay the better I'll be pleased."

It is needless to say that Tom joyfully accepted. And his sister, feeling that she had acquitted herself brilliantly with the papa, crossed the room, like a coruscation of sunbeams, to fascinate the daughter.

CHAPTER VIII.

With that young lady Tom had, indeed, made but a lame appearance, from the point of view of a suitor consciously commencing a siege. There is nothing like an *arrière-pensée*, at least in the case of minds tolerably ingenuous, for blunting the conversational faculties, freezing the ideas, and letting loose in talk all that surface *débris* which hangs about all minds, and does duty for ideas with stupid people. There is nothing, therefore, that for the moment so completely levels the clever man with the idiot as an *arrière-pensée*. Tom was, of course, labouring under this disability, and with circumstances of aggravation, for he could hardly bring himself to look upon the *arrière-pensée* as his own property. It was part of a game of his sister's, which, rather sulkily and with a half heart, he was helping her to play. Such is gratitude; but hence he felt doubly numb and stupid. It is doubtful whether Tom, though an Englishman, had ever talked about the weather, as a necessity, before. Now, however, he atoned for past neglect of that pathetic subject, and handled it with the length and insistance which enthusiasts bestow upon a fresh topic.

Esmè, who had heard him converse before, and always with

a sort of bright spontaneity that broke out upon all sorts of topics, fancied at first that this atmospheric attack was merely a bit of fun and irony, and expected for some time the development of the joke. In vain. Through many a dreary period, the vicissitudes of the barometer were canvassed; and though he went conscientiously round the dial, he made, as sailors say, "bad weather of it" all round. Somehow, at last, Cosmo Glencairn's name was introduced; and Tom, finding a subject with which he was familiar, and a listener whose interest seemed to awaken, fastened upon it, and flashed into eloquence upon the theme. *Apropos* of what, he knew not, but away he went at score upon Cosmo's merits. He really liked him, and cherished—what might seem strange in such a nature—a carefully-concealed respect for a character so different from his own, and for ways of life and thought which he dimly felt to be higher and better than his own. Now this feeling had free voice. Tom was not conscious of giving a biography of his friend; nor was he conscious that an occasional suggestive remark, or trifling query, led him, in effect, to do so. His fun rather came back to him, and his biographical essay took a serio-comic turn; but as there was nothing about Cosmo, except perhaps an occasional excess of earnestness, to which ridicule could really attach, the good-natured satire only imparted that flavour of dispraise necessary to make panegyric palatable to human nature, which abhors unqualified perfection. Esmè did not conceal her interest.

"These things to hear
Did Desdemona seriously incline;"

and, on being told of Cosmo's itinerations in the pursuit of self culture, she declared that they displayed a kind of zeal and thoroughness that were to be envied, and a dash of romance and picturesqueness which transformed the dry and dusty paths to knowledge into ways of poetic beauty and delight.

"What an ideal life!" she cried; "how enviable he is to wish to lead it, and then to be able to do what he wishes!"

"Is *that* the sort of life *you* would like to lead?" asked Tom.

"If I were fit for it; but I am afraid I should not persevere. Mr Glencairn has actually persevered in it for several years."

"Yes, he has been on the prowl for about three years."

"Magnificent!"

Tom laughed loudly.

"It is not *your* ideal life, then?"

Tom laughed still more heartily. "No, Miss Douglas; I'm

afraid it would bore me to extinction. I should be like the pilgrim walking to Mecca or Jerusalem with peas in his shoes."

"Yet you and Mr Glencairn are great friends."

"Yes, we are; and the funniest thing of all is, not that I like him, but that he likes me."

"Well, but is it not quite proverbial that men of talent——" here Esmè broke down, blushing to find herself on the brink of an involuntary rudeness, but recovering rapidly, said, "I believe I was about to say something very stupid. Where is Mr Glencairn going to next?"

"I really don't know. I was in hopes he was going to content himself with Scotland for the autumn; but he was in one of his moods yesterday afternoon, and spoke of setting out for fifty different points of the compass instead."

"I think Mr Glencairn said he was very fond of Scotland?"

"Oh yes—immensely fond of it; but then, when a fellow once fancies he has 'a mission,' he takes to thwarting himself and friends in the most deplorable way."

"What is Mr Glencairn's mission?"

"Heaven only knows. I believe he is still hunting for it."

"He will find it if he is so much in earnest; and when he finds it he will likely fulfil it. Don't you think so?"

"I daresay he will. In the meantime he threatens to run through my mission."

"Your mission, Mr Wyedale? Pray, what is that?"

"Oh, my views are lowly; for the autumn my mission was to shoot with him at Finmore."

"And that is not to be?"

"I fear not; but Lord Germistoune's kindness in asking me to shoot at Dunerlacht quite makes up for the disappointment, if my friend does break down—more than makes up for it."

"I fear we shall not be able to compensate you for the loss of your friend's society; we are very dull and stupid people at Dunerlacht."

"But *you* will be there?" said Tom, suddenly mindful of the *rôle* he ought to be playing.

"Oh yes; we shall be at home, naturally."

"Then—then I don't think I shall miss Cosmo much."

Miss Douglas opened her eyes a little at this rather straight plunge of Tom's, and said, "I am afraid you are too sanguine, Mr Wyedale. But I hope you won't have to depend for your society exclusively on papa and me. I believe we are to have, for us, quite a large party this year."

Tom was off at once on the wings of fancy to the moors. "What splendid shooting it must be!" he said; "and, by the by, Miss Douglas, have you any idea how they work the duck on the lake? There is a tremendous margin of sedge. I looked down at it once from the highroad. Punts would be the only plan. Are there punts?"

"I really can't tell you, Mr Wyedale. I'm not at all a sportswoman."

"Ah! I'm afraid if there were punts you would be certain to know; don't you think so? I suspect there can't be punts. I wonder if Lord Germistoune has ever thought of them?"

"I'm afraid I'm quite ignorant of all shooting matters."

"That lake has immense capabilities, Miss Douglas. I wouldn't go in for big swivel-guns, you know—that's not my idea of sport; but without some sort of punt the lake must be wasted—absolutely squandered. With a punt I would undertake to make the ducks reflect to any extent."

"Then for your sake, if not for the ducks, I hope there *is* a punt."

"One might rig up something of the sort simply enough, to be sure. Glencairn and I once managed the business that way on one of the big Canadian lakes. We made a sort of raft, you know, and fenced it round with sedge and scrub, so that it looked like a floating island."

"Did you make the Canadian ducks reflect?"

"Yes; I suspect they won't forget us and our raft in a hurry. We slated them."

"Is Mr Glencairn a good shot?"

"Excellent. He does everything he *does* do well."

"I suppose he is always in earnest about everything he does?"

"That's the secret, perhaps. It would bore me, now, to be in earnest about anything, except, of course, sport, and" (observing his sister's suggestive eye upon him)—"and, of course, one or two other serious matters."

Esmè laughed. "I wonder," she said, "what you would rank with sport as serious matters?"

"Hang it!" thought Tom, "she's laughing at me; "I'm on the wrong tack somehow,"—but he jerked out a sentence to the effect that "for every man there is something sacred and serious," and then remembering immortal Mr Guppy and his refrain, "There *are* chords," had wellnigh broken down.

"So that you *have* profited by Mr Glencairn's society; you are not altogether an unworthy disciple," laughed Esmè.

"Disciple? God forbid! I'm not a disciple at all. I wouldn't

go in for Glencairn's line of business for the world. Life is too short."

"Still for every man there is something sacred and serious—you are convinced of that?" said Esmè, with profound gravity.

"Oh, of course I am, and—and—all that kind of thing, you know." Then their eyes met, and they both went off into hearty fits of laughter.

"I have always understood," thought Tom, "that if a woman once laughs at you, you may as well cry 'off' at once, and throw up the sponge. Now, this girl *is* laughing at me—and small blame to her; and I feel that, if I were ever so much in love with her, I couldn't get on the proper tack—not to-day, at least. I suspect after dinner would be my only chance. I believe moonlight has a wonderful effect upon the female nature; and dry champagne (in sufficient quantities) has almost made *me* sentimental once or twice. Yes, I *must* try it some other time, under more favourable circumstances. At present I can't score, that's clear." Then, seeing his sister cross the room, he rose and said, "I must go and sound Lord Germistoune about the punts." And thus ended the first scene of Tom's little drama, "L'Amoureux malgré lui."

And then came Mrs Ravenhall, and, with full confidence in her social versatility, approached the task of fascinating Esmè, of whom she knew nothing, except that she was a very young undergraduate in London life. And very charming she made herself, in a bright, genial, cheery way, that could not but be acceptable to any well-conditioned nature. But as a skilful tactician behind his skirmishers watches to detect the points at which the enemy may most readily be open to impression, so, from behind her sunny smiles and gay *espiéglerie*, peered forth the intent worldling, striving to decipher the character of the young lady before her. The Highlanders at Prestonpans, and the Maories rushing from their "pahs," disconcerted regular troops by their unsophisticated method of dealing with conventional modes of attack and defence; and, to a person entirely conventional, there is probably nothing more indecipherable than a character which, supposing it not to be commonplace, displays only the colour of its own individuality, and reflects none of the stereotyped features of manner, thought, and so forth, which belong to some one or other of the various social coteries lying within the ken of the conventional observer. In this way Esmè somewhat puzzled Mrs Ravenhall. Her simplicity and candour would have been easily comprehended, but, blended with a straightforward shrewdness and keenness of in-

sight, and a certain independence of thought, they were, on the whole, paradoxical. And then, although nothing could be more remote from her nature than affected *nonchalance* and strong-minded idiosyncrasies, there was in her a strange ignorance of, indifference to, even a want of reverence for, persons, things, and ways of life that are sacred and canonical to people, the final cause of whose existence it is to be in the best society.

And thus, when Mrs Ravenhall settled down for a cosy talk, and unfolded the usual staples of cosy conversation among people of her stamp and class, she experienced a series of shocks. It seemed so startling to be called upon to explain who was who at every sentence. Extremes meet; and a kinship is established between Belgravia and the backwoods, by this one touch of nature, that the denizens of either paradise, in conversing with outsiders—that is to say, with the world at large — assume, with primeval simplicity, that, to all the world, the inhabitants of their little *monde*, and all that is done, said, or thought therein, are matters of familiar knowledge. Among the redskins, "Hooker Jim's" squaw will dilate to you, by the hour, upon "Horny-eyed Houlaoua's" infamous conduct to *his* squaw and papooses, and all the outs and ins of the difficulties between "Hairy Samky" and "Wingery Bong," as if these nature's nobles and their deeds were known as the sun, moon, and stars.

And, exactly in the same way, you will be muddled, puzzled, driven half-crazy among the fine ladies and gentlemen of the *crême de la crême* and (*nota bene*) their *umbras*—if you happen to be an outsider. For you will have imputed to you, and expected of you, a complete familiarity with the attributes, connections, daily lives, and excruciating nicknames of those who live, and move, and have their being in the fashionable microcosm, though the renown of them has never reached your darkling orbit. There is something fresh, child-like, and almost touching in this, when it is an attribute of aboriginal simplicity; but when you regard it as a trait of British high-breeding, "*risum teneatis amici?*" The word "British" is used advisedly and with emphasis: for against this result of a profound yet parochial egotism, the well-bred Russian is protected by his cosmopolitanism; the Frenchman by his accuracy; the German by his matter-of-factness; and the Italian by that delightful outcome of a national character filtered through countless generations of breeding,—that captivating and gracious gift of sympathy which adorns him and helps to make him what he is—the best bred and most lovable of men.

Pardon the digression, and let us return to Mrs Ravenhall, who, stamped in all respects with the pattern of her *monde*, awoke, with a series of shocks, to the fact that Esmè was something very like a pagan. She was positively ignorant of the habits of Mrs Chesterfield Beauregard. She knew nothing to the discredit of Lady Diana Potiphar. She hadn't even heard that the Hon. and Rev. Joseph Jellyfish had been quite exculpated by the Bishop. Then, as for the exploits of Donjie St Bees, they were a sealed letter for her; and the witticisms of Jam Haverel (actually of JAM Haverel!) a closed book. Was it possible that she was in ignorance of what went on that night at Drawem Castle?—that night, you know, when the Duchess of Groats lost £2000 at *écarté*? and Lady Mabilia Fantod danced *such* a funny dance at the top of the staircase with the Marquis de Saut-du-Loup? What! not know about *that* night when Algie Montfort behaved so shockingly to Prince von Pickelhauben?—put a tame fox in the Prince's bed, you know, so that the Prince's lower limbs were terribly lacerated, and he couldn't go to Doncaster for the Leger—and that, of course, was the very Leger which entirely ruined poor Pix Puffinson. How foolish, by the by, of Pix to go off with Lady Wallsend, when he *knew* he had nothing, and she had nothing! No wonder Lady Anne was furious; and really, what the dear Duke said about poor Pix was only what he deserved—don't you think so? But ah! by the by, you don't know anything about any of them. Then genealogies—Abraham begat Isaac, &c., &c., &c. Such and suchlike subjects could not, as Mrs Ravenhall found, be employed as a means of amusing and fascinating Esmè, or of testing the points of view from which she looked out upon life and the world. If you never talk about anything but yourself, your neighbours and their affairs, it is difficult, upon occasion, to have recourse to abstract subjects; and Mrs Ravenhall was in that predicament. However, with a rapid change of front, she abandoned the Donjies, and the Algies, and the Pixes, and the Dukes and Duchesses, as meat too strong for this weakling babe, and did her best to be charming on "certain things in general;" and, with a good deal of froth and gush and sunbeam, she contrived to make herself felt to be what a young man would have called a "very jolly woman," and what a well-ordered damsel would describe as "so good-natured, and bright, and merry."

"You must let me see a great deal of you, dear Miss Douglas," she said, at last; "we have no friends here, and you must really patronise us as much as you can. We want rest, repose,

sunshine, quiet amusement. Do help us. We must do things together. Now promise to be our *cicerone*."

Then Esmè promised to do her best, though disclaiming local knowledge.

"Oh, but," cried Mrs Ravenhall, taking her cue from one or two chance remarks of Esmè's—"oh, but my brother Tom tells me you are a wonderful artist, and so accomplished and clever."

"I wonder how Mr Wyedale discovered all these perfections!" said Esmè.

"Oh, Tom doesn't say much, but he sees a great deal—very clearly Tom sees. Such a shrewd judge of character, too, he is; and *such* an admirer of everything beautiful,—a fanatic about scenery and art—quite a fanatic, I protest."

Remembering Tom's recent conversation and tolerably frank account of himself, Esmè felt there was something about this fanaticism which required explanation—in fact, that there must be a mistake somewhere. She said nothing, however; and Mrs Ravenhall, having uttered a few more valedictory sweetnesses, clasping Esmè's hand with one of hers, and softly patting it with the other, finally took her leave.

"Come away, Tom," she said—"we must not waste more of Lord Germistoune's valuable time; and I know you will never think of moving if I don't actually carry you off. Come,"—and they went, with many mutual resolves, heartily expressed, to "do things together," and see much of each other.

"Well, Tom?" said his sister, as they walked down the avenue.

"Well, *Lucy?*" replied Tom, with an emphasis that implied that any revelations that had to be made ought to come from her side.

"Well, she is nice and pretty."

"Nothing fresher to communicate?"

"She rather puzzles me."

"Does she? She rather frightens *me*—in my new capacity, that is—— But what perplexes you, Lucy?"

"I can't quite tell you. She knows nothing of the world—of our world, which ought to be hers—and yet she is not like a raw, country girl. She doesn't seem to know that she knows nothing of the world; or, at all events, she sees nothing to regret in her ignorance. And then she is quite self-possessed. I'm afraid she has character and originality. I'm almost afraid she's a sort of girl who thinks for herself."

"How shocking! But, after all, why shouldn't she, if it amuses her?"

"Well, you know, all that sort of thing is not in your favour. I had hoped to find a page with no writing on it, ready to be written over by the first moderately skilful hand that made the attempt; but she is not *that*. I had expected a little blushing rose of the wilderness; but she is not *that*."

"How oratorical! Well, you think that the rose is not for my button-hole, nor the page destined to receive my autograph?"

"I don't say that; but the situation is quite different from what I expected. The difficulties are with you, however. What I fear is, not that you can't succeed—for you can, if you try—but that you won't take trouble, won't persevere. You have a part to play, and you must play it. You must study it—adapt your style, tone, and sentiment; and, above all things, be in earnest. I am sure she is truly lovable."

"So am I. She will have twenty or thirty thousand a-year."

"And do give up that hard way of talking. It grows upon people till it becomes mechanical. It is exactly the sort of tone that won't suit Miss Douglas. How did you get on with her just now? What did you talk about?"

"I didn't get on well, that's certain. I think she was inclined to laugh at me."

"Surely you didn't say anything premature?"

"No, no; but I was self-conscious, and a self-conscious man always makes an ass of himself."

"What did you talk about?"

"I'll be hanged if I know! Yes, by the by, I think it was principally about Cosmo Glencairn."

"What! the man who's here?"

"Yes; he has been in your house two or three times—dined with you, I fancy—certainly been at your balls."

"Oh, I remember him very well; pleasant, isn't he?"

"Tremendously."

"But what does she know about him?"

"Knows *all* about him *now*. I've told her all about him; quite exhausted the subject. Besides, she's met him two or three times here."

"But what possessed you to talk about *him*?"

"Well, I was short of subjects, and Cosmo was the only one that seemed to fetch her. I tried her with various topics, but somehow we always drifted back to Cosmo. We had a little round about duck-shooting, but even that turned into Cosmo. To tell you the truth, he was rather a godsend to me."

"What a goose you are, Tom!"

"Thanks; if you had said so half an hour ago when I was among the ducks, I would have agreed with you heartily."

"Is Mr Glencairn a marrying man? He is very handsome, and clever, and rich."

"No; I've told you already he is *not* a marrying man: and if you are jealous of him on my account, calm yourself. Old Germistoune has taken a dislike to him, and has been rude and bearish; and Cosmo's soul is in arms. He won't go near the place again."

"Oh! that matters nothing, if *she* is interested in him."

"Tut, Lucy, how earnest you are! What can it matter if he doesn't think of her or see her?"

"You can't be too careful. Remember how much depends on your making the most of such an opportunity. His lordship is a terrible old bore."

"Isn't he? But he has redeeming points."

"Oh, of course; he is a thorough old aristocrat."

"And he has the best mixed shooting in Scotland."

"There you go! You must ingratiate yourself with him."

"It is done. His lordship has the clear-seeing eye towards me."

"Don't neglect him then."

"I won't—I won't."

"You must woo him almost as much as his daughter."

"I will—I will. Concealment shall not prey on my damask cheek."

"By the by, you'd better dine with us to-day, and bring Mr Glencairn. I must investigate him."

"Certainly, provided the legislatorial head is sound again. Frank with a headache is fit company neither for man nor beast."

"Oh, his head will be quite well by dinner-time."

"*Va bene!*"

CHAPTER IX.

The dinner-party did not come off, however; or, rather, it did not include Cosmo. When his friend went to look for him he found that he had started early in the morning and crossed the lake; and from this solitary excursion he did not return till the evening was far advanced. The truth is, that sleep had

brought no refreshment either to his body or his mind. He awoke with the perplexities of the previous day weighing heavily on his spirit; aggravated, indeed, by daylight. If the mystic moon had for a moment charmed to sleep some of his troubles, the realistic sun roused them again into vigorous action. "Hide me from day's garish eye," is a prayer which finds an echo in all heavy hearts. Thus, to Cosmo, in his present mood, while movement was an alleviation, solitude was a necessity; and so, long before the world of luxury was astir, he had risen and passed away across the lake, and up among the hills beyond, seeking, as by an instinct, some place of silence and shade, somewhat apart from men, a little sheltered from the intolerable joyousness of the summer morning. There, wandering to and fro, among the woods and rocks, he took up the thread of his last night's meditations. The gloomy train of his thoughts moved round and round in a monotonous circle. He arraigned, and after leading evidence, he condemned himself. From whatever point of view he looked at his past history and present position, he saw that he was "an unprofitable servant." If Hope and Common-sense suggested that twenty-eight years, though a great age, are still not exactly man's allotted span, and that there might yet be time to atone for past shortcomings, he straightway found himself wandering in a labyrinth of projects, each in its nature wide asunder as the poles from all the rest, and each to be rejected in turn as not the path to take. Now it was his own incompetency that seemed to bar the way; now it was the inadequacy of the end to be attained that warned him back. Underlying all his mental conflicts there was a feverish restlessness, new to his experience, which led him to turn to many unreasonable projects, and finally, to reject all projects, reasonable or the reverse. He said to himself that it was a sphere of active and at least useful exertion which he had to find. He said it languidly, but his thoughts travelled over a sufficiently large area in the quest.

In this age there are many outlets for restlessness—sanctioned, almost sanctified, by science. The sources of the Nile are still to discover, the North Pole has not yet been reached; and, besides these great standing challenges of Nature, there is always something inviting scientific Bohemianism to distant and uncomfortable regions for purposes of discovery or observation. One or two of these, in vogue at the time, suggested themselves to Cosmo. But missionary zeal in the cause of science would not be roused. He felt, indeed, that his scientific attainments were too weak to justify or support such high-pressure action,

and so he was off at a tangent in an opposite direction—a direction which showed how abnormal was his state of mind. For it was to the Carlist war he turned. Fiercely in progress then, it seemed to promise a career of romance and adventure—an opening for one who could play the part of a guerilla leader. There was much to touch the imagination in such a life. Ah! but a career of romance and adventure! Was this his quest? No. His quest was a sphere of active and useful exertion. The service of Don Carlos was an active enough sphere, but was it useful? Was it not even dishonourable, as far as he could be concerned in it? Don Carlos was not his king, nor the Catholic faith his faith. To join the Carlists, therefore, would practically be to turn filibuster and renegade. A score of similarly wild projects were similarly canvassed and dismissed, and, with them, many others more practicable. Among the rest, two, which, as alternatives, had all along been, more or less vaguely, the horizon of promise to which he looked, and these were the careers of literature and politics. But, to-day, by the morbid play of Cosmo's thoughts, they were associated, on terms of equality, with the most chimerical projects, and dismissed with almost equal *brusquerie*.

By what right could he address himself in earnest to the career of letters? What had he to say to the world? Could he teach it anything? He had read, indeed, and travelled much, and even thought a little. So had others. He had no *spécialité*. Were not his thoughts but commonplace deductions from the commonplace experiences of a mediocre man? Could he amuse the world, then? There was an incongruousness about the idea to-day that almost made him smile.

Well, then, politics. Here, indeed, he had earnest opinions and convictions, a fine ideal of what English political life ought to be, and of the *rationale* of English statesmanship. He had often dreamt of a political career for himself—often, indeed, awaking from his dream to see that his aspirations, when compared with the actual spirit of the age, would involve what the spirit of the age would jeer at as a political Utopia. But to-day he had eyes for nothing but the imperfections of our system. He could see nothing but a selfish unpatriotic democratism on one side—on the other, a tentative spirit of stop-gap and compromise; and between the two, the chaotic mass of the general body politic, steeped in morbid lethargy, and only roused into occasional spasms of passion by a detestable system of agitation. Before these conditions he recoiled to-day. Real heroism ought not to be deterred by the dangers and difficulties confronting it.

But to-day Cosmo's heroism slept; he felt paralysed before the dead and stony aspect of English political life, and turned from the subject, as he had often done before, muttering—

> "Dreamer of dreams born out of my due time!
> Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?"

In all his musings of to-day, with the ostensible purpose above recorded, Cosmo was now and then conscious of a half-heartedness in his investigations, and conscious, at last, that the real reason why he rejected every outlet was a conviction that there *was* nothing at all in the way of personal achievement that was worth undertaking, whether for the mere sake of effort, or for the end that might be attained.

Others might do better than he what had to be done. If they did not, it did not signify; if he remained unproductive, it would not signify; if he blossomed into achievement, it could not signify. Nothing did, would, or could signify. After hours of mental struggle and perturbation, this lugubrious conclusion seemed to be the one point definitely reached.

At last, exhausted and oppressed with the heat of the drowsy afternoon, he fell asleep upon the ground, and pursuing through slumber the tenor of his waking thoughts, he dreamt that he lay in the first circle of Dante's "Inferno;" and with this addition to the sufferings of those who dwelt therein, that whereas they had Desire without Hope, in him Hope and Desire were alike dead. It was twilight when he awoke—twilight in the sky, but night in the coppice where he lay; and, as he started to his feet, the illusion of his dream was still upon him. Every tree about his resting-place was one of that weird Dantean forest of a lower circle; and the sound of the evening breeze stirring the foliage, the eternal burthen of lamenting souls.

"A dismal dream!" he exclaimed, as the world of reality forced itself upon him; "and from evil dreams how often one awakes to cry, 'Thank God! a dream and nothing more!' but now, now, to what do I awake? I might as well be in the 'Inferno' as here, in the upper air, with no purpose in my life; with hope and energy, and even the wish to do, eclipsed and paralysed. Great heavens! what has happened to me? Can I be going mad?"

With such thoughts he slowly descended the hill in the direction of the lake, and finding his boat where he had left it in the morning, embarked and made for home.

risen, and was bathing the further shore in light; and here, by some sudden impulse, he changed the direction of his boat, and steered straight for the Villa Bianca, which gleamed forth conspicuously from its dark background of wooded hill.

With eyes fixed on the villa, he crossed the lake in deep abstraction,—so deep that he would have run his boat on the rocky promontory at the end of the villa garden, had not the overhanging rocks suddenly shut the house from his view, and thus aroused him. Then he ordered the boatman to stop. From this point nothing was visible to him in front but the miniature precipice which rounded off the peninsular domain lakewards. Over all the face of this, wild flowers grew in luxuriance, and on one white cluster, which broke the sky-line on the topmost ledge, and caught the moonlight, Cosmo fixed his eyes. Presently he was seized with a caprice—like the caprice of one in a dream—to possess himself of the flowers; and in a few seconds the rock was scaled, the prize was made, and he was turning to descend, when the sound of a guitar from the adjacent shrubbery arrested him. After a few tinkling notes of prelude, a voice began to sing. He had never heard Esmè's singing voice before, but, at the first notes, he knew that she was the singer. Every tone seemed to strike straight into his inmost heart, stirring it with intense vibrations, which sent through all his being a message of revelation. Her voice was full of pathos, and the song she sang—a pensive air to words of tender melancholy—broke the stillness of the hour with an effect that would have charmed any listener. As for Cosmo, he was spell-bound. Dimly conscious, at first, of the strangeness, even the impropriety, of his position, he could not move. As Ferdinand might not choose but follow Ariel's pilot-strain which called him to "these yellow sands," and led him to Miranda, even so was Cosmo bound to the spot where Esmè's voice enthralled him. The song was succeeded by another and another, and still he remained motionless, not reasoning at all, scarcely thinking as it seemed—only receiving, as the thirsty ground drinks in the dew, an overwhelming sense of new and mysterious beatitude. At last the music ceased altogether; then there was a sound of footsteps, and in a moment the involuntary eavesdropper stood face to face with the fair singer. Esmè was somewhat startled at first by the apparition of a man standing on the ledge, as if he had suddenly risen from the lake; but, recognising Cosmo, she recovered her self-possession at once, and said gaily—

"Oh, Mr Glencairn! I am relieved to find you are only an

earthly eavesdropper after all. I feared it might be some outraged spirit of music risen from the lake to rebuke my discord, for I *was* singing very flat, I know."

Cosmo could say nothing.

"Pray," said Esmè, as he continued silent, "how did you come here?"

Cosmo roused himself with an effort and said—"I must apologise for the intrusion, Miss Douglas; I assure you it was quite involuntary."

"Please don't suppose I am going to scold you as a trespasser. I only wished to know how you came here, for you certainly did not pass me."

"No, I came from the lake.

"From the lake?"

"Yes;" and then, with a desperate effort to appear unconscious and gay, he added—"You know the legend of the Lurleiberg, and how the music of the Lörelei drew all passers-by towards the rock where she sang? Well, the Rhine drama has been reproduced on Lake Como; only that I am more fortunate than my predecessors. I have escaped the 'Gewirre,' I have reached the top of the rock, and I am talking to the nymph!"

"I don't think you pay a compliment either to Lurline's music or your own taste, though you can hardly expect me to feel flattered; but, seriously, you could not hear my voice from the lake?"

"Well, to speak truly, I must abandon the Lörelei myth. No, I did not hear your voice from the lake. I was rowing past here, and was seized with a strong desire to steal these wild flowers. I did steal them, as you see, and then I was going, but you began to sing. I hope you will forgive me for staying; I would have gone if I could, but it was impossible. You *must* forgive me, for it was your own fault."

"Forgive, Mr Glencairn? it was very flattering of you to care to stay to hear my very humble performance. If I had known," she added, laughing—"if I had known that I had an audience, I would have tried to do better—that is, if I had not run away, which is more probable; but if I *had* stayed, I would certainly have chosen other songs—more cheerful ones."

"I am glad you didn't; I could have wished for nothing different. I shall never forget my stolen happiness. I could have wished for no other songs."

"But do you like sad songs, then?"

"To-night no others would have pleased me."

"I hope that does not mean that you are unhappy to-night?"

There was a strange agitation in Cosmo's manner, and Esmè let the words slip involuntarily, and had no sooner spoken than she repented of having done so.

"I cannot pretend to say that I am happy to-night, Miss Douglas," was the reply, uttered in a voice of the deepest gloom.

"I am very sorry. Has anything serious happened? Is some one ill? or—— but forgive me, I am very rude; I have no right to question you."

"It is I who should ask forgiveness, and also correct myself. I cannot think that it would be possible to be unhappy in Miss Douglas's society; and if I have been unhappy all day, I have been more than happy since I landed on this enchanted territory,—enchanted truly, has it seemed to me," he added, as if thinking aloud.

"Ah, Mr Glencairn! I shall really think you are mocking my poor music, if you pay it so many compliments."

"The music—the music! but was it only the music? was it——"

"I daresay the moonlight, and all the summer night's delights, have had much more to do with the enchantment."

"All the summer night's delights! all! so many, so many! I——"

"Where have you been to-day, Mr Glencairn?" said Esmè, changing the subject abruptly, embarrassed by his strange manner, *distrait* air, and way of speech. "We saw Mr Wyedale on the lake this evening, and he was full of serio-comic alarm at what he called your 'mysterious disappearance.'"

"I? oh! I have been away beyond Lake Lecco."

"All day?"

"All day."

"And alone?"

"Yes, alone; I found my own society more than enough."

"Ah! you have quarrelled with yourself and not made it up, and that saddens you naturally."

"Perhaps that is what it is—it is very nearly true; but if I were to tell you exactly what has saddened me, you would certainly laugh at me."

"No, no; indeed, I am sure I should not."

"I will tell you then," he said, breaking out with sudden energy. "I awoke yesterday and realised the fact that I was dreaming in a fool's paradise. I awoke yesterday to find that all my life has been little better than a sleep and a dream. I

awoke yesterday and saw that I who began life anxious for effort, full of aspirations, I, under pretext of preparation for life's work, am spending what ought to be my harvest-time in still sowing the seed and fancifully dressing the soil. Life is so short that, if we do not observe the proportions of its seasons and allot to each its work, life will be barren. It is not in winter that we make our harvests. I saw this clearly yesterday; to-day, I see it still more clearly. I have had such awakenings before, and felt energy, impulse, eager desire, to begin a new course; but to-day, energy and impulse are paralysed. I fell asleep to-day in a wood, and dreamt I was in the first circle of the 'Inferno;' I awoke and felt that my waking life was worse than my dream. I seemed not only not to descry the new way of life I had desired, but no longer to have any desire to find it. Is not this to be unhappy? to be truly miserable? To-night—now—I begin to know, to see things which,—but, Miss Douglas, what egotism is all this! Pardon me. I have no right to inflict these confidences upon you,—morbid fancies they must seem—remorseful groans of a moon-struck idler."

"No, no; believe me I am interested—though it is very sad. But now you have some new expedient, some new plan. Mr Wyedale told me a great deal about your—about your—travels: and I thought,—but, well, I hope your new plan will be successful. I am quite certain that it will."

"Thanks, Miss Douglas; but I have no new plan. I only see—no matter! Indeed the only plan I have is to leave this to-morrow."

"To-morrow? that is a new intention, is it not?"

"Yes, it was formed to-night, not many minutes since. And now farewell. May I take these flowers? I had stolen them already, you will say; but I should like to take them with your permission."

"Surely they are not worth asking for?"

"I assure you I think they are."

"Then, as lady of the manor, I give them to you freely."

"I shall preserve them as a souvenir of to-night—and—and *you*. Good-bye."

"Is this a final 'good-bye'?"

"I am afraid it is."

"Perhaps you will be merciful to poor Mr Wyedale and come to the Highlands after all; if so, I hope you will be able to tell me that the new way is found, and the journey on it smooth and prosperous."

"If I have your good wishes, it is much."
"You have my best wishes. Good-bye."
"Farewell."

In that exquisite poem, "Atalanta's Race," the hero, Milanion, after passing a night of prayer and vigil in the temple of Aphrodité, is roused from the sleep which has at last overtaken him by an actual manifestation of the divinity before whose statue he has been pouring his supplications. In her glorious presence he sees nought "for dazzling light that round him shone."

> "He staggered with his arms outspread,
> Delicious unnamed odours breathed around,
> For languid happiness he bowed his head."

And some such condition was Cosmo's when, after a prelude of sweetest music, Esmè stood before him. She stood before him in a new light now. The revelation to his spirit was as complete and instantaneous as that to Milanion's eyes. He, too, had been prepared for an apocalypse by a vigil and an agony.

The time had come for him—as come it probably must for all, even the most intellectual—to discover that the aims, delights, and prizes of intellect are insufficient, and that, from another side of our nature, claims to have its share in our attention recognised are advanced with such a violence of impetuosity as to bear down, and cast into at least a temporary eclipse, the rival which till now had monopolised all our interest. And this? What is it? It is the demand which one nature makes for the interchange with another nature of something which the word "sympathy" but faintly expresses. It is the need to *give*, and to *receive*, an absolute devotion — so absolute that the two natures may become like the complementary parts of a single being, the disunion of which brings mortal anguish to both. As the soul of music slumbered in the shell till quickened by the breath of ethereal inspiration, so, deep in the recesses of our nature, lies this capacity of need to receive and to bestow, till, late or soon, the energising influence reaches it with the sudden impulse of electricity, and it is roused, and we awake in the dawn of a new life. It is a dawn of fiery clouds and puzzling lights, and at first the spirit is only oppressed by a sense of bewilderment, or tortured by a vague numb pain, the source of which is shrouded in mystery. This is the dawn, the birth of love. The electric spark may spring from the witchery of a single glance, which

has no witchery save only for one; from the music of a tone, which is mere dull sound for all the world besides; from a hundred things that may have fallen like passing sunbeams, leaving no impression on the many, but which are winged arrows of revelation and destiny to the devoted ONE.

There was no longer any mystery. Cosmo now saw the cause of his unrest. A long-cherished ideal, built on the slight foundation of a painter's graceful fancy, had passed from the world of phantasms, had come as a living woman, and captivated all his being. The revelation had been sudden, almost as if the work of magic; and all the strange mental phases of the last two days had been due to the overwhelming force of an emotion hitherto unfelt, and to the bewilderment of a mind seeking the cause of its trouble in every quarter save that whence it really came. Error on such a point may seem incredible; but the morbid watchfulness which Cosmo exercised over the growth of his intellectual life had developed a tendency to accesses of self-distrust and self-accusation, and to occasional recurrences of an almost despairing conviction that his life was destined to pass in laborious preparations only. This conviction—logical enough in view of Cosmo's system, which comprehended something like universal preparedness—always led to a feverish search for a way of escape into action. But, hitherto, the fever of search had exhausted itself or been quieted by the fastidious verdict, that for that to which the search had conducted him he was not, as yet, "prepared." All his mental troubles being thus connected with this subject, and all accidental depressions taking this colour, it was, after all, not wonderful that the first tumults of a great and unknown passion should fail to be recognised in their true character—a great and unknown passion the force of which is often measured by the self-depreciation of its victims. But now they were recognised. Full on his mind and heart blazed the conviction of Esmè's infinite graces. In a few moments he seemed to see and to connect, one with another, every trait and feature of mind and body which, in three or four brief interviews, had passed under his observation. All seemed to him beautiful, harmonious, unusual, and complete. Sublimated by his imagination, her perfections matched—nay, they overpassed—those, which, in his day-dreams, he had attributed to such a woman as the painter had delineated. Thus she fulfilled his dream and more; for she had a thousand other charms, all summed up in the one irrational, but *only* true, reason for loving—she was *herself*.

Are such things possible? it may be asked—such volcanic action in the minds of reasonable beings?—possible, above all, in the case of such a man as Cosmo seems to pretend to be? Yes, we reply; above all, in the case of such men as Cosmo. His heart had not been deadened by a series of transitory impressions, nor had the fineness of his sensibility and his perceptions been blunted by a sensual way of life. Fastidiousness had protected him from the former evil—purity, refinement, and perhaps it must be owned, intellectualism, had held him from the latter; and so now this, the first real impression which woman had ever made upon his heart and mind, addressed itself to capabilities which awoke, for the first time, with the freshness of youth and the vigour of manhood combined.

Cosmo had in truth, though unconsciously, been in the attitude attributed by a sweet singer to one waiting for his ideal, when he exclaims—

> "Whenever she comes she will find me ready
> To do her homage, my queen! my queen!"

And now she had come; and the "longer" he had waited, the fuller and readier his homage.

The vigil was over, the preparation was complete, when Cosmo reached the summit of the rock, and at the first notes of Esmè's voice the revelation was made. She had come. At first the *pain* of love, which springs from the disproportion between longing and hope—the one infinite, the other so cramped by the exaggeration of obstacles—at first this pain was unfelt. He was in a trance of delight, in which pain was impossible. His untutored heart, smitten with a force which it could not control, answered promptly to the shock. Words of love and homage half rose to his lips, and longed for utterance. His secret would have betrayed itself to an expert before it had been many minutes consciously in his own possession; even to Esmè, perhaps, had not her perception of his strange manner led her instinctively to an abrupt change of subject, which recalled him sharply for the moment from the world of delicious dreams. Then, as by a lightning-flash, he beheld his position—its danger, its hopelessness, and, as an immediate consequence, the necessity for flight, as instantly announced.

But yet, again, as he went home over the bright waters, the glamour of dreamland fell upon him. For him, again, it was as though from amidst the confusions of a raving tempest one clear strain of ineffable music had arisen—a harmony of power that subdued to its own theme, and absorbed into itself, every other

sound, steeping the soul of the listener in a sense of beauty and repose. The forms of external things were scarcely noted by him; but he saw that everything was good. His thought was of her alone; and the "light of the thought," playing upon all the world, clothed it in hues that belong to some better world than this.

Reveries such as these, consciously indulged in, hurry the dreamer, at lightning pace, along a path of spells and enchantments, at the end of which he is seized by a real power, and riveted in real fetters. Cosmo, again in the narrow solitude of his own chamber, fancied that he awoke before that point had been reached. Be that as it may, he completely recognised the situation into which he was drifting. He accused himself frankly, and admitted the impeachment, with a sort of desperate calmness.

"I am falling in love," he said. "That which has befooled wiser and stronger men is beginning to throw its glamour over me;" and then the tenor of his thoughts was somewhat as follows: Was it fitting to surrender all one's faculties to the sway of one passion, however pure?—to let the destinies of life revolve round the will, perhaps the caprice, of one woman, however perfect? This sudden distaste for all other aims came as a timely warning. He must quell the infatuation. If he suffered it to grow, it would overmaster him; and what then? Supposing he succumbed, following the dictates of inclination merely, what would be the result? The result was clear. He would be involved in a hopeless quest; his life would be ruined in pursuing a dream. Hopeless? Yes, indeed, strange things happen, but scarcely things so strange as this, that such a one should be attracted by a man like him. Even were it otherwise, there were a hundred other obstacles, all insuperable. Who was she, and what was her father's house? And who was he? Wealth on both sides was the one point in common. Then there were, on hers, illustrious lineage and ancient traditions —the sacredest of heirlooms. Were such likely to be lightly transmitted to another race, whose lineage and traditions were represented by a blank—worse than an ignoble history?

No, it was hopeless; she was as far beyond his reach as the stars in heaven. But now that he saw the madness, now that he knew the source of this fever that had been distracting his purposes, he must calmly set himself to root it out. He would not allow it to blind him, to distort the aspect of everything. He would turn it to his own purposes by escaping from it into action. Fortunately flight was in his power—instant flight.

He would go away, no matter whither; he would go away from an influence which he felt might become irresistible. He would fight this madness upon evener terms, and, conquering it, would find, as the reward of victory, the true way of life. In this brave manner did Reason declare war against Passion, speaking high and earnest words to assert a confidence perhaps not truly felt, and to drown the voice of the enemy. With a surplus of confidence truly, and a strong reserve of patience, must Reason enter on such a conflict.

Cosmo, awakened from his dream, and suddenly conscious of his danger, turned, at first, to the side which called him with this loud note of warning, and which offered him deliverance from evils to come.

Exhausted and bewildered he submitted himself, and swore to follow Reason's dictates; but pain and heaviness were in his heart.

Poor victim! on this long day he had had many thoughts and many revelations. He had risen from the "Inferno" to Paradise, and, falling thence, was now suffering the strong pangs of Purgatory.

We must now say a word or two about Esmè, who went from the moonlight interview both interested and puzzled. Even in her first interview with Cosmo she had found him to be different from any person she had met before—of graver thoughts and more refined interests than the people she ordinarily came in contact with; and, at the same time, with a certain self-restraint and calm, in his way of looking at things and discussing them, which relieved his conversation from the oppressiveness of dogmatism. Indeed, the modesty of his tone in advancing any view—even to her—was as marked as the refined gentleness and courtesy of his manner towards her.

All this could not fail to prepossess one capable, as she was, of appreciating it; and Tom Wyedale's revelations as to his friend's somewhat fantastic earnestness in the pursuit of culture had struck her imagination as—well, as something original and exalted. It cannot be denied that she had been thinking a good deal about him all this evening, nor that she had, in fact, begun to place him upon a pedestal of calm and lofty intellectual purpose, at which serene altitude she was preparing to gaze with growing interest and admiration. Not a little puzzling, therefore, was it to find this statuesque hero immediately jumping from his pedestal, in the most human way, and pouring forth, in a burst of unconventional frankness, the passion of his self-contempt, and the despairing conviction that his life,

so far from being heroic, was vacillating, little, and void. The incident was altogether astonishing. Had he come there to make *her* his *confidante?* If so, why? Or was their meeting altogether accidental? but still, if so, why was *she* the recipient of his confidence? It was almost incredible! But was it displeasing? No; such touches of nature make us more akin than statuesque heroism on the one hand, and reverent contemplation thereof on the other. This frank abandonment of reserve touched Esmè's sympathy, and roused that interest in the man himself, which she had before given to the rather cold abstraction—his intellectual earnestness.

But fear not, reader; she is not going to outrage your sense of the probable by blazing into a coincidence of impromptu love. We shall leave her, if you please, to her bewilderment and her interest for the present.

CHAPTER X.

Cosmo Glencairn, writhing in his mental purgatory, and physically exhausted—for a fast of fifteen hours, broken only by a crust of bread, is trying even to the powers of a novelist's hero—Cosmo Glencairn, thus suffering and prostrate, was not in the mood to receive with equanimity any further buffets from Fate. One, however, was in store for him; and it was delivered in the shape of a visit from his friend Tom Wyedale. That worthy, whose immense animal spirits obeyed with alacrity every animal influence, such as light, heat, food, drink, as well as the nervous exaltation of late hours and the friction of lively talk, was usually "about his best" when other people were thinking that the time for bed had well arrived. On this night, under a combination of pleasing stimulants, the Ravenhall bedhour found him just in the humour to begin the evening. "Bed!" he exclaimed. "Bed at eleven o'clock? No, no; I'd sooner make another night of it with that devil of a Mr Cass and his excruciating 'Bourbon.' But Cosmo must be home by this time. I'll go and draw him." Accordingly, in about a minute after, a tremendous rap at Cosmo's door roused that sad muser from his troubled thoughts; and Tom broke upon his solitude with the sudden garish effect of a hundred gas-jets simultaneously "turned on" in a dark room.

"Ha, ha!" he cried—"found at last! Ah, wanderer, what anxieties have been mine! Unravel the mystery; where have you been? and how? and why? Speak! son of the pale faces; stare not with these unspeculative orbs! Unravel!"

"Oh, I've been trying an alterative—a day's solitude——"

"It don't seem to have been beneficial. Why, now I look at you, you *are* pale, with a vengeance, and—excuse my freedom—rather wild-looking. What's the matter, old man?"

"Matter? Well, I suppose I'm tired; in fact I *am* tired—done up."

"Now here *is* a mystery. Nothing more to tell?"

"Nothing more."

"Delightful! the plot thickens! a veritable mystery! who is she?"

"Who?"

"Why, the female person who must inevitably be connected with the fifteen hours' mysterious absence from his headquarters of any man under, say forty—*senioribus debetur reverentia*, I suppose."

To Tom's surprise his friend's countenance changed, as he said, hurriedly—

"There are exceptions, I suppose, even to such incontestable rules. I was away on the other side of Lake Lecco. I fell asleep, and slept for hours, in a wood. There was no Egeria there, however. I did not awake till it was dark, and—and here I am."

"Ah! yes, *that* I can see; but—well, you've had rather a meagre day it seems. *Apropos*, have you dined?"

"No, I couldn't eat. I must turn in now, I think. What have you been about?"

"Oh, *my* day has been pregnant with events."

"Tell me about them in the morning, like a good fellow."

"Why not now?"

"Now, I must sleep."

"I don't think the narrative will over-excite you; you will sleep immediately after it, I guarantee that as a minimum. My sister and Ravenhall arrived yesterday."

"Did they? Going to stay?"

"That depends. My sister is a woman of many wiles. I dined with them last night and to-night. I find she has come down here in pursuit of game."

"Yes? what sort of game?"

"The old game—an heiress for me!"

"Oh!"

"Yes, nothing discourages her. She was passing through Milan, of course 'by the merest accident in the world,' and, scenting a prey down here, hither she has come to drive it. She has already pledged me to co-operate; she has already spread her toils, and we have had a preliminary 'beat' this afternoon. Can you guess who the victim is?"

"I know no one here, except, of course, Miss Douglas, and——"

"Well, your knowledge is sufficient for the occasion. My sister proposes to annex Miss Douglas."

Cosmo started and winced; but Tom was engaged in rolling a cigarette, and did not notice his friend's emotion.

"To annex Miss Douglas," he continued, "with all her unquestioned advantages, actual and in reversion. What do you say to it?" he went on, as Cosmo continued silent, with compressed lips and clenched hands.

"Say to it?" was the reply. "Why, what *should* I say to it?"

"Approve?"

"You know I don't approve of fortune-hunting."

"Wish me well through it, at all events."

"No, I won't. I abominate this sort of thing. I can't stand hearing a lady spoken of in this way. Even as a joke, it disgusts me."

"Ah, my dear Cosmo, this is no joke; solemn earnest, I assure you—awful earnest! I don't like the business any more than you do, though my objections are otherwise founded. But, *que diable!* a man must live."

"Must he? Not necessarily by entrapping heiresses, however."

"'Entrapping!' What a word! You change the colour of a transaction by choosing the wrong term. It is the '*suggestio falsi*.'"

"What of 'toils' and 'victims' then, and the 'pursuit of game'?"

"Pshaw! figures of speech! If an heiress chooses to be captivated with me, that is her affair; and, indeed, since to be captivated is to be blessed, it is only kind to give her the chance of being captivated, and only fair to myself to let her see that captivation may take place on my side too."

"You don't *dare* to say that you think *Miss Douglas* is captivated with you?"

"No," said Tom, standing up to light his cigarette, and speaking between the puffs. "Alas! I wish I could; the

(bother this cigarette!)—the struggle would be over, because, personally, I mean to capitulate at once. But give us both time—all three, I should say, for my sister is in the thick of it."

"I really beg that you will leave me now. You must know that this kind of language is offensive to me."

"Must I? Why? Not unless you're jealous; then I could understand: but that can't be, after what you said yesterday. You can't possibly be jealous, old boy?"

"Jealous? nonsense! but there's a right and a wrong way of talking about ladies, and yours is the wrong way. I have another motive, too, for asking you to leave me. I haven't told you, I believe, that I am going away to-morrow."

"Going away? to-morrow?" said Tom, in a voice of consternation.

"To-morrow. To England."

"The devil!" cried Tom, the gloom of whose face now rivalled that of his friend's.

"Yes, and I must get to bed now."

"But why this sudden change of plans?"

"That does not matter; they *are* changed. I *am* going; so, good night: I'll see you in the morning."

Tom was for the moment so utterly confounded that he said "Good night" absently, and left the room; but scarcely had he reached the end of the corridor, when he halted with a look of desperation, and came back rapidly to his friend's apartment.

"I beg your pardon, old man," he said, putting his head in at his friend's door, "but do you *really* mean this?"

"Yes, yes, yes. '*I am going*' is plain English, is it not?"

"Well, yes; but I thought——"

"Now, what is it?"

"Don't be so fierce, old man. Well, it is this—that heathenish banker of mine——"

"Oh, hang it! How much do you want? Out with it at once. Here's my cheque-book. Now, how much? I'm dead tired."

"Would two—yes, two-fifty, or say eighty for three months, ——"

Before he had finished speaking, Cosmo was writing the cheque, and Tom had only had time to regret that he had not said "*Three*-eighty" when the cheque was handed to him.

"Ever so many thanks, old fellow," he said. "I'll be punctual. Three months. Let me see: we are now—hum—in May. Well, then—ah!—hum—June, July, August. August? ah!

to be sure; exactly, all right," as if a sudden gleam of recollection revealed the probability of a pecuniary plethora in that month. "I hate," he added, "taking a loan without seeing my way; but August will suit admirably. Thanks, thanks. Good night. Awfully sorry you're going," and he was off.

"I would have given him double the money to be quit of him to-night," muttered Cosmo.

"What an ass I was not to say five hundred at once!" sighed Tom as he went on his way.

He was able, however (with the tangible consolation of Cosmo's cheque in his pocket), to bear with fortitude the prospect of his friend's departure. He even admitted that it was now desirable. "For," said he, "if the fellow is going to get on such a very tall moral horse, and ride rough-shod over our new-born projects, Lucy will find it hard work to get me to stand up to the business like a man." He was inclined to think, however, that in the morning there would be another change, and that Cosmo would remain after all. But in this he was mistaken.

The day proved bright and cloudless, but cool; and when Cosmo looked forth, all that paradise of land and water lay before his eyes in its most seductive aspects. It was very trying to leave such a scene, and in such circumstances. It cost a hard struggle to resist the appeal of external Nature, who urged him with all her fascinations to linger. Even on the snow-peaks far away, the early light spread a soft and goodly bloom. The spirit of *dolce far niente* hovered over the lake and its shores. Everywhere there was "a rapture of repose;" but it was the repose of life, lulled and happy; for, now and then, some drowsy echoes of languid song came over the water, and now and then the mountain breeze passed, dreamily murmurous, through the groves, and gleaned the fragrance from their boughs, and bore it to the lake, which flashed into sunny ripples as it took the gift. A scene for happiness and love—requited love, dreaming its dream of perpetuity, with no jarring sound from the outer world to break the dear illusion.

"Beautiful! but not for me," said Cosmo aloud, as, after gazing for a few moments at the matchless prospect, he turned from the window, and set about his preparations for the journey. So that Tom was mistaken. His friend stuck to his resolution, and went; vouchsafing no further explanation of his movement, declining Tom's escort in the steamer as far as the town of Como, and leaving that worthy, though after a kindly farewell, in a state of deep mystification. "You can address

to me at the ——Club in London," said Cosmo; "and I suppose a letter to this place will find you, for some time." That was all. As the steamer carried him away, he never looked behind him. He turned his back upon the Villa Bianca and looked straight ahead, thus symbolising that he abandoned love and dreams, and faced the future, cheerless and full of perplexity as it was.

CHAPTER XI.

In leaving Cadenabbia, Cosmo's plans were perfectly indefinite. He had suddenly decided "to go away"—and nothing more; and it would have been hard to say by what instinct (for it was scarcely with a conscious purpose) he took the route to London. But having fixed upon that destination, he pursued his journey with as much eagerness to reach its end, as though called thither by imperious necessity.

It was a beautiful morning when he reached London; and, as the forenoon wore on, he beheld from his windows in Piccadilly the stream of well-dressed loungers, on horse and foot, setting steadily towards the Park.

Beginning to feel a reaction from the excitement of rapid travel, and unfit, in fact, for anything else, he dressed and soon found himself floating with the stream to Rotten Row. It was a year since he had been there, and he felt strangely bewildered, thus dropping from the lotus-eater's paradise of Como, into the wondrous congregation which performs the liturgy of "morning Park;" wonderful indeed, with its *coup d'œil* of beauty, movement, colour, contrast, and variety, all set in the tender frame of leaves and blossoms. He moved on absently, amidst the strangely bracketed incongruities which Fashion, with unconscious wit, here parades so lavishly. Now and then a voice broke from the level hum and hailed him. Now and then a fair equestrian swooped to him, in a gracious bow, as she cantered past. Now and then an acquaintance stopped to ask him a hurried question, or to tell him some new thing in a frugal whisper.

No one was surprised to see him; all greeted him as if one seen yesterday. Naturally: but to-day this puzzled him. A decade seemed to have elapsed since his last visit to the Park. These faces and voices seemed to belong to some half-forgotten

period. He had run away from the world of dreams; and here, in the heart of the world of reality, he seemed to gaze upon a phantasmagoria.

He went on to where the path branches up to the Serpentine, and he followed it. Presently he came upon a young man dressed in attire which had once been fashionable, but which was now dismally faded and frayed. Cosmo recognised in him, and with surprise, one of his oldest friends, and the son, moreover, of a deceased friend of his father. The young man was standing in rapt contemplation of a collie dog and a swan, who were having a "difficulty" with each other, by land and water, —the dog in exasperating fun, the swan furious.

"Ah, my dear Cosmo!" he cried, "delighted to see you again! You've——but wait a bit! Just look! Swan scores now to a moral! No, he don't. Bravo, collie! Now swan! By George! a nasty one that for the dog! Thrown up the sponge. The cur! How are you, Cosmo? Look seedy. Been to Mount Ararat, picking up chips of the ark, or where? I haven't seen you for an age."

"No, I've been in Italy for a good while. But you, Phil! what on earth has happened to you?"

"I? Oh!——There now; just look at that beast of a swan! —bullying the ducks next. Never saw such a fiend as that bird is, when you once get his back up."

"You seem to be intimate with his habits."

"I believe you, and with some reason. They're my only amusement now, these birds—my only resource."

"Why, what *has* happened to you?"

"Happened to me? Look at me. I'm cleaned out, that's all. Listen to the *précis*. Spanish bonds. Twenty thousand pounds. Used to give me eighteen hundred a-year. To-day, nothing—a duck's egg, and *that* not eatable."

"But what has that to do with the birds?"

"Everything. Look at my clothes. Can I show in such things down there? Can I mingle with the world thus? The world has distinctly said 'No.' Every one has shunted me. My *quondam* fair friends have the sun in their eyes when we meet. No one was ever so exhaustively cut by everybody. I suppose I look as if I wanted to borrow money. I don't, however. But thus wags the world. Well, you see, they don't *quite* drive me out of the Park. I'm still here, for my hours of recreation, ha! ha! But it's no fun being cut every two minutes; and besides, my clothes are really too scandalous; so I hang about up here a good deal, commanding a view, with

one eye, of the Row, my ancient friends, and former way of life, and observing, with the other, the habits of these birds—who, to do them justice, are really good fun, if you give your mind to them. My right eye and my left compare notes; and fine philosophisings and withering sarcasms are evolved beneath this seedy tile. But to think that eighteen months ago I was down there in the 'Ride' well mounted, fed, dressed, liked—and now these paltry water-fowl for all my pals. The pity of it, Cosmo!—the pity of it!"

"Why, Phil, you talk like an imbecile. Do you expect to mend matters by idling here? Why don't you do something? Why don't you take the remnant of your money and go and work with it in a new sphere—a colony—anywhere out of this?"

"Easy to say 'work' and 'remnant.' Produce the 'work' *and* the 'remnant,' and I'll do the one and use the other—if I can. I'm sick of this life. Not a club to my name now; can't stand the ready money. Tick at a cheap restaurant; garret in Soho; about a hundred pounds left of all I had; that sum owed over and over again to divers suckers of blood. That's the situation; and a pretty grisly one I find it, Cosmo, my friend.

"I remember that, after my father's death, I went to your father, and asked him about an investment for my £20,000. He advised me to put it into a business, and go in with it myself, and work and make a fortune. I reminded him that my own father had begun life with the same capital, and, after working hard all his life, and making half a million, lost it all one fine morning, and was only able to leave his nest-egg to me, because it had been settled on my mother. 'Well,' said your father, 'you can't afford to be idle on the *legitimate* interest of £20,000.' 'No,' I said; 'but as my father was ruined by legitimate business and work, I think I'll try what can be done with illegitimate interest and idleness. It's a toss-up between the two as to safety, I fancy. Can you put me up to some nice illegitimate thing, at about 20 per cent?' Then your governor flared up, and sent me about my business. Well, I know better now. I wish I had the chance again of taking his advice."

"After all, Phil," said Cosmo, "we both want the same thing. We both want work."

"Why on earth do *you* wish to work?"

"To satisfy myself; and since, to obtain the same end, you *must* work, we are in the same boat."

"Remember, however, that you are a cabin passenger, and that I am in the forecastle."

"Well, we're both sailing in search of the same port, and the more or less comforts of the voyage don't matter much."

"Don't they? Exchange berths with me, and I'll cruise about, *sine die*, without bothering about the port at all."

"You take a low view of things, Phil."

"So, perhaps, would you, if you were hungry, and ill lodged, and ill clad, and then cut by all the world, whereas I once had troops of friends: yet, I am sure, I never did any fellow any harm—not willingly, at least."

"Dear old Phil! I'm sure you never did. I'm very sorry for you—more than very sorry. What can I do for you?"

"I don't know, Cosmo. You know I won't borrow money; besides, it wouldn't be borrowing now. So what you *may* do, if you can, is, I suppose, to find me some employment."

"I wish I could, Phil; but there is nothing so hard to find as employment for a man not specially trained to anything."

"Ah yes; but my views are limited now. With all my heart, and thankfully, I will tackle to anything, and take what I can get. I know the difficulties of getting that 'something' to do, which ruined men, brought up to do nothing, are always hunting for. I've exhausted every method: answered scores of advertisements—even reached that deepest depth of replying (with enclosure of fourteen stamps) to one which offered 'gentlemanly employment—not involving serious distraction from other work—at £5 a-week.' I've reached, perhaps, even a deeper depth than that. I offered myself as advertising poet to Blogg the cheap shirt-maker! I wrote, at his request, a sample of my powers, in celebration of his 'Obconic Shirt'—and was rejected,—I, Philip Denwick, who was *proxime accessit* for the Chancellor's medal at Cambridge, was found unworthy to hymn the huckstering invention of a man named Blogg! Look here; here are the verses. Read them, and say if Blogg is not a monster of obtuseness."

He took a slip of paper from his pocket and handed it to Cosmo, who read as follows:—

"BUY BLOGG'S OBCONIC SHIRT AT 3S. 9D."

Obconic! Obconic! thy magical name
Electrified London, in letters of flame;
For "Sandwich" battalions swept slow through the streets,
With the awful *aplomb* of police on their beats,
Displaying on boards, borne like banners in line,
The legend, "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

I went by the river, I came by the Strand;
Around me, above me—by water and land,
From pier and from boarding, from 'bus, boat, and wall,
The genius of Blogg spoke its gospel to all:
But the people were puzzled, and failed to divine
What it meant—this "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

. . . . . .

Time passed! 'Twas the leafiest moment of June,
And the hands on the clock of High Fashion marked noon,
When shadily placed in Hyde Park, by the "Ride,"
I watched, flowing by, the equestrian tide—
Full and smooth as the flood of exuberant Rhine,
Or thy bosom, "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

"Anonyma" passed on her high-stepping mare,
Lady this and Lord that and Sir t'other were there,
And Rumour asserted the Prince was at hand,
And loud clashed, from Knightsbridge, the cavalry band;
But none to mere pleasure their hearts could resign,
For the thought of "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

Oh, languid's the stare, it is said, of *haut ton!*
And it seldom looks hard at one object, or long;
But modish restraints were cast wildly aside,
When sudden appeared, in the midst of the "Ride,"
A youth, who all others in grace did outshine;
'Twas thy "showman," "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

Swift reined in their jennets fair bevies of belles,
Slow backward in dudgeon fell armies of swells—
Admiration and envy shot fire from each eye,
As the noble young *gaillard* rode haughtily by;
Ah! well might his bosom swell high, I opine,
For it swelled 'neath "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

Curveting lightly, he passed up the "Ride,"
And Fashion, at first, stood agape on each side;
But soon rose a shout, 'mid the champing of bits,
"This *must* be 'Obconic.' Just see how it fits!"
"You are right," cried the youth, as he bowed down the line;
"You behold the 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine.'"

Swiftly he turned him, and passed to the street,
Galloped behind him a glittering suite;
Racing and chasing up Piccadillee,
Went nobles and gentles—a wonder to see—
Racing and chasing, for none wished to dine
Till supplied with "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

The clubs of St James's, the clubs of Pall Mall,
Sent the flower of their youth the procession to swell,

And when it had come to that warehouse of Blogg's,
A thousand young nobs, in the noblest of togs,
Rushed in, and exclaimed, as though maddened with wine,
"Give us *all* the 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine.'"

It was done; and the pick of the nobilitee
Went scampering homewards in pride and in glee:
And from that day to this, he who longs for success—
For the senate's applause, or the maiden's caress—
Never needs to despond or his dear hopes resign,
While he sports the "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

Cosmo gave him back the paper, laughing heartily at the quaint earnestness of his friend's expression in contrast with the preposterous absurdity of the verses.

"I think," he said, "Mr Blogg must be rather fastidious."

"The villain had the audacity to say that he didn't think my vein was 'hepic' enough for his line of business: but it's just my luck all over; nothing will ever turn up trumps for me."

"Don't say that, Phil. I'll think it over, and see what can be done. Meantime, dine with me to-night at 'The Gastronomic,' and we'll talk it over: eight o'clock."

"All right; but in that case I must go and give warning at the restaurant, or they'll nail me for the daily 'regulation.' *Au revoir.*"

"Money! money! money!" mused Cosmo, as he strolled along; "half my friends seem to have no other cry on their lips or wish in their hearts. It is their *summum bonum.* If they got their wish, I wonder how many of them would be happier than they are. It seems to do nothing for me in that way. I doubt if even Tom Wyedale would be happier. Without all that intriguing against his banker and friends which represents his mental activity at present, he would find life flat. Poor Phil's case is different. Actually pinched for the common necessaries of life! That is horrible! Then he is willing to work, and unwilling to borrow. I doubt if anything would bring Tom to that. I can conceive no circumstances under which Tom would not have fine clothes and good dinners. Poor Phil is of a different stamp; has good brains, and is a manly fellow in his way; and these misfortunes, with work to follow—lots of work—might make a man of him. He is not steeped to the chin in pleasure and selfishness, like Tom."

. . . . . .

"After all, perhaps, these *are* lucky fellows whose *summum bonum is* money—for that, at least, is attainable; while mine is what I must not even think of. Let me be honest with my-

self, and admit it. Let me be true to myself, and find a substitute for it. A substitute! well, at least an anodyne. Work is the only anodyne. Enough of myself; let me think of Phil. Something *must* be done for him. Surely my father might find something for him — the son of his old friend —at my intercession. Yes, I think so; I will try. By the by, what an age it is since I saw my father! I must write and tell him of my return, or go down and see him. That will be best. I will go down at once—to-morrow. I will try to forget myself, and think only of Phil, till I have set him on his feet again."

CHAPTER XII.

"Ah! bravo, Phil! punctual to the moment!" cried Cosmo, as his guest entered the hall of the club.

"Hunger is the best horologe, my friend—a new aphorism—nearly all my own."

"Bring it into the dining-room, then. Dinner is ready."

"Oh, this is a sensation I did not expect to experience again! Two years since I ate my last dinner here—then, alas! a member. I say" (pausing in the hall), "how about my garments? All right?"

"Perfectly."

"We don't dress at our ordinary—that gives the evening things a chance. There's a fungusy sort of a smell about them, though, I fear; notice it?"

"Not a bit. Come on."

"By George! what a lot of fellows! This your table? Thank goodness! I shouldn't like to run the gauntlet of the whole room. But, after all, I've done nothing to be ashamed of. Courage, Philip Denwick! Courage, *mon brave!* Oh, you Amphitryon! Oysters and chablis! The price of three days' dinners in the molluscs, and in the wine——"

"Bad manners, Phil, to appraise the dinner."

"Ah, to be sure; they are exotics culled in Leicester Square. But, after six oysters and a glass of chablis, my retransformation will be complete."

"Poor old Phil!" said Cosmo, "I'm awfully glad to see you. By the by, I have an idea that I shall manage to get something for you through my father. I think we shall make it all right. So, meantime, eat, drink, and be merry."

"Ah, Cosmo! why are you so kind to me? I don't deserve it; I'm a worthless fellow. Why, you've actually been thinking and scheming about me since we met—the only fellow who has given me a thought——"

"Tut, man! it is only common friendship; don't gush about it."

"No, I won't gush; but it isn't 'common friendship.' Common friendship (*experto crede*) has the sun in his eyes, or is morbidly interested in the pavement, when he meets an old pal in a rusty coat. All those fellows down there—I know a dozen of them—are 'common friendship.' They pass by on the other side. If I had been a thief it would have been different; but I only fell among thieves; and you are the only good Samaritan."

"Now, Phil, shut up."

"Well, I will; but admit that you are pouring into my wounds oil——"

"No more of it."

"Not to say, oysters and chablis, and those other benefits to come with which gratitude is so much concerned," added Phil, turning off in a joke the emotion which kindness, long strange to him, really awakened. "Yet," he continued—

> "'Yet to that golden heart of thine,
> I'll pledge this blossom of the golden wine.'

On second thoughts, I won't; I'll await the champagne, which I perceive to be in ambush; for the poet's 'blossom' must clearly mean the *mousse* of that delicious intoxicant. Let us be exact."

"I say, Phil," said Cosmo, "how do you get on for society? Solitude to a gregarious man like you must be a real affliction."

"Society? I *have* none; except of course, at my dinner-hour, in the modest restaurant close by Leicester Square."

"And what is that?"

"Mixed rather; all foreign, but of all nationalities. We are couriers, most of us; but some of us are *commis-voyageurs*, refugees—spies, I suppose—and suchlike. We're a funny lot."

"How on earth did you drop into it?"

"I dropped into it because the drop into foreign low life did not seem so deep as the drop into the home equivalent; besides, I don't believe there can be an English establishment of the sort, with anything like the same low rate of charges."

"Do you fraternise with your messmates?"

"Rather! Couldn't be avoided—*at* meals."

"And what are you supposed to be?"

"Oh, they decided that somehow for themselves—an artist! And the theory has developed, so that I am now an unappreciated genius, with a great but unfinished work in my *atelier*, which one day will, &c. &c. At first, I thought of being a 'nobleman in disguise,' but it struck me the disguise would become exaggerated as Time and my wardrobe fought it out to the bitter end. Besides, I should have been too much above my company. You see, we have no men of title among us, except, perhaps, a *chevalier d'industrie* or two, and they are too retiring to parade their distinction."

"Don't they hang on to you, apart from the dinner-hour?"

"No, I manage to choke them off. Their society *at* dinner is quite enough. Their manners are not too nice, nor is their converse edifying. There is fine free talking, I can tell you, among the couriers. I get some startling new views of some of my old friends—(their employers). They have eyes, these fellows; certainly they have tongues. Well, it is to be hoped they seldom speak the truth. In any case, no one is sacred. They spare neither sex nor age. *Apropos*, you ought to hear the beasts bragging of their conquests. It makes one's blood curdle when it doesn't make one laugh. There was a row at dinner among the ladykillers yesterday, which was rich. It began in this sort of way, between a Russian and a Frenchman—awful scoundrels both.

"'Figurez vous!' quoth Antoine, the French villain—'figurez vous! Je viens de voir cette adorable Laydee Mayree, au parc, ce matin!'

"'Bien! bien!' growls Ivan, the Russ, who rather thinks he ought to have a monopoly of the Lotharious business.

"'Elle m'aime à la folie! c'est sûr,' cries Antoine.

"'Vous le croyez?'

"'Si je le crois! quand nous nous rencontrons elle me fait comprendre tous ses sentiments, par un tout petit clignement d'œil.'

"'Et cela veut dire?'

"'Cela dit, "Antoine! adorable Antoine! décidez vous à vous déclarer franchement. Moi, je suis jeune, riche, belle, noble; cependant je suis tout à vous. Avancez, donc! Demandez! vous y gagnerez!"'

"'Il paraît,' says Ivan, 'que ce diable de clignement d'œil vaut bien des paroles! Mais pourquoi ne pas s'avancer?'

"'Ha! il y en a bien d'autres qui—— Ecoutez—'

"'Ub! ub! ub! ub! bah!' roars Ivan, 'laissez moi parler. Vous connaissez la Comtesse de ——?'

"'Je l'ai vue; c'est une belle petite veuve qui va se marier avec Seer Jams Thormson.'

"'Ce n'est pas vrai.'

"'Qui vous a dit le contraire?'

"'La Comtesse elle-même — hier au soir — par un petit hochement d'épaules.'

"'Ce qui explique?'

"'Ce qui dit: "Ivan! ne croyez pas leurs detestables mensonges! Je n'ai de place dans mon cœur que pour vous! Seer Jams n'est rien pour moi!"'

"'C'est un hochement qui s'exprime tout nettement! Ecoutez! La Laydee Mayree——'

"Ub! ub! ub! ub! bah!'

"'Est ce que c'est un ours qui parle? ou bien un porc?' cries Antoine, in a fury. Here a heavy German miscreant, Fritz, explained to me confidentially, but aloud, 'Mees Fannee Baykair ees een loff wees me. Himmel! aw-fool-lee een loff.' The others turned like tigers on the outsider who was violating their special territory. 'Amoureuse de toi!' they cried. 'Amoureuse de toi! avec ta figure de cochon!' Then there was a row, and they all fought in a bunch. Ah, Cosmo, you may laugh! but to sit at meat with ruffians of that sort is not the least of trials. When I think of them I say, 'What is there in the way of work that I would not undertake if thereby I might escape?'"

"Your old aversion to work has evaporated?"

"Perforce it is clean gone. I long for work."

"Stick to that, Phil, and we'll pull you through. You're fortunate, I daresay, to be beyond the reach of fastidiousness."

"Fastidiousness! why, if I hadn't come across you, I believe that, in a very few days, I would have taken a regular header, and separated myself, once for all, from my old grade—become a 'working man.'"

"Couldn't you have become a reporter for the press, or even a writer?"

"I daresay I could, if they would have had me, which they wouldn't. My antecedents were not in my favour, and I had no one to back me, so everything was barred. I went to Sherville, the Under-Secretary, you know, who really has some influence, and used to be a great friend of mine. I asked him if he couldn't put me up to something of the sort. He was very civil, and said he 'would see,' and let me know. He didn't let me know, and now he can't even see me. I suppose he's ashamed of having forgotten all about it, and so falls back

on cutting me. Stupid of him! Aha! here comes Flintshire! Now, what will *he* do? He has ignored me steadily ever since 'the fall.' He can't pass *you*. Come, I enjoy this. Yes, thanks, another glass of champagne."

Up came the noble lord alluded to, and stopped to greet Glencairn effusively, who returned his salutations, and then said—

"Surely you and Denwick know each other?"

Whereupon his lordship screwed his glass very tight into his eye, stepped back, gazed earnestly at Phil, then thrust a right cordial arm across the table, and exclaimed—

"Why, bless me! it *is* Denwick! Bless me, so it is! Who *would* have expected to see you? And how are *you?* Don't know *when* I've seen you. Been to the-er 'Catacombs,' haven't you?"

"Well, I've been a good deal in that line of country."

"So some one said — Pyramids or 'Catacombs' — forget which; and how are *you?*"

"Well, I feel a little mouldy after the 'Catacombs.'"

"Mouldy! Ha! ha! ha! So like *him*, eh? Not half a bad place, though, I suppose? Lots of shooting and that—Egypt-er. Well, my time's up," and off he went.

"What does the ass mean by the 'Catacombs'? I don't suppose he knows what he means; but he *does* know that he's seen me half-a-dozen times in the last month. Oh, here comes little Peter Wellborough! him will I accost."

Up came Peter, crying gaily, "Just come to town, you two foreigners of distinction? Couldn't have the appetite for a *menu* like this if you had been here a week."

"Why do you cut me nowadays, Peter?" asked Phil, in whose veins the champagne was beginning to "make summer."

"Cut you?" (rather abashed)—"*I* cut *you?*"

"Distinctly, dead."

"Oh! come now, that's turning the tables on a fellow with a vengeance. Here's a fellow, Glencairn, who disguises himself, and prowls about in shady places dressed beyond recognition, never comes to his clubs, avoids every one, and then says he's cut. Why, of course, every one thinks he has a game—amateur detective—mysterious intrigue—what not,—and humours him. *I'm* too discreet to thrust myself on a fellow when I see he has a game—*that* I am. But if he *hasn't* a game he ought to tell us. I was just saying so to Bamboro."

"What were you just saying to Bamboro?" asked the individual in question; an over-eaten, insolent-looking man who now joined them.

"About Denwick, you know."

"What of him?"

"Says *we* cut him."

"Does he? Well, *I* do; he's right, so far as I am concerned."

"Why do you cut me, Bamboro?" asked Phil.

"Because you look such a sweep."

"That's frank enough, at all events."

"Why do you wear such infernal old clothes, then?"

"Because I'm ruined—that's why; got no money to pay for new ones."

"'Ruined!' 'pay!'—what words! My poor fellow, no amount of misfortune can excuse the use of such coarse expressions. Why, most of us *are* 'ruined,' as you call it. You can't be worse than *I* am; but it don't interfere with my comfort much, or with my clothes at all. It *does* prevent me knowing fellows who get themselves up like rat-catchers, however. My tailor wouldn't like it, you see; and he *is* entitled to a voice in such a matter. But I'm glad to see you're clean again; for, after all, I never cut *you*—I only cut your clothes."

"Rather a nice distinction."

"Well, so it is; it is quite true that a man and his clothes are pretty much the same thing,—but you know what I mean. How's that 'Chateaubriand'?" wistfully eyeing a *plat*. "Looks wonderful—must try to remember it to-morrow. You ought to drink one glass of a generous burgundy after it—it deserves the compliment. Not champagne! No, no, my dear Phil Denwick, NOT CHAMPAGNE!" and he almost interfered violently to prevent the profane draught. "Well, I must leave such heathens. Off to the opera, and awfully late."

"Humbugs and ruffians!" said Phil, when they were again alone—"that's the division which my Serpentine philosophy makes of mankind."

"The sweetening of your philosophy does not seem to have been among the uses of adversity. The Bamboro system is not so gloomy; it merely divides mankind into pegs for new clothes and pegs for old ones."

"Bamboro is a complete ruffian."

"And he seems to think that you and 'old clothes' are pretty nearly interchangeable terms; so each of you falls within the other's division. Seriously, Phil, it astonishes me to see you taking all this cutting, dropping, ignoring—or whatever you call it—so much to heart. What can it matter?"

"Try it for eighteen months, and you'll see what it matters."

"Well, but if every one is either a humbug or a ruffian, it can be no great hardship to you (the exceptional unit, I presume?) to lose such society."

"One didn't know what the society was till it was tried. But besides all that, if a man can get nothing to do—if he is forced to be idle and solitary—he necessarily lives much in his own thoughts, which, under the circumstances, are, rightly or wrongly, certain to be bitter. I think mine are righteously so."

"You used not to be selfish, Phil; but this is the very acme of selfishness; you judge all your old friends, *en bloc*, simply from your own point of view. You fasten motives on them that may not be theirs in reality. Many of them very possibly think it kinder to you to drop a surface acquaintanceship, which can bring you neither pleasure nor advantage, but really the reverse."

"Ah, they should leave me to judge of that. However, I won't defend myself. But remember, as extenuating circumstances, that I have been grazing for eighteen months among black sheep in Leicester Square, and that the touch of pitch defiles. Then let bygones be bygones. If I were only out of sight of all these fellows, and the old life, and at work, somewhere, somehow, I promise you I wouldn't waste a thought on Bamboro & Co.—selfish or humane: as to philosophising about them, pah! I'd none of it."

"Work, Phil! yes, that is the grand panacea for all evils."

"Even on the homœopathic principle—*similia similibus*—I welcome it."

"It kills morbid thoughts, and cheats the devil."

"I'm sick of the devil, and would gladly thwart him."

"It will distract you from selfishness."

"By satisfying the wants of 'self.'"

"It will give you a healthier tone about your brother men."

"By leaving me no leisure to observe their characteristics."

"It will teach you self-reliance."

"Having already learned that vain is the help of other men."

"You are incorrigible, Phil, and sadly deteriorated."

"Ah, Cosmo, I'm only joking! But mind you, old fellow, it is pretty easy to be philanthropic when all the race of man smiles on you. I don't think it can be very hard to give good for good. It is scarcely meritorious to be open-handed, when one's hands are too full to close; or to be interested about others' needs, when one has no necessities of one's own! There is a Johnsonian sentence for you, to illustrate the vanity of well-to-do virtue and selfishness. Why, my dear old boy, I

might hoist you with your own petard, and prove even *you* selfish for looking at me, only from your own point of view! Ah! well, well, we're passing into the champagny stage of ethics. *Apropos*, pass that king of wine, and I'll propose a toast to 'Honest Industry.' Drink to it, mine host!"

The champagne, and the reaction from solitude and desperation, sent poor Phil's spirits up to the pitch of hilarity for a while; and in ebbs and flows of grave and gay, the conversation went on, and the evening passed. When the friends separated, it continued a settled point that Cosmo should go down to his father the next day, and do what he could for Phil. What the something to be done, or got, for him, remained quite vague and indefinite. Phil was himself indifferent to the nature of the employment he might get.

"I feel," he said, "at this moment—thus warmed with the good wine—equal to anything. I feel deuced like Longfellow's 'Village Blacksmith.' I mean to make *him* my model. 'The sinews of my brawny arms shall be like strong and iron bands.' Good night, Cosmo. You'll give me the earliest intelligence of a 'career,' won't you? I long to begin it" (singing)—

> "'Each morning sees some work begun,
> Each evening sees its close.'

Great fellow the smith! I always liked him!" and so Phil went off to his garret, with a heart lighter than it had been for many a long day—and Cosmo to his luxurious chambers, musing upon many things.

When Love has once "ventured in," it is difficult for the strongest nature to expel it by mere force of will, and altogether impossible to do so summarily. It is easy to say "I will stamp it out;" but it rises from the process: cast out for a moment, it steals back into the consciousness, wrapped in mists of subtle reverie, and, regaining its lost vantage-ground, again boldly confronts its antagonist. Thus, alas! it befell with the heroic Cosmo, who, though, fortified by an evening spent "out of himself," he resisted, when first left alone, the clamorous intruder, resisted not for very long. He turned himself to Phil's affairs, and the means of extricating him from his troubles. He sketched out one or two little schemes, which he thought of submitting to his father, on his friend's behalf; and, as long as he thus devoted his attention, he did well. But presently, on recalling the conversation of the evening, he began to feel that he had lectured his friend in a pharisaical way about selfishness; and some echoes of the high moralities he had indulged in, came

back to him with the true ring of Eliphaz the Temanite and his brethren in consolation. Then, reverting to some random remarks of Phil's, on the nature of well-to-do unselfishness, it dawned upon him that there was a very large beam in his own eye, and, by pretty easy stages, he arrived at the cheerful conclusion (in his ordinary style) that the principle which regulated his own life was one of simple egotism. Once back to the subject of self, his faults, failures, &c. &c.—a subtle sub-current flowed into his mind, bringing with it, among other suggested antidotes for egotism, the thought that a life might be happily rescued from selfishness by devotion to *another* life, whose beauty and nobility should be contagious, by union with *another* nature, mere contact with which should inspire lofty motives and instigate purely generous actions. And thus beguiled, Cosmo floated unconsciously away back to the Lake of Como, to the pathetic moonlight, and the whispering groves and listening waters—to her who, amidst all that goodliness, had revealed herself to him as the mistress of his heart.

For hours he sat plunged in this narcotic reverie; on, through the silent hours, incapable of effort to throw it off. The voices of the night were hushed, and everything was still; but ever upon the ear of Cosmo's fancy, *one* soft wave of distant music seemed to beat its sweet refrain. Out in the summer night nothing was visible save the dim outlines of dewy trees; but ever before Cosmo's eyes *one* vision seemed to pass, and return, and pass again incessantly, moving with a thousand remembered charms of movement, bright with the magic of remembered smiles. Love ruled the hour and used his opportunities; and though his captive struggled not, he tightened all his bonds. Resolution whispered remonstrance, and Cosmo cried, "Why should I die, without one effort for life? Without *her* life will be death in life." Despair muttered "Lost!" and Cosmo cried, "I despaired too soon." Then Despair and Resolution fled; and Hope returned and gave the battle to the strong—and strong Love ruled the hour!

That is to say, in mere English, that, through much confusion, Cosmo reached, at the end, one clear idea and one clear purpose, and these were (sparing the reader a journey through the tortuous avenues by which he arrived at them) as follows: that he had despaired and fled prematurely and on uncertain grounds; that these grounds were, mainly, the belief or the suspicion, or something between the two, that there rested on his origin some stigma which must make his suit hopeless; that this belief was founded on his father's silence as to their origin,

which silence had been explained long ago by a maternal uncle to mean that they *had* no history, or rather that the brief history which they had was disgraceful, and would not bear investigation, or even talking about. But his father was intensely reserved on all subjects; and his uncle's views on the subject of pedigree were hyperbolical; besides which there had never been any familiar intercourse between the father and the uncle. Perhaps, then, the stigma might be—nothing altogether insuperable. So thought Cosmo, to-night, in the exaltation of his love; and his resolution was that the visit to his father, decided on for to-morrow, should, besides the regulation of Phil's fortunes, have another purpose very paramount to that.

"I have been hasty and impulsive," Cosmo said to himself; "I daresay it was owing to the wild tumult and agitation I fell into *out there*. Well, now, at least, while there is a vestige of hope, I will not give it up. It may be infinitesimal, perhaps, but I will not abandon it till I am forced to do so by clear evidence. I have not kept to my resolve? No, I have not. Love is stronger than I thought, or I am weaker. 'Weakness'? Is this 'weakness'? It may be; it may be weakness to cling to life; and she is my life. To-morrow I will ask my father for a frank statement of the truth."

And so Cosmo at last went to bed with a hazy notion (as a sort of *P.S.*) that Phil was a providential dispensation, and that, but for him, the appeal to his father might not have suggested itself. But with this view those only will coincide who believed that, when he sailed away from Cadenabbia, he really "turned his back on love and dreams" for ever.

CHAPTER XIII.

The next afternoon saw Cosmo arrive at his father's abode. It lay at the distance of half-a-day's journey from London, in a solitary district, on the outskirts of an ancient forest, within sight of the sea. The house was old, Gothic, and of imposing dimensions; its *entourage* of wooded park was unenclosed, and gradually lost itself in a heathery wilderness, which rose into uplands behind the house, and, in front, sloped down till it touched the sandy margin of the sea. With some dignity, the place had yet a gloomy, sorrow-stricken aspect; for there was

scarcely a trace of human life visible in the far-spreading wolds, and the dark hues of pine-woods saddened the summer light about the house, and deepened the gloom of winter. Altogether, in its sombre silence, the place seemed to mourn the fallen fortunes of its lord—an impoverished nobleman, from whom Mr Glencairn rented Edlisfort Castle on a long lease; and no one approaching the house could have failed to ask, "What kind of a man can care to bury himself here? voluntarily, out of the world, among desert wilds by a melancholy sea, in an old castle looking like the very tomb of Hope?" And one would unquestionably have expected to hear of a romantic character—a grand melodramatic fellow, with a history and a broken heart, probably. But no mysterious romance attached itself to Mr Glencairn. His social needs were few, and such society as he desired he imported, and entertained with large hospitality. He believed in HIMSELF, in Truth, in Energy, in the adroit use of opportunity, and in Ozone. He had been practically faithful to his creed, and with these results. In the iron trade he had become a millionaire, and availing himself of an opportunity of the epoch, he had sold his business, with its grand *prestige*, to a company formed to conduct it. Freed thus from absorption in a special sphere, and with vast resources at command, his energy found ever-increasing outlets in channels of new enterprise, which extended to many parts of the world, and which he undertook, in many instances, single-handed. Altogether self-reliant, he did not desire, and often suspected, the counsels of others. He was able, therefore, to live away from the centre of business life. To breathe fresh air and live apart were, for him, the necessary conditions of mental and bodily health. Hence his abode in the wilderness.

A special wire, laid on to the main line of telegraph, brought all that he required to know direct into his own working-room. "Thus," he would say, "I avoid all that superfluous stuff, which even business men can't keep out of business conversation. What I want is facts simply, not opinions. I can form these for myself." At one end of the telegraph a familiar spirit collected facts, and committed them concisely to wire; at the other end, a second familiar—a laconic secretary—received the facts, and placed them, without comment, before his employer.

The scenery was nothing to Mr Glencairn. He walked about continually, indeed, in the open air. But he did his work thus, and was too "inverted" to have much of an eye for the outer world. He only knew that the sea air and the breath of pine and heather gave him vigour, and kept his mind elastic; while,

as for solitude, many an elaborate scheme would have fallen still-born, but for the freedom from interruption with which his unpeopled desert favoured him. So that about this castle of gloom and its *châtelain* there was no mystery at all.

From these few hints as to the characteristics of Mr Glencairn, the reader will perceive that the contrast between him and his son was as marked as possible; and, indeed, what nature had ordained in this respect had been farther developed by the exceptional relations which had existed between them from Cosmo's earliest boyhood. His mother, long since dead, had been a well-born lady, whose family had chosen to treat as a *mésalliance* her marriage with Mr Glencairn, though already rich, and rapidly rising to great wealth. They had discarded her accordingly—at least during the lifetime of her parents. Eventually, however, her only brother, who loved her much, contrived to get over her indiscretion and to forgive her; and when she died, since he had no other heir for his considerable property, he made certain overtures to his widowed brother-in-law as to the upbringing and future destinies of the boy Cosmo. This Colonel Wildgrave—an ex-Guardsman, a man of the world, humane, accomplished, and a universal favourite in society—loved the little boy for his mother's sake; but he felt that if his nephew were to be his future representative, he, on his side, had a right to stipulate that Cosmo should be brought up according to *his* ideas, introduced into *his* world, and put into the grooves of life which he approved. In this sense, then, were his overtures. Mr Glencairn had a trader's reverence for realised wealth—for capital, landed high and dry on the bank, beyond the reach of commercial fluctuations,—and he received the proposals well. "It must be £7000 to £8000 a-year at least," he said inwardly; and, aloud, that he had no educational prejudices. He then pointed out that, as a general rule, a merchant's son could never rely upon a hereditary fortune from his father, and ought therefore to be taught to make his own way. At the same time, if Cosmo's independence of personal exertion were assured,—if his uncle's inheritance were pledged to him,—then, indeed, his uncle was free to form him, launch him, do with him, in fact, exactly as seemed to him to be best. Of course, natural affection was to be considered. Cosmo, according to the protocol, was to be much with his papa, whose ample purse was in the meantime to defray the boy's expenses. The agreement was concluded, and loyally carried out, although the article about "natural affection" was by no means strained. Mr Glencairn was deeply absorbed in other cares, and he had

no great natural sympathy or tenderness, so that he gladly humoured the boy's manifest inclination to spend the bulk of his holidays with his uncle and aunt. Thus, by degrees, "home," with him, came to mean his uncle's house, and his father's house was only looked upon as the scene of occasional visits. To his uncle and his aunt he gave all his affection. Blessed with bright and genial natures, they captivated the boy's sympathy and confidence. They entered into all his young enthusiasms and ambitions; and if, proud of his abilities and the promise of his nature, they erred on the side of letting him shape, in his later school and college days, his own course, in accordance with what they believed to be his genius, they had all along done their best not to "spoil him," in the common acceptation of the term. Above all things, they had aimed at making him a loyal, high-bred gentleman. Parents, and more than are most parents, they were to him. Healthy home influence and training, education at Eton and Trinity, a commission in the army, and an entry into good society under the best auspices,—these, and the results flowing from such experiences, were what the substituted parentage did and procured for Cosmo. But all these advantages gradually widened the gulf which nature had placed between the father and the son. Neither public school nor university could credit itself with Mr Glencairn's education. Art and literature were for him the *hors-d'œuvres* of life, which could not concern a man whose life was already full to overflowing of graver concerns. The army he regarded, on the one hand, as an expensive and inefficient method of insurance—and, on the other, as a toy devised in the interests of the privileged classes. As for "society," in the limited sense of the term, he knew no more of its components and usages than he did of Greek iambics or the duties of a squadron leader.

Habits of life and thought, tastes, aims, standards—everything, in a word, which differentiates a man—sundered him from his son. At the very best, their relations—though not unkindly—had not been natural. From the earliest period, Mr Glencairn had looked upon Cosmo in a double light. He was his child, to be sure, and, as such, subject to his control and domination; but, beyond this, he was mixed up with the idea of "realised capital," and, as such, the object of a certain instinctive veneration, scarcely consonant with the parental relation. As time went on, and Cosmo's character and ways of life developed, this respect was progressively enhanced; for however much a man may affect to disregard what does not

seem to touch the special groove in which he has embedded himself, there are influences which will affect all sorts and conditions of men—the charm of high-breeding, for example, and a wide and liberal range of knowledge.

After Cosmo had been for some years in the army, the deaths of his uncle and aunt occurred, almost simultaneously. The double blow fell very heavily upon him; and it was during the solitude and depression of his period of mourning that he resolved upon abandoning the service in favour of a more "earnest" career. Henceforth there was no monetary tie between Mr Glencairn and Cosmo; and since his new projects led the latter into much foreign travel, he had latterly seen very little indeed of his father; and now their relations were more than ever unlike those of father and son. To his son, Mr Glencairn was more than ever the one-sided, concentrated money-maker—comprehensible indeed, but not admirable, except in regard of unsullied probity. To his father, Cosmo's relation to funded capital was more and more accentuated. On the whole, however, though much sympathy between them was impossible, there was a fair amount of mutual respect, from widely different standpoints.

CHAPTER XIV.

Cosmo found his father at home—a tall, erect, iron-grey man of threescore or thereabouts, with a firm mouth, and hard but honest grey eyes.

"Glad to see you, Cosmo," he said. "I got your telegram. Only back from Paris myself three days; there on Land Company business; fancied you might be there at the same time; thought you were due: were there, I suppose?" Mr Glencairn's conversation was rather telegraphic in style—condensed, jerky, and elliptical.

"I think not," replied Cosmo. "I passed through Paris merely."

"And where are you from?"

"From the Italian lakes last."

"Still bitten with the picture mania, hey?"

"I am still fond of pictures; but there's not much in that way down there."

"Ah! well. Any news?"

"No; I think not." (Could there be any news under such circumstances?)

"Been well?"

"Thanks; extremely so. And you?"

"I am always well."

Then came that pause which occurs between two men who, with nothing in common but the formal tie of relationship, are painfully conscious of the fact.

"My aunt is well, I hope?" Cosmo resumed, as a forlorn hope.

"Your aunt is never ill. No one so tough. You'll find her tougher than ever, I think," he added, with a grim smile.

Then came another pause, relieved by "the weather," but inappreciably, for Mr Glencairn set his face against iteration, and "identified" it, through any disguise, with the eye of a detective. At last there really seemed to be nothing more to be said between the two, and it was a palpable relief to both when the thunder of the dressing-gong broke up the *tête-à-tête*.

When Cosmo returned to the drawing-room, he found the party already assembled, consisting, besides his father, of another gentleman and the aunt for whom he had made inquiries.

There is always something rather risky about a maiden aunt —that is to say, when she is of a "certain age;" and Cosmo's aunt Griselda was, very distinctly, one of the "dangerous classes." Resembling her brother in person, she had his tall stature and unflinching eyes,—which latter don't, as a rule, improve the female face; and when, as in this case, associated with a cruel mouth, they are not the kind of eyes with which one cares to exchange many glances.

Miss Glencairn "went in for" religion, bitterly; she employed it as the buttress of her misanthropy, and used Holy Writ, as an Irishman uses his shillelah, for purposes of assault and battery. The main article of her creed was that she was "elect," and (as is rather the way with the creeds of the "elect") the spiritual eligibility of her neighbours did not bulk very largely in it. She also held that "whatever is pleasant is wrong," and certainly acted up to this article in so far that she denied herself the practice of all those sweet and gracious charities which are Christianity's pleasantest outcome. Cosmo had always regarded her with an aversion, tempered, in childhood, by the feeling that it must be wrong to dislike one who was so much mixed up, as she appeared to be, with

the Bible. Eventually he arrived at a sort of compromise, and she became to him something like the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed,—sacred, perhaps, and certainly awful, but lovable by no manner of means.

She had hated Cosmo's mother with more than the normal *acharnement* of sisters-in-law, and she cordially detested him. The animosities of such women reach beyond the grave, and transcend the limits of generations.

The party was completed by Mr Hopper, an individual whom Mr Glencairn had promoted, in years gone by, from managing clerk in his house to be junior partner, and who now, thanks to the same influence, occupied the post of Managing Director in "Glencairn & Co., Limited," with a large salary and a position of influence at the Board, due to his knowledge of the iron trade—and to other personal attributes.

In person he was

> "A little, glassy-headed, hairless man,"

of an uniform drab colour, and with a neutrality of expression which would have baffled a physiognomist. Interpreted by his preposterous baldness, however (for baldness *does*, somehow, suggest respectability), this blank was placed to his credit, and taken as satisfactory evidence of simple-minded probity. He had obviously not forgotten his earliest relations with his patron, in whose honour he exaggerated an habitual eagerness to assent, which sometimes led him to complete for his interlocutor a sentence, or word, which stood between him and the fruition of acquiescence. Victor Hugo would have called him "an incarnate YES." Another propensity, connected with an earlier and humbler stage of life, was still to be observed in him, and that was a certain waywardness with regard to the letter *h;* but, to do him justice, this was only manifest under circumstances of strong excitement.

All this baldness and acquiescence, combined with a talent for making things pleasant and for *concealing* considerable powers of initiative (while using them dexterously), made Mr Hopper exactly the sort of man to appear the mere instrument of his Board, and to be its mainspring.

Miss Glencairn received her nephew with marked frigidity. Her manner expressed the watchful reserve of a policeman resolved "to use against" his prisoner any statement which he may inadvertently make on his way to the station-house. Mr Hopper, on the contrary, welcomed his patron's son with characteristic effusiveness. "Ply me with hard sayings!" his manner

seemed to say; "give me largely of the bread of paradox, that I may butter it (and you), and devour it greedily!"

Dinner being presently announced, the ill-assorted quartette repaired to the dining-room and sat down to the meal, after it had been aggressively blessed by Miss Glencairn.

Mr Glencairn was taciturn constitutionally—his sister was so, partly from habit, partly because she disliked her present company; and as for Cosmo, he had so little in common with the others, and received such scant encouragement to talk from his aunt and father, that he too was very silent. Thus Mr Hopper, whose conversational talent lay chiefly in assent, was rather in difficulties; it being manifestly hard to "say ditto" to people who advance no propositions whatever.

It was, however, his *métier* to "make things pleasant;" and a silent meal being clearly unpleasant, he made, under much discouragement, loyal efforts to keep the ball of conversation rolling. Mr Glencairn occasionally snubbed Mr Hopper, but (just as he accepted his *outré* acquiescence) rather, as it seemed, from a mechanical habit, than from any special interest he took in Mr Hopper's views. Miss Glencairn also snubbed him, as she snubbed every one when she could, simply out of "contrariness" and as dogs delight to bark and bite. Under all these trying circumstances, Cosmo was rather a godsend to him, for he was a novelty; and bethinking himself of the young man's travels as a good conversational "claim" to work, Mr Hopper commenced operations on it, with the energy of a gold-seeker.

"It's not wonderful," he cried, "at your age, and with your talents, tastes, *and* fortune, that you should like to travel. I can conceive its joys. I can see its advantages."

"A rolling stone, Mr Hopper," said Miss Glencairn, in a deep, knelling, too-late-too-late-ye-cannot-enter-now tone of voice —"a rolling stone gathers *no* moss,—none."

"True, ma'am, most true; but—let us consider a little—though that may be a disadvantage to some, nay, to most stones, yet, perhaps, where you have a polished marble, the necessity for moss may, in a sense, be dispensed with—in a sense, of course. Ah, ma'am! when a man travels, he don't (so to speak) rust. There's the great point. When the wheel revolves, it *can't* rust. All 'stay-at-homes,' like myself, are conscious of rusting. Sadly. All of us."

"Hopper!" said Mr Glencairn.

"Sir?"

"*I* stay at home mostly, and I'm not conscious that I'm——"

"Rusty!" exclaimed Mr Hopper. "Of course not, sir; I said 'like myself,' not *you*, sir. Too fine a metal, if I may so express myself. Gold don't rust, eh? ha, ha!—and then the mental activity! But with *me* it's different—quite. Look at me!"

"I should have thought," said Cosmo, "that the excitement of business would keep off the rust."

"You're perfectly correct, Captain Cosmo; in a sense, that is: but there are two or three different ways of rusting."

"If you lay up for yourself treasures upon earth," knelled Miss Glencairn, "as I fear you do—as I *know* you do—*that* is one way in which you will assuredly acquire rust. What does the Bible say?"

"I know, ma'am, I know—only too well. I honour the Bible, ma'am—I try to square my life with its maxims; but, in the present depressed state of the iron trade, there's no rust of that sort coming my way. With 'pigs' at 49—I beg your pardon, ma'am, with pig-iron at forty-nine shillings the ton—the poor sinner has nothing to hope, I should say to apprehend, in *that* direction. He ought to be thankful, perhaps, for his freedom from temptation—as thankful as the old Adam will permit, and——"

"Hopper!"

"Sir?"

"Is it, or is it not, a business maxim that the man who mixes up religion with business, is a man to be distrusted?"

"It is, sir, most unquestionably," replied Hopper, in a voice of deep dejection, which might either imply regret for the existence of so deplorable a maxim, or penitence for his own lapse into religion.

"I wish you would lay it to heart, then."

"Oh!" cried Miss Glencairn, rearing a warlike crest—"oh! this is indeed monstrous! The merest heathenism! Brother!"

"Well?"

"What does the Bible say?"

"The Bible, Griselda, says that there is a time for all things, and *I* say that the time for religion is neither during business hours nor at the dinner-table."

"I should like to know, then, how you interpret 'in season and out of season'?"

"I don't interpret it at all, and, what's more, I won't *have* it interpreted either at my dinner-table or in my business room. Change the subject, Hopper, if you please."

The 'religious difficulty' was one of frequent occurrence be-

tween Mr and Miss Glencairn; but when the former adopted this trenchant method of adjusting it, his sister knew that she might as well strike her colours at once; which she now accordingly did, and relapsed into an angry silence, only broken by some muttered allusions to Mammon, Apostacy, and the Thessalonians.

Charged to change the subject, Mr Hopper flew back with alacrity to Cosmo's travels.

"Now, Italy, Captain Cosmo," he said, "*that* must be a fine country—in its way, of course. Vesuvius, and — by the by, sir, did you ever see Garibaldi?"

"Yes, I have had that pleasure. Indeed I made a pilgrimage to Caprera, and visited him in his own home."

"Prodigious! to think of that! Now, sir, is he very fierce, should *you* say?"

"No; I should say decidedly not. A little child might play with him; in fact, a little child *was* playing with him when I arrived. He was very rheumatic at the time, however, which might account for it."

"Clearly so. Quite. Well, what did he say about the state of things?"

"That's rather a wide question," laughed Cosmo.

"So it is, sir; unreasonably vague. Well, I suppose he would like to drink the old pagan's blood? You'd make *that* out, I fancy?"

"I don't know to whom you allude."

"The Pope, Captain—the Pope, sir!"

"The Pope is a very good old man, Mr Hopper. I think it is altogether wrong to speak of him as a pagan."

"Distinctly so, sir. It was a jest; a poor one, I admit. Did Garibaldi speak of his Holiness?"

"No; in fact we did not talk politics at all."

"I see, I see: better so, better so."

This complaisance to the Pope was, however, too much for Miss Glencairn, who, unmindful of her brother's edict, dashed into the conversation, brandishing her tomahawk.

"For shame, Mr Hopper! For shame, Cosmo! 'Holiness!' 'Good old man!' forsooth! This *is* putting bitter for sweet. Pagan? ay, he is a double-dyed pagan! Shame to the Protestant who denies it! Worse than all the pagans that have gone before. The dragon! The deceiver! The adversary! Holiness! Is sin holy? Is blasphemy holy? Who, I should like to be told, is 'the scarlet-coloured beast'? Who is the

beast 'having seven heads and ten horns'?—answer me that. Who is he?"

"I suppose," said Cosmo, suppressing a strong inclination to laugh—"I suppose you wish me to say he is the Pope; but I can't identify *him* with these astonishing hyperboles—indeed I can't."

"This comes of foreign travel! This is cosmopolitanism, I suppose. We turn our backs on the blessed light; we go into the dark places of the earth: no wonder we can't discern the truth. But you, Mr Hopper,—you, who have *not* been lapping up error at the waters of Marah; you, who have *not* been rolling idolatry 'like a sweet morsel under your tongue,'—I ask *you*, who is this 'having seven heads and ten horns'?"

Mr Hopper, though he had spoken so handsomely of the Bible, and, indeed, sometimes affected a Scriptural twang when Mr Glencairn was not by, perhaps knew the spirit of Holy Writ better than he knew its letter; the apocalyptic lore was, at all events, beyond his range, and he was sorely mystified by all these heads and horns. He glanced at his patron, hoping for his support, but saw nothing in that quarter save a look of grim amusement, inconsistent (Mr Hopper thought) with his recent words. He looked at Cosmo; but *he* wore the expression of a man who had fired his shot and does not mean to waste another cartridge. The Avenger reiterated her question. Whereupon poor Hopper tried to trim, and began to drop his *h*'s, stammering that "as for these 'eads and 'orns, much was to be said for them; but, at the same time, perhaps a good deal in an opposite sense," and then broke down and truckled—mumbling that he was an erring mortal, and could not presume to oppose his opinion to that of one so notoriously Scriptural as Miss Glencairn. Whereupon that lady, unmollified by the compliment, asked if she was therefore to understand that he *did* reserve an opinion favourable to the Pope—in short, clamoured for a distinct declaration as to the real proprietorship of the "seven heads and ten horns." Whereupon Mr Glencairn and Cosmo both laughed outright; and Mr Hopper, lured to his destruction by the supposed encouragement, rashly attempted to escape from the dilemma by turning the whole thing into a joke, and remarked that "in any case, seven heads were too many for *any* one man to keep clear and straight, and that if the Pope were to be docked of a few of them—say four—it would probably be for the advantage of Christendom; while, as for the ten 'orns——" but Mr Hopper was not allowed to finish his impious sally.

"Was he aware that the language he was playing with was from Holy Writ?" Mr Hopper was not sure, but thought (as a shot) that it *might* be from the Apocrypha. And then the vials of Miss Glencairn's wrath were frankly opened upon him; and he learned, among other striking facts, that there existed a strong parallelism between himself and many of the most abandoned characters of Old Testament history—all with very hard names, except Og, the king of Bashan, who, in other respects also, was perhaps the least open to reprehension.

For a short time Miss Glencairn was permitted thus to buffet Mr Hopper; but she soon infringed Mr Glencairn's private act against iteration, and then he interposed, walking quietly into the *mêlée*, and rescuing, so to speak, the dishevelled manager from the clutches of his antagonist.

"That is enough, Griselda," he said. "Mr Hopper, take a glass of that Marcobrunner. I hope you'll find it better than the water of Marah."

And when Mr Hopper made a glozing and weak-kneed attempt to right himself with Miss Glencairn, by inquiring if she were *absolutely positive* that the seven heads and ten horns were *not* "out of the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' which he fancied—he thought—he knew"—Mr Glencairn closed him also, again inviting him to change the subject. So there was nothing for it but silence and wrath on Griselda's part, and Marcobrunner and discomfiture on the part of Mr Hopper.

From this state of limpness, however, he gradually emerged, by putting some questions to Cosmo as to the Italian rate of exchange; and having elicited his views as to the depreciation of the paper currency in that country, gradually worked his way back to smooth plumage and general acquiescence and admiration.

"You hear what he says, Mr Glencairn?" he cried. "A summary, sir! Terse. Concise."

"I hear it," said Mr Glencairn; "but, with due deference to Cosmo, I must take some ex——"

"Ceptions!" shouted Hopper. "Unquestionably. In such matters that is inevitable. But Captain Cosmo's brain has been at work—at work, and to good purpose. I can see that."

"Come, come, Mr Hopper," said Cosmo, laughing, "you mustn't try to humbug me." And then Mr Hopper, by a gesture more eloquent than words, disclaimed any such mad and perilous enterprise; and so the strangely-constituted symposium went on, Miss Griselda and Mr Hopper being occasionally called to order by the chairman, and the tenor of

the conversation sent topsy-turvy by that autocrat and his peremptory calls for a change of subject. As this requisition was invariably made upon the managing director, whose range of general ideas was very limited, he would have been sorely put to it but for the reserve of Cosmo's travels, which meandered, like a fertilising rivulet, through the barren wastes of the conversation.

Towards the end of the sitting, this brought him to Athens, with regard to which Mr Hopper had three ideas: the first, connected with a certain M. Christopoulos, an iron-broker of much flagitiousness, who, it appeared, had on one occasion got to windward of Mr Hopper; the second, with an unsatisfactory contract for rails for the Piræan railway; and the third, with the Apostle Paul. Thus was the city of Pericles associated in the mind of Mr Hopper. And *apropos* of the last head, the unfortunate manager, still burning to rehabilitate himself with Miss Glencairn, thus expanded—

"A fine thing it must be, Captain Cosmo, to stand, as you have stood, on the top of the Areopagus—which I take to be an edifice on the summit of Mars Hill—a grand thing to stand there and say, 'This is the *very* spot where the great apostle stood and preached to the men of Athens!' It was an act of courage, sir, that. It was a kind of a taking of the heathen by the beard—a kind of bearding of the lion in his den, if I may so say—that I've always admired him for. I wish some one else would give the scoundrels a bit of his mind nowadays. They must require it, if Christopoulos is a fair specimen. I wish some one would take Christopoulos by the beard. I wish *I* had the chance." Here Mr Hopper pantomimed the action of struggling with a beard for some seconds, and added, "I'd *Christopoulos* him! There's a fellow that would have been capable of forging St Paul's name to an acceptance! I assure you, ma'am, he would. He forged mine."

"Don't address me, Mr Hopper, if *you* please," snorted Miss Glencairn; "don't associate *me* with a conversation where sacred names are treated with irreverence."

"Irreverence, my dear ma'am!—irreverence! Who could suspect me of it?"

"I don't suspect you—I *accuse* you; you are self-convicted. What had St Paul to do with trade and money-making, I should like to know? Acceptances, forsooth! pollution!"

"Ah, ma'am, you do me injustice! I honour your sensitiveness, though. It's noble. But are we not told that Paul was a tent-maker? and if a tent-maker, then a seller of tents, and so

both a manufacturer and a merchant, as well as an apostle. I've always been proud to feel that I belong, in a sense, to Paul's calling. Always."

"He wasn't a trader; he gave everything to the poor brethren."

"There's a great deal in what you say, ma'am—a very great deal. Still, ma'am, the question *will* rise, 'How did he *get* what he gave?'"

But, at this juncture, the cup of Miss Griselda's wrath ran over, as not unfrequently occurs with ladies on the slightest adverse application of logic, and she swept from the room with awful dignity.

"You've put your foot in it, Mr Hopper," said his patron, with a grim smile.

"To my regret, sir—to my deep regret. Bull, so to speak, in a china-shop. The intention was, however, good. I thought it might gratify Miss Glencairn to know the high respect I entertain for one of her——for the apostle; which is genuine, sir, and unfeigned. The business qualities of his mind have always struck me. I've often thought that, as chairman of a com——"

"Hopper!"

"Sir?"

"Let us change the subject, if you please."

CHAPTER XV.

In the drawing-room after dinner, Miss Griselda devoted herself to a bilious-looking magazine; Mr Glencairn read the newspapers; and Mr Hopper fluttered about the room, perking little observations half to himself, half to Cosmo, who looked at a book of prints, while his mind was occupied with very different subjects. For it had occurred to him that, of the two matters which had brought him to Edlisfort, the least important might possibly be advantageously opened to Mr Hopper, who, though ridiculous in social converse, was notoriously a capable man of business. Mr Hopper would undoubtedly be glad to oblige him, by helping his friend with advice, or perhaps with something more substantial.

He had, of course, no more faith than his father had in that gentleman's hyperbolical respect and devotion; but it was Mr

Hopper's interest to be well with him, and that was sufficient; and it *might* very possibly be in his power to "put something in Phil's way," through some of the various business channels with which he was connected. Then Mr Hopper would have no prejudices touching Phil to affect his hearty co-operation, and it was otherwise with Mr Glencairn. Before the evening terminated, therefore, he had decided that Mr Hopper should be consulted.

The dinner had been early, and the night was still young, when Miss Glencairn bade them good-night and removed the pall of her presence. Cosmo, feverishly anxious to get something done before he slept, was debating with himself whether he should now invite his father to give him a private interview, and straightway open the paramount matter to him, or whether he should seduce Mr Hopper to the smoking-room and unfold his wishes as to Phil, when Mr Glencairn solved the problem by unexpectedly lighting a candle and declaring with a lusty yawn that he was "played out." "You'll find everything right in the smoking-room, Cosmo," he said, "and I make no stranger either of you or Mr Hopper, so good-night." Perforce, therefore, he fell back upon the second string to his bow, and invited the manager to accompany him to the den sacred to tobacco and the slaughter of the small hours.

Mr Hopper was no smoker, but "he could not resist the rare (in every sense) pleasure," &c. &c., and went grateful.

When they were comfortably established in the sanctum, Cosmo at once drew the conversation into business channels, and notable was the transformation which took place in his companion's manner and style of speech when he found himself once again in his congenial element. Though upon alien topics jerky, grotesque, and inconsequent, as the spasms of a fish out of water, Mr Hopper's speech, on his natural subjects, flowed smooth, copious, and coherent.

"Company flourishing, I hope, Mr Hopper?" Cosmo began.

"Thank you, sir, yes. *It* will do. No mistake there. Trade is what they call 'bad,' to be sure. There has been over-production, and there has been a glut, and there has been stagnation, and reduction of wages, and strikes, and alienation of trade. Never mind, sir. A. Glencairn & Co., Limited, weathers them all. We watch; we foresee; we adapt. We're elastic, that's what we are. All a matter, sir, of alternative combinations, sound connections, and, if I may so say, sleepless management. Mr Glencairn's guarantee is safe, sir—*as* a church. He guaranteed 'nine' for a term of years, you know.

We'll not get below the 'nine' at the worst; and when the rebound comes—*then*—aha!" Mr Hopper made a large but incomplete circle of his arms, to figure the limitless wealth that might be looked for at the period of the "rebound." He then went on to express his wonder, as he had often done before, that a man of Cosmo's acumen had never taken any of "our shares," and still greater wonder that he should be contented with mortgages at 4½ and Government stock at 3¾. With the greatest deference, Mr Hopper must say that such returns were "paltry." He was sorry to use so strong a word; but when he considered the capabilities of capital, it *did* seem to him that a man who could sit down content with *such* returns from such a tremendous source of reproduction, *was* a man who—who was satisfied with—that which—is "paltry." There was really no other word for it.

"Well, Mr Hopper," said Cosmo, "the capital, at all events, is safe; and the return, if it be *paltry*, is at least regular, besides being more than twice over sufficient for my requirements."

"Safe, Captain! Sufficient! Why, sir, you might double your fine income, and yet be as safe as the bank, in many undertakings, and unquestionably in ours. And 'sufficient!' Oh, sir, is that a view to take of capital? Think of its power; remember the responsibilities attached to it. Four per cent! O Lor! It's like cutting off one of your legs and one of your arms, and putting out one of your eyes. It's like encouraging your child to play truant from school. It's like using a helephant to do the work of a costermonger's pony. It's a kind of an outrage to Enterprise. It's a slap on the mouth for the spirit of the Hage. Forgive me, Captain—forgive my 'eat. O Lor! O Lor!"

It was Mr Hopper's way to be earnest and eager; and this sort of whole-souled gush was known to tell immensely upon amateur directors and meetings of shareholders flushed to a rose-colour by recent announcements of rattling dividends.

Cosmo, who had experienced it all before, laughingly gave it the go-by, by deploring his deadness to the commercial instinct, and his inability to use even half the "paltry" return which the "helephant" supplied to him.

This gave Mr Hopper a new point of departure.

"Then there are your 'clippings,' Captain—your surpluses. Give them the chance of doing something. Don't *hoard* them. Because the dam browses in idleness, why leave the foal to eat its head off? I'll tell you what it is, sir—in confidence—we

see our way to profitable development. We use new capital, not to dilute the profits of the old—mark that!—but to fortify the old and increase its productive power. Ahem! To a trifling extent, we are inclined to increase our capital. I have recommended a small issue of shares—say £80,000, more or less. Now, sir, to any extent, within that limit, I *think* I can guarantee you a holding with us. The Board, of course, have a right to the refusal of all new shares; but I'm confident that there's not one of us who won't say, 'I'll take my *pro ratâ* allotment, but I'll transfer it at once to the son of him to whom we all owe so much.' Say the word, Captain Cosmo, and I'll place your surpluses for you. To what figure now might the surpluses——"

"I'm sincerely obliged to you, Mr Hopper; but, really, I haven't thought of changing my system. As to the 'surpluses,' I daresay there's a certain amount of money in some kind of temporary investments; but how much, I don't know. Every midsummer I have a clearing up with my agent, and everything is settled then, about investments, &c. &c. It is hard work at the time; but after this yearly audit, I don't give my mind to money matters at all. In fact, they don't interest me."

Mr Hopper looked at him with a kind of wondering pity, as who should say, "Yet, I suppose, this poor devil *may* possibly have a soul!" and then said, "Well, Captain, I won't despair of you yet. At your next audit, promise me that you'll give earnest consideration to what I've said. Do, now."

"I certainly will, Mr Hopper."

"My motives in speaking thus," said the manager, "with this freedom, are simply these—regard for your interests, and veneration for that sublime lever which has 'oisted Great Britain up to the pinnacle of commercial pre-eminence." With which peroration (from his last half-yearly meeting speech) Mr Hopper sank back, violently rubbing the equatorial line of scanty hair which girdled his gleaming head, looking every inch the director who courts inquiry and deprecates applause.

The way being thus paved, and Mr Hopper having had *his* innings, Cosmo said, "There *is* a matter, Mr Hopper, on which I wish to consult you, as a man of business, and as a friend."

Mr Hopper was proud and delighted, and sat up, all attention.

"A friend of mine," said Cosmo, "is in difficulties."

"Monetary difficulties, sir?"

"Monetary difficulties."

Mr Hopper's face changed a little, his sympathies rather lying with the "surplused" classes.

"He is almost in want," continued Cosmo.

"Tut! tut! tut! sad, that—ve-ry sad."

"Yes, it is very distressing to me, who am his oldest friend, and the more so that I am at a loss how to help him. As to helping him with money, that is out of the question."

With this Mr Hopper promptly coincided; it required no demonstration, he said—none.

"Not," pursued Cosmo, "from unwillingness on my part, but from honest pride on his."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr Hopper; the case was evidently going to be a puzzler.

"He is of high education; took an excellent degree at Cambridge; is very intelligent; and yet he has found it impossible to obtain any employment."

"His antecedents, perhaps, not quite—eh?"

"What, Mr Hopper?"

"Respectable, though not exactly criminal, of course."

"He is *my* friend, sir, and in all respects a gentleman."

"To be sure—to be sure! What *am* I thinking of?"

"He has been unfortunate, and, I must admit, foolish—that is all. You are acquainted with his name, for he is the son of my father's old friend, Mr Denwick."

"Whew!" Mr Hopper whistled, apologised, coughed, finally laughed nervously.

"That expresses your opinion of him, does it?" said Cosmo, grimly.

"Far be it from me, sir, to have a bad opinion of any friend of yours. I was merely recalling a little anecdote of your father's about him,—a merry story, a merry story—nothing more."

"It has not been a merry story for him."

"He went into some South American securities, if I recollect right, against your father's advice, and lost a good deal of money in a rather comical way."

"He went into Spanish bonds, and lost his all in a very *tragical* way."

"Tut! tut! tut! Dear, dear! that's bad—ve-ry bad."

"Yes it is. Now, do you think you can find him any employment?"

Mr Hopper rubbed his equator—but in the sense of a man who is invited to perform a miracle—pursed his mouth, and slowly shook his head.

"You see," he said at last, "there's nothing we could make of him. University gentlemen are, in some ways above, in

others below, business. They're not available—that's the word. We couldn't make a clerk of Mr Denwick. It wouldn't pay us, and it wouldn't pay him. Besides, we take no *apprentices* or probationers. They must come to us finished. It takes time to *finish* a clerk to the mark of Glencairn & Co., Limited."

"Well, that is very true; but could you not put him into some berth where his general education would tell? We have lawyers and merchants at the head of our War Office and Admiralty sometimes. Their subordinates supply them with practical details, and their own talents and general knowledge enable them to organise and administer. You *have* various departments, of course?"

"Oh yes, we have—not a few; coal, ironstone, survey, finance, &c. &c."

"Well?"

"Well, my dear Mr Cosmo, surely you don't propose to put a novice at the head of one of the departments of A. Glencairn & Co., Limited?"

"Why not?"

"Oh sir! oh sir! Think! think! Besides, all our heads of departments have holdings in the Company—some of them large. It's one of our rules; they're, as it were, working partners. That wouldn't suit Mr Denwick. No."

"Outside the Company, then; through any of your business connections, do you not think you could find *some* employment (he's not proud) for my poor friend—something that would give him work for his brains and food for his body?"

Again Mr H. shook his head.

"Can you suggest nothing, even?"

Mr H. could not; but "give him a few minutes, and he would 'roll it over' in his mind."

During the few minutes accorded, the manager went through awful contortions of the face; rose up; moved about the room; stared at isolated flies on the wall; took out a pencil; bit it; calculated; jotted; tousled his equator; finally sat down, smote his leg, and earnestly gazing at Cosmo, whispered, "I've got it—got it, sir—got IT."

"You have?"

"I have, sir—*with* your co-operation, but on that condition alone."

"You may count on that."

"Ah! I don't know; but a kind of a Providence seems to have connected my talk about your surpluses and your talk about Mr Denwick. That emboldens me; but in any case it is your

affair. Now, sir, the thing lies in a nutshell. Invest £25,000 in our shares, for Mr Denwick, and he shall have a department by-and-by. In the meantime, as *your* friend, he shall come into my office and learn the details of business. There! the plan is simple."

"Simple, yes; but Mr Denwick would not accept a present of £25,000, even if I thought it right to give it to him."

"Present! O Lor! Captain, who talks of presents? Let me explain. You advance the money. The shares are bought in his name. The certificates are held by you, as security (*our* security, your father's security—good enough, hey?), and Mr Denwick pays you five per cent interest, or what you stipulate for, on the capital; reserves a portion of the surplus for the extinction of the debt; lives on the rest; and qualifies, by the whole transaction, for a lucrative appointment, *should* his acquirements and capacity warrant his being selected, *by-and-by*. The plan pays you as well as your mortgages do; finds bread and work for your friend, and—what more would you have? At all events, Captain, I can suggest nothing else."

"It's a noble idea!" cried Cosmo, with enthusiasm. "Nothing could be better. I help Phil, without putting him under an obligation which a gentleman could not accept; and help him in a way that will make him work, and keep him from sliding back into old ways and associations—of which, however, I think he has had enough. I can't sufficiently thank you, Mr Hopper, for your proposal. I close with it at once. But are you certain of your power to get the shares?"

"Leave it to me, sir. Find the money within six weeks, and the shares shall be at your disposal."

"Poor Phil! how pleased he will be! He will be as grateful to you, Mr Hopper, as I am. This is indeed luck!"

CHAPTER XVI.

In the morning, Cosmo's first care was to telegraph to Phil that on the next day he would receive a letter explaining all details of a remunerative "career" which was open to him—that the letter would also contain a cheque for £100, being an advance with which Phil was at once to clothe and house himself properly, and find some pasture-ground more eligible than that

which he had been sharing with the black sheep of Leicester Square. And then he wrote the letter, which breathed all the affectionate delight which he felt at being able, "by the luckiest accident in the world," to help his friend; and worded it with such diplomatic delicacy, that you would have almost supposed that Cosmo was the real gainer, and that Phil's part in the transaction was that, by magnanimously undergoing a good deal of toil and risk, he was enabling his friend to obtain a higher rate of interest for his money than heretofore. And these things being done, he went and ruminated for many an hour by the sea, thinking of his love and his hope and his fears, and how he would open the matter to his father, and when. And the day slipped away, and another precarious dinner was got through; and before Mr Glencairn was "played out," Cosmo asked him, with some trepidation, for a private interview, which was at once granted, and they marched off to the "business room."

Fairly confronted with his father, Cosmo felt much difficulty in opening a conversation in which the initiative lay necessarily with himself. The result of the interview was of vital moment to his happiness (and Hope, once admitted, had grown hourly); and, beyond this, he shrank with an almost feminine sensitiveness from exposing to observation those feelings which are jealously guarded even by natures comparatively coarse. It was with much embarrassment that he commenced the dialogue, scanned by his father's unfaltering eyes.

"We have never had any confidential intercourse, father," he said, "and I daresay my request for this interview surprises you."

Here Cosmo paused, and Mr Glencairn intimated that surprise was an emotion foreign to his nature.

"You are no doubt puzzled as to its object," continued the son.

"Guessing and puzzling would be the merest waste of time. You have a direct statement to make. Is it not so?"

"That is true."

"Then, pray, let us have it before us at once."

"I confess I have much difficulty in opening this matter to you. It is of a most delicate nature. It is difficult to plunge directly into a delicate subject."

"In business matters, between men of business, there need be no delicacy, where motives on either side are honest, and the lines of business adhered to."

"You forget that I am not a man of business."

"True; but still you are a gentleman, therefore incapable of proposing to a business man, on a business matter, anything you need be ashamed of—which is the plain English for 'having a delicacy.'"

"Ah! but this is not a matter of business, nor is it a proposal."

"My dear Cosmo, why speak in riddles? You say this is not a business matter, and I have no knowledge of your world. I can't conceive you consulting me on any matter relating to *it*. I would help you with a guess to start your ideas, if I could, to be done with fencing. You are in trouble, evidently. All the world over, the troubles of young men are mainly connected with the purse or the heart. The former can't possibly affect you—as to the latter, ha! ha! you are not likely to seek me as a confidant; so, my ideas being exhausted, you must speak out—if you *really* want advice or an opinion," he added, looking at his watch.

"Cosmo was silent for a minute, and then said, "Well, father, I am not exempt from the troubles of young men—as *you* define them."

"Ah! money after all! Speculation, of course; ruinous to amateurs. Foreign stock or shares, of course, and a question of holding or selling. Well?"

"No, father, my troubles have nothing to do with money."

"Then it is——"

"Yes," interrupted Cosmo, who shrank from hearing the divine word uttered by lips that seemed so earthly.

"Yes," he went on; "and now you will understand my hesitation."

"Well, then——"

"Listen, father, pray, and I will try to make you understand." Then, nerving himself with an effort, he went on: "Lately, quite lately, it has been my lot to meet with a lady on whose perfections I will not dilate. It is enough to say that for me she *is* perfection, and that all my heart was given to her almost unconsciously, and before I had realised the profound impression she had made upon me."

Mr Glencairn rattled his watch-chain, and gave a little groan, discreetly commuted into a cough.

"She is beautiful," Cosmo went on, "and accomplished; and the only child, the heiress"—(Mr Glencairn dropped his watch-chain and sat up in his chair)—"of a nobleman of proud lineage and vast possessions——"

Here Mr Glencairn's natural reserve gave way, and he cried

lustily, "Bravo, Cosmo!—bravo! Well done, sir!" and made as though he would take his son's hand. Cosmo interrupted him.

"Pray, hear all I have to say before you congratulate me."

"Excuse me; one question—is the landed property large?"

"I am sorry to say it is; but——"

"You prefer the funds? or concentration in minerals? Well, remember *they're* exhaustible; but perhaps there *may* be a mineral field into the bargain?"

"I'm afraid it is very probable; but really——"

"Afraid? Tut! tut! depression can't last for ever; and even now, if there should be 'hematite' in any quantity—should you suppose, now——"

"Allow me to say, my dear father, that, for a man of business, you strangely anticipate matters, which you will see when I assure you that not only are the lady's affections not secured, but that I dare scarcely hope that they ever could be bestowed on one so unworthy of her, even were every other obstacle removed. Her great prospects are really nothing to me; and even if they did not constitute an obstacle, which, to a certain extent, they do, I would rather have her dowerless."

Mr Glencairn grinned a knowing grin, but said nothing.

"When I found," Cosmo went on, "how deeply my feelings were compromised, there was but one step for me to take——"

"You declared yourself?—prematurely, perhaps?"

"No; I said nothing to the lady."

"I see; you went to her father?"

"On the contrary, I left the place at once."

Mr Glencairn was not a man swift to mirth, but this reply of Cosmo's plumbed the depths of his sense of the incongruous, and he burst into laughter loud and sincere. "I beg your pardon, Cosmo, but—'the one step for you to take!'—really—ha! ha!—upsets my gravity. I never understood you. I have thought it might be my fault; but now—O Lord!——" and he broke into laughter again—"but now, who but a wizard could understand a man who falls in love with a lady, and thinks that therefore 'the one step for him to take' is to fly from her at once!—frightened by the size of her fortune—is that it?—when he has a large one of his own, too—ha! ha! ha! Prodigious!"

"You misunderstand me, father."

"I hope so, my dear fellow; for the credit of your intelligence, indeed I do."

"Let me finish my statement, then. You will pardon me

for saying that in my world—the distinction is your own—that in the society which I frequent, money is not *necessarily* a paramount consideration. It is important, of course, everywhere, but it can't do everything; and though in matrimonial matters it can do much, it has its limits of power there too. This lady's great prospects, though, as I quite honestly say, they are far from an inducement to me, would *not* have deterred me from—from prosecuting my suit. The suit might have been hopeless; still this consideration of her fortune would not have deterred me, because my own fortune would have, so far, removed the suspicion of mercenary motives, as you justly suggest. I would not, therefore, have run away, but for another consideration, which is really the object of my interview with you."

"Ah," said Mr Glencairn, "I'm glad we're going to reach *some* point at last. I'm really getting a little confused."

"Admitting that money is the main thing looked at, in this miserable and selfish age, where matrimony is concerned, still, even nowadays there must be some kind of respectability in the antecedents of any suitor. I should say, for instance, that certain taints must not rest on his origin, otherwise he will be rejected by the most mercenary aristocrat. I should say that the hereditary taint of felony or illegitimacy would disqualify him. Father, how do I stand in this respect?"

"Great heavens, sir! what do you mean?" cried Mr Glencairn, starting from his chair; "what do you dare to insinuate?"

"Nothing—I insinuate nothing. The honour of our blood must be as dear to me as to you. I ask a simple question. I will put it differently. Father, who are we?"

Mr Glencairn laughed scornfully. "Who *are* we? I am Archibald Glencairn, formerly principal partner in the firm of Glencairn & Co., ironmasters, now a large shareholder in the Company of that name, and a financial operator known, ay, and respected, on most European bourses. As to yourself, you are better acquainted with the subject; but if you add your own experiences to mine, the question 'Who are we?' is satisfactorily answered, I take it."

"No, father, not at all. In the sense of your answer, I require, of course, no information. I am not trifling. You treat this as an impertinence. Is that just? I am your son, and of full age; surely I am entitled to the information I demand. When I was a child, my questions were always evaded. Once only did I get a sort of answer from my uncle

Wildgrave—and what an answer! It was to the effect that the less I inquired the better; that there was little to know, and that little, discreditable. In fact, I gathered that there was a flaw or a stain on my origin. I never repeated the question again; and your continued silence on the subject confirmed what my uncle hinted. Now it is everything to me to know—the truth; and I now ask you frankly, What is our pedigree?"

"Pedigree?" laughed Mr Glencairn, resuming his seat; "ha! ha! I'm afraid that has to be manufactured. Don't look so horrified; it is done every day. A mere question of money—and you are rich. I have heard that a high-priced article (including counterfeited title-deeds, and even tombstones) almost baffles an expert to detect its spuriousness. If people are fools enough to value such things, they deserve to be humbugged. It is more a practical joke than a fraud, for it simulates something which, intrinsically, is nothing. The foolers and the fooled are equally beneath contempt."

"That does not touch my question, which is still unanswered. Am I to understand that you are the first of our family?"

Mr Glencairn laughed and said, "I believe my father would have resented that idea emphatically."

"Oh, you *had* a father, then—forgive me—I mean, socially speaking?"

"I understand your meaning. Yes; my father was, socially speaking, a gentleman. At least I understand that a commissioned officer is technically so considered. He was a captain in the Indian army."

"And my grandmother? his *wife?*"

"My mother, his *wife*, was the daughter of an Indian judge."

Cosmo gave a sigh of relief and said, "Then—then—had he done—was there any cloud on his reputation?"

"No, I think not, 'socially speaking.' He was a foolish man, and a violent man, and a dissolute man. His death proved him to be all three, for he was shot in a duel to satisfy his antagonist's family honour, which had been outraged by him."

"But there was nothing else?"

"No; 'socially speaking,' he was clean-handed; brave, too, I believe, and even distinguished."

"Thank God!"

"Small mercies, Cosmo."

"Then, my uncle Wildgrave—what did he mean?"

"Ah! your uncle was superfine. All the Wildgraves were. We must go farther back for his horror of the Glencairns."

"Your grandfather was——?"

"My grandfather was an indigo-planter in India; but not much is known about him, except that he lived in India the greater part of his life, and died there."

"And *his* wife?"

"Well, Cosmo, as far as I can make out, there *had* been some little oversight on his part about *her*. In fact—though, let us hope, in other respects, a good husband—he never went through the form of marriage with her."

Cosmo started to his feet.

"Then," he cried, "my worst fears are realised!"

"Come," said his father, "that is a little unreasonable, surely. Be thankful for wedded parents and wedded grandparents. It is really a fair allowance, as matters go."

Cosmo sank into a gloomy silence, till he remembered that the pain was (or might be) his father's as well as his own, and then, to break the pause, he said—

"I understood from my uncle or from you, long ago, that we are of Scottish descent. Is this so?"

"Oh yes; the indigo-planter certainly went from Scotland. There is no doubt about that; neither any doubt that he changed his name. But now we are on the subject, and since you are entitled to know all I know, I may as well tell it you—little though it is—once for all, and you can form what conjectures you please. You are aware, I presume, that I have an elder brother?"

"Yes; but I know nothing more than that he exists, and is in India. By the by, I understood, also, that you and he were on bad terms. You have never mentioned him to me before."

"Right; and I mention your uncle Robert now, simply because it is mainly from him that I know anything about our family history. We quarrelled, or rather, he quarrelled with me years ago. The matter was simple enough. He grew tired of the civil service. He saw fortunes being made rapidly all round him in indigo. He thought he would like to make a fortune rapidly too—in indigo; but he lacked capital. I was prosperous; he knew it, and invited me to supply him with the necessary funds. I declined—mainly because to have disengaged so much capital from my business at that time would have thrown my own career back for years. Besides this, Robert had no business qualities; almost inevitably he would have lost the capital; and, having resigned the service, would have had nothing to fall back upon. So I refused, for his sake as much as my own. He took a wrong-headed view of things;

accused me of I don't know what all, and abjured my relationship in a theatrical way which showed how just was my belief that he would have failed in indigo. Well, well, he ought to thank me now, for he is high in the service; he don't, however. His affair. In our friendly days we used often to talk together on this—this genealogical matter. He was sixteen years of age when our father died, and the statements he had from his lips amounted in effect to this: The indigo-planter—my grandfather—was of a good Scottish family; but having been very wild, as a lad, was in perpetual trouble with his people; and was at last turned out of doors by them, in consequence of an intrigue with a tenant's daughter, which scandalised the good people of the old world in a way which this more philosophical age would scarcely comprehend. He took the young woman with him to India, where, after having given birth to one child (my father), she died. His resentment against his own family was very deep (as is often the case with those who have offended their families); probably he was theatrical, like your uncle Robert, for he had dropped their name from the moment he left home, and was never known in India by any other name than 'Glencairn.' He would conceal his real name, no doubt, by way of insult to those who had repudiated him. It is quite in keeping with Highland pride to abjure the abjurer, and scornfully spurn a connection which has already been renounced on the other side. So it is probable that his real name was never known; for he seems to have made no secret that the name we inherit from him was assumed—and the true name, had it been known, would likely have come down to us as this fact has come. No record of a marriage was left by him; nor is there any tradition that he owned to, or pretended to, a marriage. The evidence is all the other way. Old Mr Denwick—the father of my friend and benefactor—was the indigo-planter's intimate friend in India, and became my father's guardian; and being still alive at his death, was for a time the guardian of us children, which trust he bequeathed to his son—my friend, to whom I owe nearly everything. I think, therefore, that if there had been anything else to know, we should have learnt it through the Denwicks: unquestionably, if there had been any grounds for believing that my father (who was most anxious and sensitive on the subject) was born in wedlock, these grounds would have been stated. Mr Denwick, however, denied all knowledge of the existence of such grounds. Here, then, is a blank, which can only, I think, be interpreted in one way. My father, according to Robert, had a variety of theories, some of which he

shared, which made for his own legitimacy. I apprehend they had no solid basis. What is conclusive to me is, that no man who was not both a maniac and a villain would have condemned his son to the penalties of illegitimacy, by wantonly suppressing evidence of his marriage, because it was contracted in a name which would have identified his son with the race which he had abjured. There, Cosmo, that is positively all I know. If some one could weave a clean pedigree out of it, and identify us with a decent family, I should be glad of it for your sake. For myself, I have got on so well *without* a pedigree, that I confess to some indifference on the subject."

When this cold and passionless summation was concluded, there was silence for some time. At last Cosmo groaned out, rather as thinking aloud than as addressing his father, "This accursed taint! can it *ever* be removed?" And then his father spoke. "I see," he said, "you have inherited the Wildgraves' ideas. *They* put the same question to themselves, *apropos* of me, and answered it in the negative. Well, that unlucky old indigo-planter *has* a good deal to answer for. I heard enough about him in my young days, when, like you, I aspired to marry into a proud family. I don't owe him a dutiful thought, I can tell you. But how many generations is he to keep in the shade? When do you suppose illegitimacy to disqualify? Three generations make a gentleman, it is said: if so, they abrogate the bar; and you are the third from it. Is it not notorious that nowadays the bar-sinister, provided it is gilt, is no bar to social success? Times have changed since my youth. The world is more sensible; and you have the advantage of a generation over me. You have other advantages—position, solid wealth, lineage undisputed on one side. Fall back upon your mother's pedigree. With that and £10,000 a-year and prospects—ay, and *prospects*—you are good enough for any of them. Take my word for it. If *they* think not, do as I did—take your own way. With the lady on your side, you can afford to laugh at them. They'll come round in time, and soon enough. May I ask who the noble lord is?"

"I would rather not mention the name."

"As you please; but whoever he is, he'll come round if the lady is on your side."

"My dear father, the lady doesn't dream of me; but even were it as you suggest, still you misunderstand the case. In some ways I do recognise the justice of what you say. It does seem monstrous that a bar like this should hang, like a

felon's fetter, on generation after generation. But this is an exceptional case. The lady is not only her father's heiress, —she is the last of her family—an ancient and historical house, which must merge in the race with which she intermarries. Do you think, then, it would be honourable, without the concurrence of her father—the last male depositary of the family honours, traditions, and *prestige*—to persuade his daughter to an alliance which would couple their noble name with this ignoble bar? Don't you think it would be something like stealing a possession more valuable in their eyes than all their wealth?"

"No, I don't; but I *do* think, if you'll excuse me for saying so, that you are talking common nonsense. If the lady is the sole heiress of the family *prestige* (a shadowy inheritance, by the by), she is as much entitled to have an opinion about its disposition as about the disposal of the family wealth. You would have no scruples as to the latter appanage, which is of real importance; why, then, about the former, which is a dream, —an idea? Well, well, well. You *are* a gentleman; you *have* your three generations, and that obliterates the bar, to which, I am very sure, this ungenealogical age will never say 'nay.'"

"I am very sure, however, that the noble lord in question will."

"Then the noble lord in question is an——, is no wiser than he should be."

"That may be; but he is the guardian of his family honour, and has a right to his own opinion. What that would be, I know too well. He is the proudest of the proud. Twenty generations would not erase this blot. The suitor who seeks *his* approbation had need be immaculate."

"Then take your own way; win the lady, and leave the rest to time."

Cosmo sank into silence and abstraction. His father's arguments; his own delicate sense of honour; the old peer's pride and prejudices; his own sense of justice; the conflict between the fading dogmas of past generations and the fresh and liberal views of modern life; the eclipse of privilege; and the triumph of individual merit over inherited *prestige*,—these, with his own fond wishes, rushed through his mind, clashing here, coinciding there, tumultuous and chaotic. And slowly from this confusion the dim outline of a compromise evolved itself, which, marking with judicial severity that which made against Cosmo, as well as that which made for him, yielded this balance in his favour, that that which in him was lack-

ing *might* be supplied by personal distinction, won by *personal* effort. That would obliterate flaws—of which justice claimed the obliteration—and by a nobler expedient than the brute force of wealth.

"Ah!" he murmured aloud; "now would be the time to concentrate vague ambitions and desultory efforts! Could I but make a name for myself—a great reputation . . . then, indeed . . . but what can I do? . . . Yes, achievement is the root of real aristocracy. He who achieves must be nobler than he who merely inherits the rewards of achievement."

"Right, sir! right! therefore achieve."

Cosmo started to find he had been thinking aloud, and that his father's eyes were fixed upon him with a half-friendly, half-mocking expression.

He rose, and said—

"Father, I thank you for your information and advice. The unknown evil is always more formidable than that which we see, and my fears were greater than the fact. The fact is, however, sufficiently grave; indeed an obstacle all but insurmountable, though *possibly*, in one way—— Well, there is no good pursuing the subject. One explanation, however, I must make. In my anxiety to know the disability which birth lays me under, I may have seemed to you to imply that, that being removed, no other impediment would remain. If I conveyed that impression, let me now correct it. That I am unworthy of this lady, I am very certain; that she might think otherwise is but a dream."

"Well, Cosmo, as I said before, I don't understand you, and never shall, I suppose; but what, then, does the whole thing amount to?"

"It amounts to this, that I came away from—from a certain influence, to dissipate dreams, or, if you please, to deaden pain, by using my faculties and acquirements, such as they are, in some active sphere. I still wish to find that sphere. Our conversation has, at least, made no difference in that desire."

"There is but one obvious sphere for a man in your position, of your culture and general views, and that is the sphere of politics. You have surely turned your thoughts in that direction?"

"Yes, I have; but there are obstacles——"

"Obstacles! obstacles! obstacles!" shouted Mr Glencairn. "Lions in every path! This passes patience! Is this all that

Cosmo felt somewhat abashed at the rude justice of these remarks, but replied—

"I did not say that in *this* case the obstacles were insuperable. But it has appeared to me that when a man goes into political life, he ought to be able to identify himself heartily with one of the great parties—otherwise his career will be a failure, and he himself useless. I have never, as yet, seen my way to unqualified enlistment with any party."

"Oh, if that is all, it is a small matter! Every one leans towards certain outlines of political belief, sentiment, prejudice, or what you please to call it. With this party or that or the other, he will find that these outlines are followed in a general way. No thinking man can honestly pledge himself to conform to all the details of all the measures which a party may support. All he can hope is to be able to subscribe to the general sentiment which guides it—to recognise its key-note as his own. I should fancy that your views are moderate, and that this should not be difficult to you."

"No, certainly; but I have strong opinions on some important subjects which have been made shibboleths of party adhesion, though no general principle, as distinctive of either party, is involved in them. Well, you can see that, if I were honest in my declarations, I should run a very strong chance of falling between two stools, and failing to be returned. Suppose I go consistently with the Conservatives on all but one subject, but that that subject has *arbitrarily* been made a Conservative test; I should expect that the Conservatives would oppose me for my defection on that point, and the Liberals for my generally Conservative views, and *vice versâ*. Well, but suppose, nevertheless, I *did* get into the House. I should not go there without ambition; and do you think I could look for political advancement from a party to which I ran counter on one or more test-questions?"

"Ah, well, when a man has been in the House for a little, and sees things from nearer points of view, it's wonderful how well he manages to harmonise his views, on the whole, with his party—unless, of course, he is a crack-brained crotcheteer, when he is not worth considering. By the by, if it is only a question of *getting into* the House, there, I think, I could help you. Indeed it would suit me *personally* to do so. There is a borough in which we—I—have much to say. It is not much of a *political* borough; indeed I don't think the good folk there care two straws about any public question. They have a local interest to promote—a healthy legitimate interest—and what they

chiefly want is a member who will nurse this interest. To a moderate man on either side, who would give some time and trouble to this affair, I think I could almost guarantee the seat. I take it that you have a Conservative bias, but that on some points you are inclined for discreetly liberal progress?"

"Yes; I think that, on the whole, defines my position."

"Very well, I will now give you all the details, and you can think it over. I may say that I believe the sitting member will apply for the Chiltern Hundreds at the end of this session."

Mr Glencairn then briefly laid the details before his son, and, at last, the longest conversation that had ever taken place between them came to a close.

There is no doubt that the direct and unsentimental view which Mr Glencairn had taken of every subject discussed had produced its effect upon Cosmo, and carried him farther than he could have believed towards his father's position. He had half admitted that, under certain conditions of compromise, his hopes need not be altogether abandoned; and now his father's prompt energy was hurrying him towards a step which *might* lead to these conditions, and which certainly would force him into a sphere of activity, between which and others he had vacillated—doubtful of the maturity of his powers and preparation—doubtful where his special aptitude lay. Even for his own mere peace of mind, he felt that active employment was now indispensable. Open to him, apparently beyond a doubt, an honourable sphere now lay. Would it not be well, then, to abandon hesitation? To cut himself free from this eternal weighing of alternatives, and combating of scruples? The step *might* lead to this or that eventually; in the meantime, it meant "work," which nothing else offered. Would it not be well, then, to close with what would supply this supreme necessity? And if it meant hope, too? *Did* it mean hope, too? Well, at least nothing made a fairer offer of it.

Before Cosmo slept that night, his resolve was taken; and next morning he communicated to his father that the borough of Puffboro might consider itself suited with a nurse for its "healthy local interest."

CHAPTER XVII.

We must now borrow the wings of Cosmo Glencairn's fancy, and fly back to the Lake of Como, where the golden summer days passed pleasantly and peacefully for the occupants of the Villa Bianca; so pleasantly, indeed, for Lord Germistoune—who was hard to please—that, as the period of his tenancy drew to a close, he began to turn scowling glances on the mountains of the Engadine, and to use language of bitter scepticism about Gull and the rest of the faculty, *apropos* of his approaching sojourn in the Alpine paradise. "Empirics and blunderers—all of them!" he would grumble. "Because it is the right thing for Sir Peter Rabbits to go to that detestable place" (Sir Peter was a civic dignitary whose "case" had been mentioned as having points of similarity to his own), "why should it be the right thing for me? Monstrously improbable that my organs could ever have resembled those of an alderman, even before he had bedevilled them with gross living and Guildhall banquets! Name of Rabbits, too! Preposterous!" But, after all, this constituted a grievance without which his life would scarcely have been in order.

Pleasantly, too, the days passed for Esmè—all unconscious of the influence she was exercising over the lives and destinies of others—happy in fancy-free meditations and in pursuits congenial to a graceful and cultured mind. The weather continued to be faultless; the sun shone every day in a cloudless sky, but the mountains lent themselves to nature's pleasant conspiracy, and sent down light airs, that came tempered from the abodes of snow, to fan the favoured district. As for the Ravenhall party and Tom Wyedale, the delights of the place were not so patent to them. Poor Mrs Ravenhall! long, long ago had the bloom of young enthusiasm for anything in this weary world been brushed from her *blasé* spirit; the voices and the aspects of external nature had no message and no meaning for her. But her walk and conversation were so artificial, that it came like a second nature to her to simulate whatever for the time being seemed to pay; and thus to all her little circle she was untiring in her raptures over the lake and its environs, which, from morn to night, never ceased to be "quite too divinely lovely and enchanting," to say the least of it.

The few people whom she knew at Cadenabbia were impressed with this. It showed, they said, such freshness, sim-

plicity, and soul; for here was a lady, ordinarily involved in the turmoil of the great world of fashion, retiring without regret from its seductions, at the call of duty, and finding more than consolation in the sweet teachings of the beautiful and the sublime. All this factitious enthusiasm was focussed upon Esmè, into whose confidence and affections it was her design to penetrate; and since it appeared that freshness, simplicity, and soul would be the proper "wear" under the circumstances, she thus masqueraded accordingly.

Esmè was rather perplexed by it all, and even, at times, a little bored, when she would say to herself, with unconscious truth and humour, "I wonder why Mrs Ravenhall seems to think that *I* must take it as a personal compliment when she says anything pretty about the scenery?"

Of course, the whole thing inexpressibly bored Mrs Ravenhall herself. Her heart was far away in the crush and scramble of the London season. She was missing everything; she was not being seen at the right places; she was losing ground, perhaps —even, perhaps, being forgotten. The Honourable Nora Hackbut, who contributed Anglo-Continental gossip to one of those weekly papers which are so frank and so exhaustive in describing the private lives and doings of even trivial people, did, indeed, let the world know what Mrs Ravenhall was about, and what a high opinion she had of the beauties of nature; but this could not compensate for a dreary blank in the 'Morning Post,' where Mrs Ravenhall's place knew her no more.

Nor did these vexatious circumstances by any means exhaust the list of Mrs Ravenhall's trials. She was somewhat in the position of a manager of amateur theatricals, who, besides composing the piece and playing a part in it himself, has to fulfil the combined duties of stage-manager and prompter—now hustling a sluggish member of the *corps* on to the stage, now suggesting a "cue" to the forgetful, and at times even dashing "on" in person to supply the place of an absentee. Her *corps*, it will be observed, was divided into conscious and unconscious *dramatis personæ;* and the former—her husband and brother—had to be constantly instructed, cajoled, and stimulated in private,—so that, with the additional necessity of keeping the whole company in good-humour with each other, her trials were heavy and incessant. If one of them, even, would have heartily co-operated, it would have been different; but not even Tom, for whose benefit the whole thing was devised, could be got to do so—he was sluggish and procrastinating, and, indeed, played his part in a way that left much to be desired.

As to Mr Ravenhall, whose *rôle* was almost a negative one, he gave her continual trouble. He very soon grew tired of the place, and, being indifferent to Tom's interests, could not see why his convenience should be sacrificed to them. Hence he became very restive, and anxious to move on, which involved yet other calls on his wife's powers of stratagem. His wish to escape was, perhaps, not to be wondered at; for, independently of everything else, his relations with Lord Germistoune soon made his position somewhat irksome. The bluff member for —— had, in truth, been utterly cowed by the noble lord. At first, things had gone very smoothly between them, for Ravenhall, laying his wife's precepts to heart, carried himself deferentially in the presence of the autocrat, who, mindful of his gallant promise to Mrs Ravenhall, and moved also by propagandist considerations, was studiously temperate in sentiment and courteous in tone to Mr Ravenhall. His wife had spoken of the "struggle" going on in his mind—implying that the contest lay between Reason and Radicalism; and the keen old partisan felt that a little tact and diplomacy might be well bestowed in settling the "struggle" in favour of Toryism and Truth. Lord Germistoune, by the by, occasionally rather mystified Mr Ravenhall by subtle allusions to the "struggle" in question, for Mrs Ravenhall had not revealed to her husband the existence of that phase of his own consciousness; but his stupidity guarded him from untoward discoveries, and things went on serenely for a time.

The characters of the two men, however, made it impossible that they could long do so. Mr Ravenhall was one of those people who must either trample, or be trampled, upon; and being misled by Lord Germistoune's unexpected complaisance and moderation, he presently began to recover his self-assurance, to lose his deferential tone, and even to develop very decided symptoms of bluffness. Lord Germistoune, with a hawk's eye for all this sort of thing, noted the change resentfully; but, in consideration of the "struggle," was able to subdue the feelings of the man to those of the partisan for a little. There are limits, however, to all human endurance; and it is equally certain that, in this country, the majority of men will much more readily endure a strongly-expressed dissent from their views, as to principles merely, than as to the personal qualities of this or that party leader whom they follow or oppose.

The principle and the measure may be amicably discussed by the week; but when the Man is introduced, the hour of explosions has arrived. Lord Germistoune's politics were

strongly flavoured with the personal element; so were Mr Ravenhall's.

And thus it one day befell that the latter, finding himself in a mixed company, and stimulated by the presence of an admiring constituent, ventured to speak reckless words in eulogy of a great leader, as to whose character—whether purely diabolical or altogether saintly—a keen controversy then raged; whereupon Lord Germistoune forgot all about his gallantry, and the propaganda, and the "struggle," and made short work of the eminent man and his rash disciple. Mr Ravenhall, alluding to a recent speech of his hero's, had affirmed that "there was no disputing *that*, at all events;" and added some bluff remarks about "malignant stupidity," as distinctive of all those who might think otherwise, not only on this point, but upon the general question of the great man's perfection. The words were not addressed to Lord Germistoune, but they reached his ear, and he at once came into action.

"Let me beg you, then, Mr Ravenhall," he said, "to write me down 'malignant and stupid.'"

"No, no, Lord Germistoune! no, no!" laughed Ravenhall; "we all know *you* are too clear-headed a man to differ with what I have just said."

"I protest, sir, your test of clear-headedness *astounds* me—it really does. As to the—the individual of whom you speak, I differ with you to this extent, that I think if he were expelled from the British realms—and with every circumstance of ignominy—it—it would be a fortunate circumstance for the realms, sir. What?"

"It would be a black day for England when that took place; and in the depths of your heart I am convinced you agree with me."

"Now, isn't this a great deal too monstrous? What the dev—, how, may I ask, do you venture to assert that my words and my real sentiments are at variance?"

"Pooh! pooh! pooh! my lord, you take the matter too strongly. I merely mean that I am sure there is room in your mind for admiration of a man's intellect and uprightness, apart from political considerations. That man gives a tone to public life——"

"Yes, he does—a tone of political recklessness and effrontery; and, let me tell you, there is no room in my mind for anything but abhorrence of a traitor."

"Oh! ho! ho!"

"Ah! but it isn't 'oh! ho! ho!'"

"'Traitor,' Lord Germistoune? you'll scarcely make that out, I take it."

"Yes, sir, I *said* 'traitor'—and I'll swear to the word, if you please—a traitor whose intellect is perverted, whose uprightness robs us piecemeal of the constitution, tampers with the coronation oath, filches and perverts the Prerogative, sacrifices every conviction to self-interest, and—and—oh! by the Lord Harry, sir! your boldness in speaking of this man as *not* a traitor, passes my comprehension."

Ravenhall was white, partly from anger, partly from consternation; but he was not going to cave in, before a constituent, without another struggle.

"Come, Lord Germistoune," he said, rallying his courage, "let us speak as common-sense, patriotic men of the world, and——"

"I should be glad to hear you in that vein, Mr Ravenhall—monstrously glad."

"And make allowance for differences of judgment, temperament, and so forth."

"No; I will make no allowance for iniquity, however it may be begotten."

"These are hard words, but hard to prove, I fancy. If I chose, I might say some hard words about a certain great man on your side who——"

"Now, Mr Ravenhall, if you think I am going to bandy *tu quoques* with you, you are mistaken. Legitimate argument, conducted in a temperate tone, I always court; puerilities of this sort I am in the habit of resenting as a personal affront. I simply repeat that the man you speak of is a traitor and—and a disgrace; and there is no kind of sophistry that can disturb the facts which support my definition. There! enough of him."

"There is one thing about him——"

"I distinctly decline to discuss him any farther; and, for the future, you will greatly oblige me by avoiding the subject. It disgusts me."

Lord Germistoune looked so awful, and so aquiline, and rapped his words out with such forcible intonation, and with such an air of uttering axioms, that Ravenhall fell before him mute, prostrate, and permanently cowed—shunning intercourse with him for the future as much as possible, and, when in his company, observing, as a rule, a rather sullen silence.

And all this gave grievously superfluous trouble to his wife, who, in her ignorance of the passage of arms which had taken

place, went on wasting a world of diplomatic *finesse* and vigilance in hope of promoting more intimate relations between Lord Germistoune and her husband, and thereby of lightening her task of diverting the attention of the former from her serious manœuvres.

It was, of course, Mrs Ravenhall's grand object to bring Esmè and Tom into contact. To "do things together" was therefore her constant aim. But there is not much to be done at Cadenabbia beyond its delightful *spécialité* of floating about on the lake, and indulging in the poetry of idleness; and this did not favour her schemes, which pointed to a good deal of *tête-à-tête* intercourse between the young people. She liked to do things which involved loitering in quiet places, where the party might, insensibly as it were, separate, and Tom and Esmè, without perceiving how it came about, might drift away in company together. Her ingenuity in devising pretexts for such excursions was really wonderful. One day it was "such a dear little road-side shrine" she had heard of as really remarkable if you looked into it, which they had not yet done; another, it was a picturesque old woman, of whom dear Lord Germistoune *must* make a drawing for *her;* or a church deserving of a similar distinction, or a tree, or a cow—no matter what the object, or how commonplace, for she always contrived to invest it with some imaginary interest, which caused the pilgrimage to be made, and gave point to it. Then she would set Lord Germistoune to his task, and remain beside him, full of interest, query, and suggestion; while Tom and Esmè naturally moved about, or went away together to search, at her suggestion, for some mythical point of view affording scope for Esmè's sketching powers. The two young people soon got on terms of friendly intimacy; for Tom was extremely frank, cheery, and amusing, and Esmè's unconsciousness of the plot which circled round her was not disturbed by any aggressive action on his part. In fact, he was much more at ease with her in a *tête-à-tête* than when with the rest of the party, which, considering he was a suitor, was exactly what he ought not to have been; but, in truth, it was his sister's presence which mainly reminded him of the part he had undertaken to play. His state of mind about the whole matter was very ambiguous. He did not quite know *what* he wanted. He was perfectly certain, of course, that he would like Miss Douglas's fortune, and that the state of his affairs made such an acquisition desirable. Moreover, when his mind turned upon his financial troubles, it did, in some mysterious way, take comfort from feeling that there

was, in *possible* reserve, this *possible* something—this off-chance—upon which he might *possibly* fall back, and perhaps successfully. But his heart was untouched; he had no turn for matrimony; he was sadly deficient in those arts which his sister believed him to be practising; and he shrank from the disturbance and opposition which he knew must arise, even were he successful with the lady herself. So he drifted on, procrastinating and temporising, forced to deceive his sister as to his real relations with Esmè, since a knowledge of them might probably have led her to throw up the game which he was not helping her to play, but which he could not bear to abandon—as a last resource, which might come in usefully some day or other.

Now and then, indeed, when the post had brought him some desperate menace from a creditor, and when his sister had improved the occasion with urgent rhetoric, he would make some quaint, spasmodic approaches to the subject with Esmè; but they were so clumsily made, and so adroitly withdrawn, that they passed altogether unobserved and unsuspected.

Mrs Ravenhall, of course, catechised him often and searchingly; and since, to a certain extent, she regulated her tactics towards Esmè from the impressions she received from him, she was often in a state of mystification which gave rise to cross-purposes.

"Another day gone, Tom," she would say, "and what progress?"

"Well, it is difficult to say, Lucy."

"But *some?*"

"Oh yes, I think so."

"You are getting to like her very much?"

"Very much."

"Now, be frank with me; do you observe any change in her manner?"

"Ye-es, a decided change, I should say."

"Is it at all fluttery when you are left alone together, or when you meet?"

"Rather fluttery."

"And you adapt your manner, I hope?"

"Oh yes; I flutter too."

"Be serious. I sometimes think your manner is a little too familiar and easy. Avoid that. If you loved the dear girl as she ought to be loved, there would be no familiarity."

"Well, you know, we *are* getting pretty intimate; we couldn't well help it—thanks to your management."

"Ah! but you mustn't be intimate. Check that sort of thing at once. It kills sentiment. And there ought not to be too much conversation. It is, of course, unnecessary to say how fatal your ordinary style of rattle would be. If her manner is fluttery, the time for constrained silences ought to have arrived. Encourage them, by all means. Never interrupt them, except by an incoherency. Think of your debts—anything that will keep you quiet and sadden your face. By the by, what *do* you talk about?"

"Oh, the usual thing."

"Do you mean what is usual between people who are falling in love with each other?"

"Of course."

"And what is that?"

This was a poser, but Tom brazened it out.

"Why, hang it, Lucy," he said, "you've been in love yourself, I suppose! at least you seem to know all about it; so surely you must understand what I mean."

"Well, perhaps. I can't say honestly, Tom, that I observe any hopeful symptoms in Miss Douglas."

"But you know how women dissemble before each other."

"True; and she has natural self-control. Her manner is, of course, *totally* different when you are by yourselves?"

"Oh! totally, totally;" which was so far true that, on these occasions, Tom was livelier and made her laugh more.

"Well, I hope things are progressing; but you mustn't lose time. I should say you might bring matters to a crisis within the month."

"Wouldn't that look rather bold and over-confident?"

"Delays are dangerous: if you don't, you must follow them to the Engadine."

"I was thinking it would be better to put it off till the end of my visit at Dunerlacht. There would be more delicacy in that, I think." What Tom *did* think was, that he would at least make a certainty of his shooting.

"If the state of her mind is what your account implies, it won't do to delay long."

"Oh, perhaps I am over-sanguine! possibly I exaggerate."

"Well, you must be guided by circumstances, and keep your eyes wide open. I wish Frank didn't abhor the old gentleman so dreadfully. You can't conceive what difficulty I have in keeping him here. That is one reason why you should hasten matters. If *we* go, where will you be?"

"Where, indeed?" said Tom; but the ready answer suggested

itself to his inner mind, "At Homburg within eight-and-forty hours."

Mrs Ravenhall having thus put Tom through his facings, would occasionally go over to the other camp, and while she played a *coup* or two for her brother, endeavour, from the other point of view, to discover how the land lay. To Esmè she was in some respects incomprehensible—without the key to her plot it could hardly be otherwise, act she never so adroitly; but her unfailing geniality and kindliness of manner were sufficiently attractive, and she was sure of a sincere welcome, on her frequent visits.

"Here is the tiresome, gossipy old woman coming again to worry and interrupt you, dear Miss Douglas," she cried, as she entered Esmè's room, on one of these occasions, towards the close of the Cadenabbia campaign, and when Mrs Ravenhall began to think that she must intervene more actively herself. "But I hope you are not too busy—I hope I am not too dreadfully in the way?"

Esmè reassured her on these heads, and she went on to propose the inevitable expedition; "but," she added, "it is not for a common reason I propose it to-day; and since Lord Germistoune is not busy—for he is walking on the pier—and since you are always so sweet and good, I am sure you will oblige me, if you can."

"Oblige, Mrs Ravenhall! of course I shall be delighted to go with you—I always am. Where do you think of going to?"

"Ah! I *have* got a little gem for Lord Germistoune, about five miles down, on the Chiavenna side. But, to be quite frank with you, I have a selfish object—yes, quite a selfish object—in proposing an excursion to-day. To tell you the truth, I am miserable about my brother Tom. He is so depressed and low. He will admit nothing; but I can't bear to see the dear fellow suffer. So I wish to distract him, if I can—to take him out of himself; and I think, if we can get him to go with us, we cheerful people ought to be able to do him some good among us."

None of Love's ensigns displayed themselves in Esmè's face, but she expressed all due sympathy for Tom, and asked simply what was wrong. That, Mrs Ravenhall said, was what she could not make out; but his depression had existed for some time, and was increasing; and probably Miss Douglas had noticed it? But Esmè could not say she had, by any manner of means. "He has given you no hint," said Mrs Ravenhall, "that there is something preying on his mind, you are certain?"

"Most certain; and surely it is most unlikely he should have spoken to me about it."

"I don't know about that. I *do* know that he has a strong feeling of sympathy and *rapport* with you; so I thought he *might* have made you his confidant, though he admits nothing to me. But he has said nothing?"

"Nothing. By the by, he sometimes speaks with a good deal of anxiety about a horse which he is interested in, for some race; perhaps he has had some bad news about it."

Mrs Ravenhall's face fell, and she replied, "Oh dear, no; he makes no secret to *me* of any trouble of *that sort*. This is something far, far deeper." Furtively scanning Esmè's face as she spoke, and seeing no desired change in it, she said to herself, "If this is dissembling, she dissembles skilfully; and dissembling it must be, unless Tom is deceiving himself, which, in his calm state of mind, is not likely." Then she went on to say, confidentially, that they must extract Tom's secret from him, if possible. "You will help me, will you not, my dear Miss Douglas?"

"I? Oh, Mrs Ravenhall, I don't see how I can possibly do that. I think it would be——"

Here Esmè paused, and Mrs Ravenhall thought her manner and expression more satisfactory.

"At all events," she said, "you will help me to try and cheer him, I know."

The idea of that rattling talker and *farceur* requiring to be cheered made Esmè smile; but as he *might* be depressed in private—must be, indeed, or his sister could not be so concerned about him—she laughingly said that she would heartily co-operate. "I daresay," she added, "he is only bored. It must be dreadfully dull for any one of his tastes, down here, with none of his usual pursuits, and no congenial companions. Probably the best advice we can give him is to go away."

"Probably," thought Mrs Ravenhall, "this is a feeler."

But here she was rather in a logical difficulty; for, having just stated that Tom was excessively unhappy, it was hard to affirm (which she would have liked to imply) that all his happiness centred in Cadenabbia. She could not do this, or even throw out any broad innuendo as to the attractions which the place had for him, without showing her hand, which, sorely hampered as she was by her ignorance of the exact relations existing between Tom and Esmè, she could not venture to do. So she merely said, with some *intention*, that she felt certain "*that* would not meet the difficulty, but rather aggravate it *materially*."

And then she went on in a side-strain, *apropos* of Esmè's allusions to Tom's tastes and pursuits, to suggest that, in reality, his soul soared above the vulgar pastimes of his coevals, to which he merely addicted himself from the disgust incidental to a *carrière manquée;* moreover, that the underlying vein of thoughtfulness and earnest feeling which he undoubtedly possessed, was concealed by the *mauvaise honte* and artificial cynicism so constantly to be observed in the Anglo-Saxon when disappointed in his loftier aspirations. In fact, she gave quite a romantic colour to Tom's pigeon-shooting, polo-playing, and race-frequenting propensities—winding up with a firmly-expressed conviction that from them he might be satisfactorily retrieved by the *right influence*, if only it could be brought to bear upon him; for "Ah, dear me," she concluded, with a deep sigh, "it doesn't bear thinking of! It is the sorrow of my life; and I *had* such hopes of him? We all had. Yet I can't bring myself to despair. No. I constantly say to myself, 'Under tender and noble influences, what might not that gifted creature do, even yet!' for he is full of heart and sympathy. Well, well; forgive me for boring you. Dear Tom is so very much to me, I forget myself when I begin to speak of him."

Mrs Ravenhall did this passage excessively well, and Esmè's kind heart was touched for the "sorrow of her life." It was impossible, indeed, that Esmè should not feel a little perplexed about this strangely unobtruded side of Tom's nature, but it could not be altogether imaginary; and, in any case, Mrs Ravenhall's anguish was obviously sincere, and to be respected.

On the morning of this expedition the sorrying sister had discovered her "gifted" brother gazing in some consternation at a sheaf of newly-arrived duns, and had, then and there, well battered him with counsel, suggestion, and reproof as to the progress of his suit; and after the start, while the party were still together, she was so observant and manœuvring, and so plied Tom with secret telegraphy, that for once he really became conscious, constrained, and silent, thus favouring the recently-coined theory of his depression. Then, when Mrs Ravenhall's tactics had ripened for the separation of the party, she contrived to whisper Tom, before he and Esmè sauntered away, "Just continue as you are doing; be low, be depressed, but, at the right moment, *empressé* and earnest. I have paved the way for you, I think." These words of wisdom Tom did not long bear in mind, but presently fell into such wild spirits, and rattled away so continuously, that Esmè, thinking partly of Mrs Ravenhall's revelation, partly of Tom's recent eclipse, and having no

reason for constraint with him, laughingly congratulated him on the recovery of his spirits. "Recovery of my spirits!" he cried, and then (remembering his sister's words, and suspecting some move of hers to which he ought to play up), "Ah!—ahem! did you think I was out of spirits?"

"Oh yes; your gloom was quite tragical, and visible to every eye."

"Ah! perhaps; I didn't think it would be observed. I'm sorry it was. A man ought to conceal these things—to—to wear a mask, and that kind of thing."

"I think it is very hard, when one is really bored, to conceal the fact."

"Well, it is; but I ought to have concealed it."

"I was right then; I knew I was. You *are* bored with this place, and I think it is very natural."

"Bored?" cried Tom, aghast at his clumsy *lapsus*, "of course I didn't mean that. I meant low, depressed."

"Which you are?"

"Yes, now—now you press me; I must admit that I am—horribly so."

"But yet not bored with this place?"

"No; I never was happier than I am here."

Esmè laughed. "What a very curious state of mind to be in!" she said.

"Isn't it?" said Tom.

"Horribly low and depressed, yet never happier—all at the same time?"

Tom was not so logical as his sister: besides, he had a dim notion that this was the normal phase of a lover's mind; so he stuck to his paradox, trying to look lugubrious, with fun threatening to break out in his eyes and all over his face.

"It is impossible, then, for your friends to know whether they ought to congratulate or condole," said Esmè, demurely, humouring his whim, and expecting a *dénouement* in connection with Tom's ever-execrated banker and some turn of fortune on the turf.

"Ah!" said Tom, "I wish I knew which they ought to do. No one could tell them except yourself."

Here he was, up at the very point, long before he meant it; whereupon, immediately, great consternation fell upon him, so that he swerved, and adroitly added, "Of course I don't mean *you* specially, but you or some other tremendously clever person, who understands metaphysics and that kind of thing."

"Really, Mr Wyedale, I wonder what you will credit me with

next? Metaphysics! I don't think I even quite know what the word means."

"Oh, neither do I, for that matter; but it's a good big word, and means something wise."

Esmè laughed, and said, "Well, I don't think I need go very deep into metaphysics to discover what would be a remedy for that part of your state of mind which is not 'exquisitely happy.'"

"A remedy? What is it?"

"Some pigeons to shoot, for one thing."

"Well, the place would be more endur——would be the better for something of the sort."

"Or a polo-ground."

"Ah! *if* we had some polo."

"Or a race-meeting, within reach, now and then."

"Don't tantalise me, Miss Douglas."

"And a few sympathetic men under sixty, to talk to and play tennis with."

"Oh yes; the men here *are* maddeningly old and stupid. They can do nothing. They break one's heart."

"Exactly; in other words, you are severely bored."

"No, no, no."

"Oh yes, you are; and, strange to say, I can suggest an alleviation to you, which I don't think you have discovered for yourself. Giuseppe, our chief boatman, tells me there is splendid sport to be got here in spearing trout at night in the lake—what they call 'burning the water' in Scotland."

"You don't say so!"

"Giuseppe does."

"And—and large trout?"

"Gigantic, according to Giuseppe."

"And how do they work it?"

"Ah! I must refer you to Giuseppe for the particulars."

"I can't tell you, Miss Douglas, how much obliged I am for the hint. I'll get at Giuseppe this very afternoon. I'll try conclusions with the trout before I'm a day older. There's really no sport much better. That *will* be something to do at last." And so, forgetting his sister, matrimony, depression, and all the real business of the hour, he rattled away upon the intoxicating subject, till, coming abruptly upon the rest of the party, he stopped short and pulled so long a face—remembering how hopelessly he had broken down in his duty, how far he had wandered from the prescribed path—that his sister almost feared she read in his guilty features the announcement of his rejection.

From all this it will be seen how little Esmè's unconsciousness was to be wondered at; what a waste of power was involved in poor Mrs Ravenhall's sleepless exertions; with what poetic justice nature, working through Tom's natural instincts, buried her intrigues, for the present at least, in bathos; and how little cause, for the present at least, Cosmo Glencairn had to torture himself, as he often did, about the rival who had communicated his designs with such offensive *nonchalance*.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The month drew to a close at last, and Mrs Ravenhall had the mortification of feeling that the campaign in which she had displayed so much strategy was perhaps, at best, only a drawn one. Misrepresent as he might, Tom could not point to a single position of advantage which had been gained. He could only keep on reporting, like the telegrams from despairing armies, "the *morale* of the troops is excellent," "the situation is easier," "the definitive blow is postponed for strategic reasons," and so forth. All was cruelly vague and unsatisfactory; and from the opposite side no cheering symptoms came to the anxious eye of her who conducted the siege operations. It was hard to draw off now—with nothing to look forward to but a renewal of the campaign in a new field, under circumstances that could scarcely be so favourable, and when her own supervision might not be available.

She was at her wits' end about Tom. She wished him to go on to the Engadine, and at least preserve the *status quo;* but Tom was obstinate. He wanted a rest, a change from this *toujours perdrix* of ladies' society, polite small-talk, boredom, dissimulation, and physical inactivity. But he put it otherwise to his sister, asserting (and this reasonably) that in her absence the field would not be conveniently open to him; also, that a little absence often did good—making the heart (as he was instructed) grow fonder; and lastly, that he had a presentiment that the thing would be done at Dunerlacht, and nowhere else. It was hard, he added, to fight against a presentiment—which Mrs Ravenhall felt to be true, when, as in this case, it merely signifies an obstinate resolve; so she was reluctantly obliged to give way before it. And what was Tom going to do now?

Tom's heart was already beating high with the thought of Homburg. The siren-song of "faites le jeu," the "innumerous" crisping of *billets de banque*, the diapason of shovelled gold, was sounding in the ear of his fancy; but it was part of the matrimonial scheme that he was to appear *rangé*—so he said he required bracing, and would go to bathe at Biarritz or Ostend for a month. In this melancholy way matters stood, when, two days before the break-up of the party, Mr Ravenhall, who had been detrimental all along, at last came in useful; for his wife, on returning from a long excursion that afternoon, found him in a high state of fuss—his portmanteaus packed and in the hall, and he himself fuming at the non-arrival of the steamer which was to convey him on the first stage of his journey to London. Mr Ravenhall, be it known, had come away from Parliament without "a pair," and on that very forenoon he had received telegram after telegram from Hustler the Whip, imploring him, in agitated terms, to return on the instant; for, two nights thereafter, the Opposition—"strong, united, and jubilant"—were going to "try a fall" with the Ministry, which was shaky and despondent, and required every vote which could be scraped together, if it were to be saved at all.

"So I am off, of course," said Ravenhall, "to save Ministers."

"And what am I to do?" asked his wife.

Mr R. had not given her a thought; but, as he rushed to the steamer which now came up, he said that she might do what she liked—that was to say, come home at her leisure, securing the escort of Tom; and so went on his way.

What, then, was she to do? It was grievous to miss a season; but to go back to London when two-thirds of it was over, to set the machinery of season-life agoing when the rest of the world were beginning to think of the wind-up, was by no means remunerative—and, in this case, there was a special reason against it. Her resolution was taken at once. She would "go home by the Engadine," with Tom as escort, and linger as long upon the way as seemed advisable. Had not Ravenhall given her *carte blanche*? Without a word, therefore, to Tom, she went straight to the Villa Bianca; and relating how her husband had been suddenly called home on "urgent business," she explained her new plan, which she thought would be *quite* delightful, were she only convinced that the prospect of her continued society would not be irksome to the Germistounes. Nothing could be more flattering than their response to this: and what, they asked, of Tom? Tom, his sister said, would accompany her; it would be a *delight* to him; the *poor fellow*

had been *quite dismally low* about the break-up of their *charming little coterie!* And when Tom's accession had been also hailed with kindly acclamations, she went into the plans for the journey; and, in a few minutes, it was arranged that they should travel together, and "to prolong the enjoyment, and make quite a picnic of it," start for Chiavenna on the following afternoon, sleep there, and make their way over the Maloja Pass next day. With all details cut and dried, Mrs Ravenhall then sought her brother, to communicate what she called this "rare stroke of fortune." Strange to say, the "poor fellow" heard of Fortune's bounty in a spirit of utter thanklessness; for he fell into a violent passion, and protested, in most unlover-like language, against being "swindled" into further association with the *objet aimé* for the present.

"But," urged his sister, "they are so pleased you are coming —*quite* in ecstasies."

"Gammon!" cried Tom, whose faith in "ecstasies" the events of the month had crushed—"ecstasies be hanged! They are thrown away, at all events, for I'm *not* going. There!"

"Now, Tom, do be reasonable!"

"No, I won't. I've been in the mill long enough. I'm off to Ho—— to Biarritz. I require bracing. Health before every consideration."

"But what am I to say to them?"

"Exactly what you please."

"But I've pledged you."

"That is your affair."

"And who is to take care of me?"

"Again your affair."

"And all our schemes?"

"All *your* schemes may slide. I'm dead tired of them."

Here was ingratitude, base and brutal; but Mrs Ravenhall knew that Tom's wrath was ever evanescent, and his nature kindly—so she turned away very silently to the window, applied her pocket-handkerchief *very* furtively to her eyes, and gave a *very* little sob. There was pathos in the silence, and dramatic power in the suppression of the tear and the sob. Few men —not brutal—can resist this sort of thing: Tom was beat at once. "Come, Lucy," he said, "I didn't mean to be so harsh; but it *is* hard on a fellow, admit that."

"A great deal harder upon me," replied Mrs Ravenhall, with her back still turned and a *tremolo* in her voice. "See what I've been doing and sacrificing for you, and this unkindness the only return!"

"Well, I *am* a brute, but I'm sorry for it."

"And you'll go?"

Tom had felt from the first that this was a foregone conclusion; but he replied, "If there *is* no help for it,"—adding, with a sudden flash of the predatory instinct, "if I can *get*, that is to say; for unless you pay my hotel bill, I'm afraid the manager may be rather pressing in his invitation to remain."

His sister reassured him on this head, and pointed out that, when such a stake was at issue, a little money was of no consideration. This healthy financial sentiment opened up to Tom a new field of auriferous possibilities, which helped to console him, though he continued all day sufficiently "low" and "depressed" to have covered himself with distinction in the most protracted "love" scene with Esmè.

The next afternoon saw them on board the steamer for Colico. Lord Germistoune and his daughter were very sorry to go; and the retainers of the Villa seemed very sorry to part with them, thronging to the piers with bouquets and benedictions, and breaking out into a choric song of love, admiration, and regret as the vessel moved away. This, as the words of their little hymn implied, was a tribute to the sweet English girl whose gracious ways and fair Madonna face had captivated the simple folk. His lordship, however, took it all as for himself, stiffly raised his hat, and observed to a bystander that he was gratified; also, that these were a goodish kind of poor devils, who lied and thieved like fury, but had an eye for a gentleman when they saw him, and knew how to treat him. Mrs Ravenhall was only too thankful to turn her back upon the lake; but she was still "before the footlights:" so when they left it and drove away to Chiavenna, she kissed her hand sentimentally to the last of it, and murmured, "Lago, mio! mio bel lago, addio! Ci bisogna partire! ma i nostri cuori staranno sempre con te!"

And Lord Germistoune, gallantly affecting to catch her enthusiasm, waved his hat in the same direction, and cried in the same melodious tongue, "Addio, bel lago! La signora se ne vada, e con lei tu perdi la tua più cara bellezza!"

And Esmè laughed and said—

"Al rivederti, bel lago!"

And so they all said "good-bye" to the lake, in its native language—all except Tom, by the by, who was still "low," and who said nothing, but looked as if he never wished to see its waters again: and so the curtain fell upon beautiful Como.

Pleasant is the route through the Val Bregaglia, by which Italy speeds her parting guests, and sends them upwards from her summery plains to the solemn haunts of winter. Upon the massive crags that overhang the way, the South still spreads her mantle of deepest foliage, whose exquisite verdure is blended from the green of the chestnut, the walnut, and the oak. Thickets of shrubbery clothe the levels in dark luxuriance, relieved with flashes from the rhododendron's bloom; there are glimpses of sward still enamelled with souvenirs of the Land of Flowers; even the boulders which have tumbled to the river-side have brought their gala covering of wondrous mosses, purple, amber—a wealth of indefinable colour—which tells no tale of winter. The Maira, fresh from some glacier up above, meets the tender grasses and the flowers upon her margin, and checks her haste. It is still the Land of Summer, and the Val Bregaglia will summer it with every art, as long as may be.

But we go on and up. Here is Castegna, and we are across the frontier. Farewell to Italy! On we go and up, through gradual transformations. We begin to miss the walnut-leaf; we lose the chestnut; we pass through galleries of unclothed rock. Over the dark crests of pine and alpine cedar, flashes from sunlit snow-peaks begin to reach us. The Maira is a torrent now, sometimes a waterfall. The alpen-rose and heather nestle on her rough banks; the mountain-ash trembles over her angry tumult. On we go and up, with a sudden steepness of ascent. Suddenly a mist falls around us—a cloud. We hear the jingling of the horses' bells and the roar of a waterfall; we feel by the angle of the carriage that the gradient increases; and though we can see nothing, we know that we are breasting the western face of the MALOJA. The mist lifts, and, behind, we have a dream-like glimpse of far-away plains sleeping in the sun—Elysian—beautiful exceedingly; and below us, in the foreground, a deep, dark piney gorge, whence, in a ghostly column, the spray of a cascade rises up, quivering with the voice of its hidden waters. Down comes the mist again; nor does it rise till, the horses springing forward in their supreme effort, we suddenly find ourselves upon the level, and everything is clear again. We are in the Engadine. We stand on the edge of an upper mountain-world—on a plateau 6000 feet in height, where the great mountain-peaks separate themselves at last from the family chain, and, rising up to heaven in sublime loneliness, assert their magnificent individuality.

By this route, and with some such experiences, the combined party made their way from Chiavenna to Maloja, much favoured by the weather. Then, after a brief halt, they continued their journey to St Moritz, through the unexpected green pastures and by the blue waters of the Upper Engadine, where everything *is* so unexpected and strange—where the air is so still, and the woods so songless, and everything wears such an impress of solemn pensiveness, it would seem as though some awe from the near presence of the mighty hills saddened the valley, or the weight of their pine-clad feet oppressed it with too sore a burden. The day was waning when they started from Maloja, and when they left the Silser-see the sun's last rays died on its quiet surface. Up in mid-heaven the rose light still bloomed on the peaks of the Julier and Bernina; but twilight deepened apace as they drove swiftly down the valley, so that when they reached Campfer the last of the after-glow was fading from Piz Languard, and they entered St Moritz in the dark. Up to a certain point things had gone most satisfactorily *en route*. Tom had rather a bad time of it, to be sure; for whenever Esmè remarked on anything in the shape of a plant or a flower by the wayside, his sister, finding telegraphic measures vain, frankly ordered him to descend and secure the specimen—and as Esmè's botanical sympathies were quick and wide, his exits and entrances, notwithstanding her protests, were incessant. Nor when he had half filled the carriage, and escaped to the *banquette*, under plea of smoke, did he find sanctuary there, being perpetually harassed by his sister's parasol arousing him to some bit of scenery which Esmè admired, and which he was consequently assured was "quite in his style." There is a good deal of labour and sorrow in the conduct of a courtship at best, when all the *petits-soins* are inspired by the heart of the suitor, and Tom often felt that this "machine-made" wooing was becoming perfectly intolerable; and over and over again, on this day, he bitterly compared himself to a barrel-organ, whereof the grinder was Lucy, who, with no fear of the police before her eyes, was grinding his works to destruction. Lord Germistoune had begun the morning "gouty," by which euphemism (strongly recommended for use in families) he described a general fractiousness of temper and desire to put every one else in the wrong; so that the prospect of the journey was not lively. But suddenly remembering that he had unlawfully partaken of Chiavenna beer the night before, and deciding that Stefano, the courier, was in some mysterious way responsible

for this infraction of medical ordinance and his master's *malaise*, he packed his "gout" neatly up in half-a-dozen sentences of malediction, flung them on his scapegoat's back, consigned him to the arch-brewer of all mischief, and, thus relieved, became as pleasant and ungouty as need be. Nothing could be neater than his gallant little speeches to Mrs Ravenhall, or more graceful than his patronage of the scenery, or apter than his remarks, botanical and geological—nothing, at least according to Mrs Ravenhall, and even Tom (when not engaged in rooting up something tough and bulbous by the roadside), for Tom was still the faithful *claqueur* of the proprietor of the "best mixed shooting in Scotland." And then, his lordship's anecdotes! so racy! so full of sarcasm! so interesting! If they were old they were "historically instructive;" if their satire clung, like yew's roots, round dead men's bones—well, it served the bones right; for Lord Germistoune was great, and wise, and infallible—when Mrs Ravenhall was his prophet. So things went cheerily and well, till they were more than two-thirds up the Pass. But neither the temper of a gouty noble nor the weather of an Alpine pass can be depended upon. A little thing will disturb the equilibrium of either. It became suddenly rather chilly, and there was a check in the flow of Lord Germistoune's converse. A haze came over the sun; it became chillier. Lord Germistoune began to look a little dangerous—to put his ears back, as it were. Symptoms of an impending mist showed themselves; Lord Germistoune shivered angrily, and was pulling his plaid tighter round him, when his arms dropped, and glaring with all his eyes at the second carriage which followed close behind, he almost screamed—

"By heavens! the HOUND is actually *drinking* before me—*me!*—in my very face!"

And there, sure enough, was Stefano, seated in the *banquette*, positively refreshing his inner man from a flask, in the august presence of his employer! "A d—d low Neapolitan lazzarone" drinking (with gusto too!) "in the whites of the eyes" of the Right Hon. Archibald, Viscount Germistoune, Baron Dunerlacht, K.T., and a Baronet! If ever there were a provocative to "gout," here surely it was. His lordship succumbed to it instantly. The *cortège* was halted on the edge of the precipice with some difficulty, and even peril, and the courier, being extracted from his perch, was "brought up," and received such a *warming* about "roistering ruffianism," and "brutal, mutinous insolence," as would have closed the mouth of a timid courier against *schnaps* for the remainder of his days. Then

the flask was confiscated, and its contents poured as a libation to the infernal gods, whom Lord Germistoune had continuously invoked during the "incident." But this time the ebullition brought no relief; the scapegoat went in vain to the wilderness, and Mrs Ravenhall's blandishments fell flat,—for the mist swooped down and wrapped them in its cold wet blanket, so that the thin blood of the old man had need of all the fire of his anger to keep it on the move at all. There was, fortunately, no lack of this stimulant. If Sir William Gull had, with devilish art, concocted "this accursed cloud," and conveyed it through the air, and caused it drop on the Maloja Pass, so as to meet his noble patient there, he could not have been held more personally responsible for its existence. Awful superlatives were tacked to the doctor's name, and even Alderman Rabbits came in—as a sort of accessory—for the tail of the storm, the most ungenerous strictures being passed upon his interior. Nor did matters greatly improve when they emerged from the cloud and found themselves upon the plateau of the Engadine. The whole thing was pronounced to be a mistake, if not a swindle; the air would give a seal bronchitis; the levels about the river and lakes looked malarious enough to kill herds of the strongest elephants. Scenery? there *was* no scenery; it was an infernal desert invented by the doctors as a sort of theatre for empirical practice. "Let them," he cried, "make their experiments on aldermen if they please; they may vivisect Sir Peter Rabbits if they choose—probably they couldn't do better; but it's monstrous that a really valuable life should be tampered with by the scoundrels." He was in the state of mind which prompts the "Tax-payer" to write to the 'Times;' and perhaps he might have done so had it *not* been the habit of the "tax-payer," and if he had not regarded "*l'organe de la cité*" as the root of all national evil.

Few places in Europe are more loved by its visitors than the Engadine, many of whom regard it with a kind of bigoted enthusiasm which will scarcely allow that there can be any qualification of the praises due to it; but even these will, *perhaps*, admit that, at first (*only* at first), there is a certain dishevelledness—a general happy-go-luckiness—about the hotels, to which one requires to get accustomed. At all events, they will be quite able to conceive that a man arriving in the dark, and in Lord Germistoune's frame of mind, might very probably not be soothed by his first impressions even of the Hotel "Zur frohen Aussicht" at St Moritz.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was dark when the party arrived. All the guest-world were at "evening-meal," and all (the few) waiters were feeding them—the porter even assisting. Thus, when the Germistoune equipage clattered up, there was none of that rush and *élan* of welcome which, at smaller altitudes, greet parties less illustrious. All the shouting, and jingling, and cracking of whips was met with a bathos of darkness and silence. Only after a very prolonged ringing did a leisurely form, with a shaggy head, and its hands very deep in its pockets, lounge to the door. This was the landlord himself, at that time a worthy Switzer, with the fear of God, perhaps, but certainly not that of man, before his eyes; and who—being a republican, or rather because his hotel was always full, and because a contract price is equally valuable, be it paid by peer or proletarian—had no sort of leaning to a lord, but rather contrariwise,—the servants of the noble being often troublesome. This individual, then, remained at the top of the steps, leaning against the door-post, and making no sign whatever.

"What does it mean? what the d—l does it all mean?" shouted Lord Germistoune; "where are the people? the servants? the landlord? the—speak to that man, Stefano! speak to him—if he *is* a man!" Stefano reascended the steps, and a low, sleepy, growling sound ensued, on the part of the man, which was presently interpreted to his master by Stefano, to the effect that the growler *was* a man, that he was also the landlord, and that he too wished very much to know "what it all meant."

"Tell him," cried Lord Germistoune—"tell the idiot that we want rooms, and our luggage taken down, and—and what people usually want at hotels."

"Tell him," replied the growler, "that he can't have rooms here."

"Then I'll go straight to the mayor!" shouted his lordship, springing to his feet. Whereupon the growler announced that *he* was the mayor, and ready for him and all comers. "Then, by the Lord Harry, I'll go to the president of the district, wherever he is!" But there was no checkmating the monster—he was also president of the district! Great heavens! here was a pretty pass! Lord Germistoune had got beyond the law, or rather he found all its machinery concentrated in the hands of a brutal pluralist, who would certainly not use it against him-

self. What was to be done? All kinds of vituperation and menace fell upon the growler as spray upon an iron-bound coast. Eventually, in some of his capacities, he might probably lock his lordship up for inciting to a breach of the peace; in the meantime, he rather seemed to enjoy the fun of the thing in a dim, ruminating way.

Things were in this state of dead-lock when a smart and intelligent young woman, who proved to be the landlord's daughter, appeared on the scene, and who, receiving nothing from her father but an unintelligible grunt in answer to her inquiries, tripped impatiently down to the carriage, and asked the pleasure of the party, and their names—on hearing which she gave a cry of astonishment, assured them their rooms were reserved and ready, rushed up-stairs, tolled the bell, dashed into the house, cried shrilly for the attendants, and, when she had put everything in train, turned upon her father sharply, and asked him, as Lord G. had done, "What it all meant?" To which, in the same grim monotone, he simply replied, "They didn't tell me their names. They only said they wanted rooms. Am I a prophet?"

And this is the kind of thing that did, and may perhaps still, occur in the Engadine; but, after all, it is only the people's way—only their way—which, of course, makes it as right and pleasant as possible. The poor old lord was really quite crushed by this last scene. The terrible immobility of the landlord had been too much for him, after the trials and fatigues of the day; and he went to bed entirely subdued, and without a word of bitterness, save the remark that an egg, which he had encountered at supper, was sufficient to "account for everything—*almost* everything;" the exceptions being, perhaps, the mysterious clemency of Providence, which could permit the continued existence of the growler, and the savagery of a political system which could place him in a double-seated curule chair.

The Engadine, as has been said, enjoys an affection on the part of its visitors which is quite enthusiastic. Some give all their love to Pontresina, others to St Moritz, others to Campfer, others (the sybarites) to Samaden; and, among the partisans of each, there is often hot contention and dispute. Yet, as against an outsider, all true Engadiners will sink minor differences, and "go for" the Engadine, the whole Engadine, and—it would *almost* sometimes seem—for nothing but the Engadine. Well, it cannot be said that their enthusiasm is much misapplied, for it is a goodly and a glorious region—Lord Germistoune's

first impressions notwithstanding. The air alone makes the region unique. Is there anything like it anywhere else? so dry, elastic, and champagney? The *genius loci may* be solemn and pensive, but we laugh at him; we defy his contagion, breathing this brave atmosphere in the brave summer time. You seek delight in the glories of nature? in vast expanses of mountain panorama, in the splendours that dwell about the world of snowfield and glacier? Elsewhere you may purchase fleeting glimpses of these, with toil and weariness of the flesh. But here, at ease, on a high green oasis, in the midst of the glittering ice-world, you can watch, like a lotus-eater, the restless phenomena of light and colour, which dream over it in tender ripples, or surge across it in gorgeous floods, incessantly, from the first streak of dawn till the after-glow has faded from the tallest summits. And here, without effort to distress the feeblest, you can reach points where all the Alpine world lies before you—all the giants of near and far, from the Tyrol to the Oberland, from Palü to Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn. And if you are muscular and ambitious, and wish to enjoy, with vast ranges of vision, the "swagger" of braving crevasse and avalanche, *circumspice!* many of the highest and severest mountains in Europe are beside you; you are half-way up them all, and thus can achieve your objects and earn glory at, so to speak, half-price. Here then, living in neighbourly intimacy with mountains and glaciers, young, old, lusty, feeble, athlete, and sybarite, can all taste the best delights of the high mountain life, each in his own way and degree. Yes, it is a goodly place. The splendid air, the noble scenery, the sound sleep, the conscious bound into a new vitality, after the languor of the plains—all these things are good; but, behind these positive delights, a negative advantage gives them exquisite point—there are no tourists here. The tidal wave of noisy vulgarity and brutal selfishness which swamps Europe, "affronts" the desert, and "puts a girdle round the earth," does not rise to these altitudes. We are beyond the zone of Cook and Gaze. Let us not pause to consider how it is so. Let us be simply thankful for the mystery, that in these pleasant places they are not.

It might have been expected that Lord Germistoune would not remain to appreciate the delights of the locality, and that earliest dawn would see him and his suite flying in the direction of monarchical institutions. But, strange to say, when he came down in the morning, whether it was the magic of the air already, or of a wonderfully sound sleep, or what not, his tone

was temperate in the extreme. "We must try the place for a day or two, at all events," he said. He did not even allude to the landlord. Indeed, the relations between these two remarkable men were very singular from first to last. Manœuvres were of course resorted to, to keep them apart. Still, Lord Germistoune could not be kept from going occasionally for his letters to the bureau, in a corner of which the landlord was habitually ambushed; thus they would meet from time to time. Could it be that the imperviousness of this republican pachyderm to Lord Germistoune's wrath and general augustness paralysed the latter by its utter novelty, and so quelled him? Certain it is that no further "scenes" occurred between them.

As soon as his lordship's eye fell upon the landlord, his back would stiffen, his nostrils dilate, and he would breathe short. As soon as the landlord beheld his lordship, he would rise slowly from his chair, with *his* back very much in the air, and his hands very deep in his pockets, and his eyes very much fixed upon the noble lord, and thus remain—alert, and, as it were, ready to spring—until the latter marched warily out of the room, with the cautious dignity of a large dog retiring from the presence of another large dog who looks as if he "meant business."

But the existence of the landlord did no particular harm. The place *was* tried for a few days, and it suited. The air and the waters were all that could be desired; the hotel was comfortable; the food was respectable; my lord's appetite immense. There was no talk of moving. Gull was rehabilitated, and the name of Rabbits was not heard any more.

As yet there were few English in the place; but the foreign visitors were plentiful, pleasant, and *comme il faut*. There was a charming contingent of high-bred Italians at the hotel, and some official Prussians—all padding and bureaucratic *morgue*, but of much distinction; and several Russian princes and princesses of the most charming description; and, among all these, there were several persons of real eminence in the world of statecraft, diplomacy, and fashion. At once Mrs Ravenhall let loose all her tentacles into this shoal of eligibles, and had captured at least half-a-dozen distinguished "friendships" in a week. Poor woman! after all her vicarious love-making, she had certainly earned some relaxation. Who could grudge it to her? And here it was for her, as she best loved to take it. Lord Germistoune, too, was pleased with the society, particularly with its diplomatic and political elements; and the society received him with distinguished consideration.

He was always fond of political talk, and it was his foible to believe that he understood the foreign policies of all nations—even of England. So he posed as a statesman here, and harangued at large, occasionally being kind enough to explain the drift of treaties and memorandums to the men who had devised them. "I have been a Minister myself," he said, and they all called him "Excellency." One observes that people with far fewer advantages—with less voice, less presence, less money—will always find a gallery for their prose and their platitudes if they only assert themselves; and Lord Germistoune was quite the centre of a little peripatetic *salon* down at the Kurhaus, of mornings. There he walked about, dropping words of wisdom, in the intervals between the prescribed tumblers. The air about him was foggy with turgid sentences, of which one continually caught such fragments as—"I told Beust very distinctly that I could not sanction——" "Cavour, who was a charlatan, implored me——" "Buol knew what my distinct opinion of *his* policy was——" "Louis Napoleon frequented my society at that time, and took my advice; if he had continued to do so——" &c. &c. People listened to all this respectfully; how much they swallowed, is another question, "Que diable!" said Prince Latschki to an American friend, "I have turn that old man inside out in five minute. It is a shell! Void! Pah!"

It is probable that Latschki expressed a pretty general sentiment, but it was certainly not the sentiment which met his lordship's ears and eyes; and he was delighted with every one, especially with himself.

Mrs Ravenhall's "weather eye" was, notwithstanding other allurements, by no means neglectful of the young people. The Engadine seemed full of promise for her projects, at first. Here, there was no call to rack the brain in devising expeditions, and excuses for them. There was something of the sort to be done every day in the week, without apology, and, indeed, almost *de rigueur*. These excursions are usually made in large parties, involving many vehicles, so that a very little generalship enabled her to make such travelling combinations as suited all her purposes. To one carriage she would invariably "detail" herself and Lord Germistoune, with some gentleman who would amuse and flatter him; and, for fourth, the lady of distinction whose "friendship" she happened to be *stalking* at the time. In another conveyance Esmè and Tom would find themselves *vis-à-vis* with a neutral matron and some strangely unattractive old man,—generally Schnoll, the German publicist, a dungeon

of learning perfumed with garlic—or Angus Slorach, the Edinburgh metaphysician, who had one eye, reckless ways of snuffing, and an intolerable fund of anecdote about the late Dr Chalmers. Tom sometimes grew restive about these old men, inquiring bitterly *who* on earth the late Dr Chalmers was, and *why* on earth he should be disinterred for his benefit.

Things, however, seemed to go along pretty satisfactorily. Tom's occasional bulletins were as rosy as need be; and being, from various reasons, less searchingly verified than hitherto, they passed muster, and Mrs Ravenhall was tolerably content for a time. But matters changed. For it chanced that there was in the hotel a certain young Count Roderigo Fori, of monstrous fascinations, with large, lustrous, and tender brown eyes, and a tenor voice that had simply no right to be off the stage, —a youth, indeed, "framed in the very prodigality of nature," and dressed by Poole; and this splendid creature, who had no doubt desolated many female hearts before, introduced grievous care and agitation into the soul of Mrs Ravenhall. And it also chanced that there was sojourning there a certain young American damsel—not beautiful, as it is the delightful habit of her young *compatriotes* to be, but endowed with that kind of wit and *espièglerie* which is calculated to fascinate *that* kind of young bachelor who, as a rule, sharpens his face against female allurements. And this Miss Krupper—in full, Eudoxia G. Krupper—to whom Mrs Ravenhall had never done any harm—beyond never looking at her—yet cast upon that lady the curse of the sleepless eye. For, if the alluring Count had only had the sense to fall in love with Miss Krupper, all might have been well; or if Miss Krupper had followed her national instinct in favour of a coronet (even when it only exists in the imagination of the nobleman or on his cigar-case and pocket-handkerchiefs), and cast her glamour over Count Roderigo, things might still have been supportable. But this regrettable Count fell desperately in love, or seemed—for these Italians are nice, but—well, fell in love with Esmè; and "that impossible" Miss Krupper fell in love with, or at least did her best to throw glamour over, Tom Wyedale. And these two tragical threads of circumstance interweaving, presented themselves almost simultaneously to the observation of Mrs Ravenhall, and wrought her woe. The party in the hotel spent their evenings together in the common drawing-room—for they were, on the whole, of the same *monde* (except, perhaps, Miss K. and her mamma); and, since there were many Italians among them, much music was made. Roderigo was the musical star; for his playing on guitar and piano

was worthy of his performances as a tenor, and he had such a dramatic method of singing and playing—such a way, as he sang, of fixing his beautiful eyes, with passionate intensity, on some inanimate object, and then gradually shifting his gaze to the face of some pretty woman, on whom it would rest in pathetic dreaminess during his tenderest phrases—that he was justly the object of admiration, and in perpetual requisition, particularly among the pretty women, of whom there was abundance. Esmè's singing was also justly admired; but since her playing was unequal to it, what more natural than that so apt an accompanier as the Count should be ever ready to assist her? And thus they were brought together, and Roderigo very soon began to favour Esmè with a monopoly of the dreamy gazings above recorded.

About the same time, the charming young man developed a strong partiality for Tom's society, frequenting it so assiduously, that where Tom was, there, too, generally was the Count, or thereabouts. Thus Mrs Ravenhall's scheming in favour of her brother had a reflex action in favour of his new friend, who was almost as much in Esmè's society as was Tom—except, indeed, when the latter shared the happiness with Herr Schnoll or Dr Slorach. But let us be just. The Count's affection for his English friend must have been, in part at least, independent of the *arrière pensée* of access to Miss Douglas. Otherwise why should he have invited him, night after night, to his rooms, when all the world slept? He certainly did so, and Tom as certainly went; and, since it would have been but dull work for two young fellows to sit doing nothing, could anything be more natural than that they should trifle with a pack of cards? And although the count was (he said) a perfect noodle at *écarté*, could anything be more in keeping with a chivalrous nature than that he should hospitably engage his guest in a game to which he was partial, being, indeed, favourably known in connection with it at "The Turf" and similar literary institutions? And if he won? Well, chivalrous conduct *sometimes* has its reward, and the battle is not *always* to the strong; so that Mrs Ravenhall need not have been so very bitter against Roderigo, *apropos* of his little *soirées*—all about a trumpery three hundred sovereigns too! which paltry sum she had to pay for Tom in a fortnight—Tom having "no effects," and debts of honour being "the very devil." Mrs Ravenhall *was* perfectly blind to the romantic element in the incident, and thought, and said, quite dreadful things about the amiable young nobleman.

This, however, was comparatively a trifle. The Count's daylight conduct became markedly aggressive. Fellows of this sort are no laggards. At all the excursions he was at Esmè's side from the moment of debarkation, fetching and carrying, bounding up steep rocks for flowers and what not; anticipating every want; prostrating, worshipping, wriggling like a spaniel, with the eternal look of a spaniel's devotion in his beautiful brown eyes. Every night, at music, the *intention* of his singing and his dreamy gaze became more pronounced. One night the wretch even ventured on a serenade with his guitar: but here justice overtook him; for, mistaking Lord Germistoune's chamber for Esmè's "bower," he had not achieved the second verse of "Com' e gentil" before the window was thrown up, and he was ordered, in the most unfeeling terms, to stop "that infernal caterwauling, and be off about his business." Another day, Esmè having remarked at dinner that she did not possess a specimen of the *edelweiss*, at breakfast-time next morning she found a bouquet of the same upon her plate, with the legend attached to it, in Italian, "AN OFFERING FROM THE DAWN! CULLED THIS MORNING AT 11,000 FEET ABOVE THE SEA BY FORI." Dr Slorach swore to several people who had observed the tender incident, that he had seen the "whupper-snapper" buy it in the market-place ten minutes before, and was in a mind to expose the imposture; but he didn't: so that the imaginative Count scored the feat to his credit.

All these extravagances of worship were lost upon their object. Esmè admired the young man's singing, and thought him very good-natured but supremely ridiculous, and treated his arts of devotion as the mere stock-in-trade of an Italian youth of artistic proclivities. Don't let the profane thought that she flirted with him enter any one's mind. Any repudiation of the sort on her behalf is indeed unnecessary; for it is obvious that the smallest sign from her would have brought the Count to a prompt declaration. Between the tender thought and the earnest glance and the burning word, there are but short intervals with combustible gentry of the Fori type.

The ordinary "Mees Anglaise" might—probably must—have succumbed at once to his wiles and graces; but Esmè was not an ordinary "Mees Anglaise"—which, of course, Mrs Ravenhall knew; still she could not know how completely the Count, so to speak, missed fire. Great, therefore, was her dismay. That wretch Tom could not be roused by her to a sense of the peril. "Do you wish me," he asked, "to shoot the fellow, before he has given me my revenge and you have got back your

money?" and instead of being alarmed, went and straightway fell into the toils of E. G. Krupper, and flirted with her—for he *could* flirt with a certain kind of females who amused him and took all the trouble off his hands—and was seen lurking with her in the veranda at the back of the hotel, and on the terrace, in the suggestive gloaming; where Mrs Ravenhall, with her own ears, overheard "the artful minx" confide to Tom that she had 8000 a-year!—"what they *always* say," Mrs Ravenhall afterwards assured Tom, "and which *always* turns out to mean, in green-backed dollars, worth about sixpence apiece or so. So don't you go and add madness to folly." Tom, too, addicted himself yet the more to the society of his friend the Count; and, instead of manœuvring against him, seemed to be for ever playing his game. The thing could not go on long. Mrs Ravenhall was getting quite thin, and had no heart for her own little pursuits. But the crisis came. A party was organised for the Morteratsch glacier. Tom and Esmè were, as usual, to share a carriage with the metaphysician and the old Baroness Blinkenschwag. But, by the fiendish arts of Miss Krupper and Roderigo working upon, and through, Tom, the plan was upset. The doctor and the Baroness were beguiled and diverted to alien vehicles, and Esmè found herself driven rapidly off with the three conspirators, unchaperoned, before there was time for inquiry or remonstrance. They were ahead of the rest of the party: and when Mrs Ravenhall arrived at the scene of the picnic, the spectacle which met her eye was, Tom and Eudoxia huddled together, like a pair of love-birds, and sharing one plaid (for your glacier gives a chill to the air); and, at a little distance, the Count, posed as William Tell, on the edge of the ice-cataract, and singing divinely to a group of maidens below, in the centre of whom was Esmè, focussed, of course, by the dreamy gaze of the songster. This was altogether too much. The cup ran over. Mrs Ravenhall resolved now to make short work of William Tell, and to be quit of Eudoxia. For the return journey, she very demonstratively took Esmè into her own carriage, and manœuvred her off the ground, almost before Roderigo was aware of the change of programme. When he *did* make the discovery, his face was a sight to see. Tom roared out laughing. Eudoxia openly made game of the poor wretch, and tendered him bantering advice, which he rashly took *au sérieux;* for he ran after the carriage and hurled a little farewell bouquet of thyme into it, but, missing his mark, smote Viscount Germistoune, K.T., on the nose withal—and *that* was pretty nearly the last of the Count. The throw-

ing of the bouquet at all was a liberty — the accident that it impinged upon his lordship's nose was an outrage. Lord Germistoune and Mrs Ravenhall both felt this,—especially Mrs Ravenhall, who took the incident as the text for a discourse, commenced then, and afterwards finished in private with Lord Germistoune.

This bore on the innate depravity of Italian counts in general, who were often impostors, wearing aces in their sleeves, as necessary accessories of raiment; who were usually connected with the "CAMORRA," and *always* heiress-hunters. The application of all this to the luckless Roderigo took place on their return home. "I never liked the man, dear Lord Germistoune. His eyes are quite enough for me, and I *do not* like his companionship for my brother. He has begun to get money out of poor Tom, who is *so* trusting; and I can't stand *that*." The recollection of the Count's little *soirées* and their financial aspects, as affecting herself, gave great intensity to this passage. "In short, I really must get Tom away from his influence." Then, with exquisite tact, and speaking as an old and fondly-devoted family friend, she gradually insinuated that there *was* danger for "that sweet unconscious child." She had seen, she said, things—attentions—which had made her *reflect*. Her eyes, sharpened by womanly tenderness, had noted the wolfish ways of Roderigo. Speaking *as* a woman, she felt that the Count might gain a *deplorable* influence over *any* woman. He was horribly magnetic and glamorous; and, being in *absolute want*, there was little doubt that he meant to bring his magnetism and his glamour, and all his other diabolical properties, to market here, and was, in fact, doing so now. No doubt Esmè was so superior, so very superior, she—still, as a matter of parental principle—— But there was no need to argue the point. Lord Germistoune's soul was in arms at once. The bare idea of such a monstrosity as that this—this hound should lift his eyes to *his* daughter, had never occurred to him. He towered, in his arrogance, above such a suspicion. The giant walks with his nose in the air, and trips over the mole-hill. But—once suggested! *Donnerwetter!!* Well, he did exactly what Mrs Ravenhall intended. He had his bill and ordered a chaise for Pontresina, as did Mrs Ravenhall and Tom; and, with bag and baggage, the combined party thither shifted camp. "There is too much sharpness in the air of St Moritz" was his lordship's explanation of the move to Esmè. The last object they beheld at the hotel was Roderigo's green and chapfallen face. His sympathetic southern nature told him exactly how matters

stood. He saw them go, without an *œillade* for Esmè, or a bouquet for her father's nose. With a solemn sweep of his Tyrolese hat, he bade adieu to love and *écarté* and a thousand golden dreams.

CHAPTER XX.

Cosmo Glencairn did not remain very long at Edlisfort, after his memorable interview with his father; he returned to town, and, while all the world made holiday, lived a hermit's life in his chambers. Now fully resolved on a parliamentary career, he plunged into certain ponderous lines of reading which bore on the political science, or manfully explored the dreary literature of blue-books for instruction upon special subjects. Everything about his political life was to be honest, solid, complete. On no half-knowledge were his opinions to rest—from no vague opinions were his political actions to flow; and, since he proposed to himself not the stationary see-saw of a hobby-rider, but keen participation in everything, it will be seen that his earnestness promised to be a hard taskmaster. All measures for the restoration of Phil Denwick to a well-ordered life were put in train; there was no difficulty about the money, which was to be forthcoming in the beginning of autumn; and at that time Phil himself was, according to agreement, to commence his period of probation and practical instruction in Mr Hopper's office. In doing what he was undertaking to do for Phil, Cosmo wished really to benefit his friend—not merely to extricate him from his present penury, but to make his life stable; so that his bounty carried with it the benevolent condition of work. Phil's gratitude was unbounded, and it would have been a hard condition to which he would not have subscribed to show it, and to please Cosmo. But, indeed, the idea of work—suggesting, as it did, everything that was the converse of his late miserable experiences—was welcome for its own sake; and he, like Cosmo, sprang forward to anticipate it in preparations. Hopper was most affable to the prospective shareholder, let him know what to study in the meantime, and how to set about it; and Cosmo sent him out of town to a quiet place by the sea, where he devoted himself to mastering the theoretical mysteries of commerce and the *arcana* of the iron-trade. So Phil, living cleanly with the parson of the parish, who was an old Cambridge chum, was

a reclaimed prodigal, for whom the swine of Leicester Square and their husks and other abominations were only an evil memory or occasional nightmare. Mr Glencairn, indeed, shook his head rather violently over that part of the plan which involved Phil's future admission to the hierarchy of the Company; but, on Hopper assuring him that the probation was to be stringent, and that the prospect of Phil's qualifying was almost *nil*, he said he "was glad to sanction an arrangement which might benefit his dead friend's son,"—which Mr Hopper assured him was most magnanimous, and exactly like himself—in fact, "quite." And everything for the present was comfortably settled, as far as Phil's affairs went. Cosmo had returned to town in the early days of June, and, in seven weeks thereafter, Parliament was prorogued: for as yet there were no "Obstructionists" to paralyse the Legislature and befriend the grouse; and the noodles who addressed the House and wasted its time could then only be counted by the dozen, instead of, as now, by the hundred. So that her Majesty was able to dismiss her faithful Commons for the recess on the 20th July—which is not like to occur again, unless some one can invent a gag for Jawkins, M.P. And during these weeks, and now, Cosmo was on the *qui vive;* for the incumbent nurse of the "healthy local interest" of the borough of —— was expected to resign. And Cosmo had prepared an address for the electors, and written speeches, and studied the local maggots of the borough, and, in short, armed himself at all points for the electoral campaign. Phil Denwick, who came up to see him now and then, used to assist at private rehearsals, when, after listening to the flowing periods of his friend's speeches, he would take up the *rôle* of a "heckler"—which is the Scotch name for the political excrescence who puts questions to the candidate at political meetings, and who, although always the shallowest dunderhead in the assembly, yet, by dint of not knowing what he is talking about, and of not being able to display even his ignorance in any sort of grammar at all, can undoubtedly trouble and mystify and exasperate a candidate, and is therefore dangerous, and to be considered beforehand. Phil could imitate the ways of this monster, and heckled to perfection; but, on such occasions, Cosmo always passed with flying colours, and was, *nem. con.*, declared to be a fit and proper person, &c. &c.

Alas! it was all premature. The member for the borough changed his mind. "Circumstances," he wrote to Mr Glencairn, "had occurred which made it his bounden duty to remain stanch to his post;" and so, though Mr Glencairn was resolved

that his "post" should not continue stanch to the honourable gentleman any longer than *he* could help, there was nothing for it at present but to await the general election, which could not be distant.

This was very trying to Cosmo, under all his circumstances. In the first place, he was feverishly anxious to begin. Dim, in the far distance, but overtopping every other motive, there was a light to be reached, and not even to have started in its direction was distressing. Then the near prospect of the contest had naturally brought its preoccupations, besides specially stimulating his studious energy in fields which are sometimes of no great interest in the abstract. And now, in the reaction from this, he lost, for the time, that vantage-ground from which he had been able to discipline his love, and once more, at times, became a sport for "the tempest of the heart," with its ecstatic contemplations, its agonies of longing, and those cruel lulls of blank despondency which are the cruellest of all to bear. At such times it was in vain that he invoked Ambition, Duty, Manhood —in vain that he nerved his resolution, and tried desperately to immerse himself in the dry routine of study. Sentences read and re-read, conveyed no impression. Subtle spirits of the air filched the thoughts from the words, or interwove them with strange fantasies, or flashed the image of a haunting face over the meaningless page, or overwrote it with a haunting name in the splendour of prismatic colours. These spirits come in a note of music, in a sunbeam, in a breath of meadow-fragrance. There is no exorcism that can prevail against them. In truth, the burthen of his love was over-great for him, now that he had lost the assistance of that spring of a present excitement which derived its virtue from the hopes with which it was connected. This being gone, spirit and flesh alike began to cry out for relief. And a desire to see Esmè again, to hear her voice—but even only to see her, to be near her, though she should be unconscious of his proximity, to breathe the same air, to look at the same mountains, to establish between him and her *some* chain of association, however faint and visionary,—this pathetic desire became more and more clamorous, and grew daily to be less resisted. And a longing for a freer air than this of the town fell upon him. Here he began to feel stifled, cramped, and jaded. He would have the quickening breezes of the north; he longed for the hills and the heather, and the clear streams, and space, and freshness, and movement.

"I require a change," he said to himself. "I am overworked; but my preparations are well advanced; and, let an

election come when it may, I am ready: so that I can afford a change; it will not do to be overtrained when the time arrives. I must go away for a change; the question is, whither?" In such prosaic words of feeblest self-deception did he put the case to himself. Yes, he required a change—a change from this twilight life of separation; and the question, "Whither should he go?" was answered by his yearning for the Highland hills, where he knew that she now must be.

But how? whither *exactly?* under what pretext?

It had got to this approach to the concrete, when, one fine morning in the beginning of August, the eminent Mr Snowie of Inverness, whose wintry name has sunny associations for all northern sportsmen, waited upon Cosmo at his chambers.

"Just to see, Captain, before I leave town, if we can't even yet come to an arrangement about Finmore. It's still open; full of birds; never was a finer season; pity to lose the chance; cheap, too." Thus Snowie,—and exit in ten minutes, with a look on his face which told that Cosmo's questions, "How? whither *exactly?* under what pretext?" had found an answer which was entirely satisfactory to the worthy agent at least.

No one would for an instant venture to stigmatise Mr Snowie as a poetical character; but on this occasion it appeared to Cosmo that

"A Voice
Went with him, Follow, follow! thou shalt win!"

Let all true-hearted readers hope that the voice *did* say so, and may not prove an impostor.

CHAPTER XXI.

"It will pe somepody that iss koing to Feenmaur."

"What wye to Finmore mair nur ony ither gate?"

"Pecause there iss a crayt few ither dogs will pe koing to there twa days syne; which I haf saw on to the rod."

"But this isna a dug, Alistair; it's a man."

"You are a pretty smert fel-lo, Tchon Tcheemyson, and so iss your mither; and she leeves in Glasco toon, where aal the shops iss; and you haf a hat on the Saabuth dess, which iss like the meenister's hat; but you are ferry much into the wrong for aal. This iss not a man."

"You'll no be sayin' it's a wummin, ony wye?"

"That iss pretty true, too. She iss not a wummin, and she iss not a dog; but she iss not a man naythers. She iss a tchentelmans."

"Haw! haw! haw! haw!"

"Goot life! Tchon Tcheemyson, do not mek that tammd noise with your ucklee mouth. Stop it haystilee, or you will fricht aal the sheeps that iss on to the hullside. She iss a tchentelmans; and ferry certainly, she will pe the tchentelmans that iss com to Feenmaur; and her dogs will pe koing to there twa days syne, and I haf saw them on to the rod mysel; and her horses and her consarn and her sarvint lasses, and ither things."

"And wha *is* the gentleman? What do they ca' him?"

"She will pe a captin frae apoot England some gate. Look to her. She is takkin' the rod for Feenmaur."

. . . . . .

An interval of intense observation and silence, tempered with the sound of riotous snuffing.

. . . . . .

"Goot life! whaat will the craytur pe standin' glowerin' at the castel for, aal this time?"

It is a godsend to a Highlander in a lonely district, when any living thing above the rank of a sheep or a grouse comes within the range of his vision, for it affords him a valid excuse for abandoning his lawful occupation, and devoting himself to the phenomenon as long as it remains in sight. The questions who, whence, whither, why, and how, with many minor problems, are grappled with according to the most exhaustive methods; and where there are two philosophers to compare their hypotheses, and squabble over them, the excitement and the idleness may be quite indefinitely prolonged. The dialogue, of which the brilliant fragment above recorded formed a part, took place a few days after the events which occupied our last chapter.

The scene was a hillside overhanging a beautiful glen in the mid-Highlands of Scotland, and the speakers, as their dialects may have suggested, were a Highlander and a Lowlander—the former an ancient shepherd supposed to be "tenting" his sheep, the latter a keeper supposed to be "giein' a bit look ower the hill," in anticipation of "The Twelfth." The subject of their remarks was a gentleman who was making his way along the highroad which ran below their post of observation; but since he was merely a pedestrian, and therefore scarcely worthy of

the mystery enshrouding the "two figures"—invariably on horseback—which used to pioneer our boyhood into the delights of James's novels, we may frankly admit, at once, that he was no other than Cosmo Glencairn. Mr Snowie had dangled the bait of Finmore before his eyes at the right moment. Cosmo had risen to it with an impulse which only gave special expression to a fixed, though half-unconscious, purpose; and here he was, on the 11th of August, in the heart of the Highlands, and *en route* for the shootings in question. His dogs, by a covenant with his father, were quartered, during the off season, at Edlisfort, with training and exercising privileges on that domain; and these had arrived, two days before, in charge of his own keeper, or rather *shikari*. Nor was old Alastair at fault in any of his other surmises; for Cosmo's horses, and a small establishment hastily got together by his trusty *factotum*, had also preceded him, so that everything might be in readiness within the lodge, as well as without on the moor, against his arrival. At the conclusion of his railway journey, of some fifteen hours, from London, he felt rather cramped and fagged; so he dismissed what Alastair called "the consarn," which awaited him at the station, and started on foot, meaning to take to the heather and strike across the hills when he reached the borders of his own territory. A stretch on the hill would, he assured himself, be a beneficial and even necessary preparation for the work of the morrow. It is barely possible, however, that he had some other motive in addition.

The glen which Cosmo entered, shortly after leaving the railway, was almost wide enough, at its entrance, to be called a strath, but narrowed in rapidly, and at its farther extremity was little more than a gorge. The inner sides of the hills which formed it were marked by strange and picturesque irregularities—now projecting bastion-like bluffs and salients of displaced strata, now falling back in ravines and corries and dells. Over all, deep stretches of pine-wood drew their dark covering, smoothing harsh outlines into mellow curves, and melting abrupt discords into flowing transformations; while the lights and shadows, in following the ever-changing contour of the ground, relieved the monotony of the all-pervading and sombre green with a variety more dignified than mere contrast of colour can afford. The river, which found a channel in the centre of the glen, rested here, in a level reach, from its struggles with rock and precipice far above, and murmured melodiously along between fair slopes of heather, which came down from the foot of the hills on either side, interspersed with bright

bosquets of young larch and hazel, and birch and oak, and all that aromatic shrubbery which makes the Highland wilderness a garden of delight. The majestic silence of the summer noon was marked, rather than broken, by the voice of the water, the song of birds, and the minor sounds of Nature, which rippled, as it were, on the surface of its profound depths. At the top of the glen, high spurs from the opposing hills met and closed it in with a sheer precipice, over which the river passed from its upper to its lower channel in a noble fall. The ruins of an ancient keep hung over the caldron on a dizzy ledge, showing dimly through a haze of spray which rose from the abyss below; and on a spacious plateau farther down the right bank of the stream, a baronial edifice, in the ancient Scottish style, stood out from its background of precipice and wood, and scaur and falling foam. The season had been backward, and the first freshness of vegetation still lingered here. The young larches by the river still met the sunbeams with their tenderest green; the splendid purple of the bell-heather had not yielded to its graver substitute; the golden broom fringed the wayside; and all the riparian bells and plumes and tassels of early summer still swung joyously in the breath of the passing stream. Some slight showers had fallen on the previous day, but they had cleared the sky of every cloud, and left a legacy of thymy fragrance to the valley, which greeted Cosmo, as he entered it, with a sweet Highland welcome.

The aspect of the glen was familiar to him. He knew all its beauties by heart. Before now, as he turned into its solitudes, tired with the whirling din of London's high-pressure life, he had felt its stillness fall round him like the benison of some spirit of rest and peace; and, before now, the first inspirations of its unpolluted air had reawakened in him childhood's ecstatic sense of the goodliness of life. Here, to-day, was the same infinite repose and the same virgin air; there was nothing changed in the bravery of wood and hill; the river warbled its hymn of content in the same music as of yore, and the song which rang in the thickets was old as the glen itself. But for Cosmo, all to-day was changed and transfigured. The glen of other times was remembered as a faint and colourless sketch. Light, colour, fragrance, sound, the sweep of outlines, the harmonious whole, all now seemed instinct with an intense and beautiful vitality. Life had come into them—a soul, and a voice, borrowed from every harmony of nature, which cried to him that the world was fair, but here for him the climax of all its charms. This was Glenerlacht; and, as he turned

a curve of the road, and caught the distant thunder of the waterfall, Esmè's home—the real shrine of his pilgrimage—burst upon his view.

About half a mile from the house, the river, whose banks had by this time become high and precipitous, was crossed by a bridge; and this being the formal commencement of the avenue, it was shut from the highroad by lofty iron gates, flanked by a Gothic lodge, with a warder's tower. The arch, which formed the gateway, bore on its keystone the Germistoune escutcheon, assuring the wayfarer, by its innumerable quarterings, of the noble alliances of the family, though the ominous motto which surmounted it—

"Nicht and Micht mak Richt"

—suggested that the origin of their possessions was perhaps not altogether so respectable. About this point the highroad turned sharply to the right, as if respecting the privacy of the demesne, and wound up the hillside, till, at a discreet distance from the avenue, it resumed its direction parallel to the river. Exactly opposite the house another road branched inland to the right. This was the road to Finmore; and it was here that the hawk's eyes of the gossips in the heather above had first detected the lingering form of Cosmo.

Herrick says that—

> "Love is a circle which doth endless move
> In the same sweet eternity of love;"

and this being so, we are confident that readers will gladly be excused, now and then, from following the lover in his spiritual circumambulations under our pilotage, and will kindly fill in for themselves—some, perhaps, with the freshness of recent personal experience—the various phases of exaltation and so forth with which Love's pilgrim drew near the shrine of his divinity. To their imaginations, therefore, we commit the interval which separated Cosmo's first emotions on entering the sacred glen, from the moment when Alastair (as though resenting the misuse of time) remarked, "Goot life! whaat will the craytur pe standin' glowerin' at the castel for, *aal* this time?"

We may well believe that Cosmo had got through a good deal of this sort of contemplation, as he came slowly up the valley; in fact, that from the moment the castle became visible, his eye had rested upon no other object, and all the more intensely when a Union-jack, proclaiming the presence of the family, was seen to float from the central tower. Yet, when he

got to the cross-road, he had by no means looked his last, for he sat down, and pulling out a powerful deer-stalker's glass, proceeded to sweep therewith the castle and its grounds. Cosmo strained his eyes across the glen; but he could descry no living thing about the place: the esplanade, the terraces, the walks on the wooded hill beyond, the very windows of the house—all were scanned over and over again, but vainly. A glimpse of any one, however remotely connected with Esmè, would have been a relief; even Lord Germistoune, if he would only have condescended to show himself, would have been quite a godsend. But no one came. An hour passed. Where were all the people? Would no one ever come? What did the flag mean? He got quite peevish about the flag. If the family were not at home, why didn't some one have the common honesty to come and haul it down? It was a swindle. He grew bitter; he felt aggrieved; the petulance of a lover rose in him; and after an hour and a half of fruitless vigil, he took the road for Finmore. But—oh blessed backward glance, which no true lover e'er denied his lady or his lady's bower!—just before the road dipped, and cut him off from hope, he turned and looked once more, and this time not in vain. Figures—one, two, three—a host of figures were streaming from the castle doors; and it is needless to say that Cosmo sped back to his post of observation, and again, with trembling hands, brought his glass into position.

By this time there were at least a dozen people on the esplanade—male and female forms; but though the glass was a good one, it failed to reach the *minutiæ* of human features, polish and readjust it as Cosmo might. Figures, gestures, colours of dress—all could be distinguished; but the faces were blanks: and even about the individuality of the figures it was at first difficult to speculate, as the party remained massed together.

Presently there appeared in relief on the steps in front of the house, a figure which there was no difficulty in identifying. Tall, erect, and stiff, it extended its arms towards the group, as if directing them to some particular point; and in the blended characteristics of the lamp-post and the lion rampant, Lord Germistoune shone revealed. Apparently his instructions were not at first comprehended; for the lion's paws shot out, and sawed the air impatiently, and at angles which defied heraldic canons. And now from the group below, an airy form detached itself, and ascended the lion's pedestal, and seemed to lay playful and soothing hands upon the agitated arms. Some one

asking for an explanation, of course. Some one? Ah! here, at least for Cosmo, there was no vagueness, no uncertainty. Cruel distance might veil the divine features; but the contour, the attitudes, the undulating graces of movement—these, at twice the distance, would have proclaimed the adorable personality to the eyes and the instincts of love. Esmè! The glass shook in Cosmo's hand; his colour went and came, and his voice quivered as he murmured aloud the name which, for him, was the epitome of all music. But the rapture of steady contemplation was denied him. Esmè immediately left her father, and ran back to the group, which now broke up and streamed down to a terrace by the river, and a good deal nearer to Cosmo. And now he could see Esmé's face. Ah!

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A good deal of conference and arrangement seemed to take place; a couple of footmen brought down from the house a large oblong box; and at last, mystery and chaos solved and evolved themselves in the disorderly order of lawn-tennis. Two sets engaged in the game, which was played with much spirit by all concerned, the firm and nimble rushings and boundings of the male performers being not more full of *élan* than the wondrous swoopings and gyrations of the ladies. They played with only too much spirit to suit Cosmo's purpose; for, though a lover's eyes are quicker than other eyes, his telescope is as fractious and unmanageable as every other telescope is. And thus, when he essayed to track Esmè through the mazes of the game, this perverse instrument was never up to time. Now she would be in repose, and, the focus having been brought warily across the lawn, he would just have begun to drink in the rays of an aureole, when, lo!—a flash! a jerk!—and Cosmo's amorous gaze was lost in a bank of senseless turf. Or now, with the energy of desperation, the telescope would give chase, and participate in all the acrobatics of the game—up, down, right, left, scouring, rushing, scurrying—but doomed to eternal disappointments, for ever settling on the blue flannel body of a corpulent male, or painfully travelling up a skirt to reach a female waist of the most revolting dimensions. The sorrows of Tantalus, or of a man attempting to shoot rabbits with an Enfield rifle, sink into insignificance when compared with Cosmo's present ordeal. Exasperating, truly; so exasperating that he was just pronouncing lawn-tennis a game only worthy of Mænads and Satyrs, in which, if a Sylph permitted herself to take part, she was—— when ah! thank goodness! it was over at last. Esmè retired to the bench of spectators, and

a new game began. Everything looked promising. Now, telescope, now! Vain hopes! When the focus struggled into the proper position, it collided with a pair of male legs, and ascending, was hopelessly stopped by a broad back in a jersey striped with all the colours of the rainbow. The body thus arrayed was actually standing right in front of Esmè, and by its gestures appeared to be very gay and conversational. But surely the—the *brute* was not going to dare to stand there for ever, intercepting *her* view of the game? He might; Cosmo said to himself that he very possibly might, seeing that a fellow with stripes of that description must be capable of any enormity. But no; another figure came to the rescue—a female figure of dignified movements—who had been standing, hitherto, somewhat apart, looking up, as if in conversation, to the terrace above, from the edge of which Lord Germistoune appeared to watch the game. When Esmè retired from the contest, this lady, who was veiled and unrecognisable, at once got under way; and presently the hyperbolical jersey was replaced on the disc of the telescope by a curtain of blue serge of equal opaqueness. This woman was as bad as the man! Right in front again! What on earth was she about? She seemed to be engaged in a little amicable struggle with the invisible princess, and in which a white cashmere shawl appeared to play a prominent part. Mysterious! Ah! her object evidently was to wrap the shawl in question round the resisting form of the young lady—evidently. There! she had carried her point, and now, of course, she would go. Not a bit of it. Some officious wretch brought her a light garden-chair, and she sat down, again right in front; and all that the telescope could now report was a new aspect of the blue serge body, and, above and beyond it, the upper half of the demon in stripes, who had moved round to the back of Esmè's chair. Nothing of the fair girl was visible but fitful glimpses of the top of her hat, for these two people seemed to heave forward against each other, like opposing waves, and obscured the treasure which lay in the intervening trough. It was sickening! He turned the telescope impatiently on other members of the party, and became aware of a neat lilac figure, which seemed to flit about among the rest, like a thing of joy. All the ladies he addressed appeared to be at once agitated with laughter; while the men doubled themselves up, smote their knees, and retired, convulsed and tottering. "What a buffoon!" sneered Cosmo; and then, "Of course! *just* as I expected! Tom Wyedale!"

Cosmo observed his friend's proceedings with rather a grim

expression, which was by no means mollified when the "thing of joy," flitting past Esmè's group, was suddenly absorbed into it, and added another and decidedly aggressive element to the obscuring sea.

Matters continued to go on in this way for a long time; for, though game after game took place, and the players were constantly relieved, Esmè played no more, and the attendant group remained constant to her, and all in the same regrettable positions. "If they ONLY knew," thought Cosmo, "how ridiculous they look!" And yet a disinterested person would hardly have agreed with him; for they were all decidedly good-looking, and their gestures, however aggravating, were the gestures of well-bred and graceful people. At last a couple of empty carriages drove up to the door, and a "powdered menial" came forth, and solemnly tolled a great booming bell which hung in one of the turrets. Whereupon, like a dog infected by the barking of other dogs, Lord Germistoune immediately began to wave his hat with great impetuosity (no doubt shouting lustily the while) to the group below, which must have been well disciplined, for the games were at once discontinued, and players and spectators moved promptly towards the house. Esmè was thus again visible for a little—but very slightly: for the waves were true to their mission, and floated about her without intermission; the devoted lady leaning upon her arm; the man of stripes moving, tall and graceful, on her other side (much too close, Cosmo thought); while Tom Weydale hovered promiscuously round the group, whose lively gestures told that his quips and cranks were numerous and effective. Nothing could be more joyous than the *ensemble* of the whole party, which now disappeared, leaving Cosmo gazing into vacancy. The pageant had come and gone like the episode of a dream, wherein Lord Germistoune had been a magician that had set the revellers in order with a wave of his hand, and then dispersed them, as abruptly as Prospero's voice dismissed from their "country footing" his airy band of "fresh nymphs and sun-burnt sicklemen." Cosmo remained gazing abstractedly into vacancy, perplexed like one half roused from sleep, and doubting between illusion and reality. Very presently, however, this was succeeded by a vivid and painful sense of the reality of all he had seen. Painful? He had seen Esmè, and surely that was bliss? Where, then, was his gratitude? where his ecstacy? Yes, he had seen her, and the first glimpse of her, indeed, had electrified him; but ecstacy had been shortly suppressed by supervening circumstances, and gra- -ll- -eplaced by emotions far removed from the ecstatic. The

mere mechanical difficulties of contemplation had been damping, the physical obstructions irritating, and the persistence of the obstructionists enraging. But these were by no means all. Through force of his transcendental musings, and by the intense sympathy which an intense passion produces, Esmè had become to him, in some degree (if we may be permitted to soar so high for a parallel), what Beatrice was to Dante—ever present to him, and ever present in a halo of gracious attributes, which daily grew more and more real and familiar; so that her idea came to be linked with every association of the ethereal and the beautiful and the good which touched his consciousness. To-day, as he wandered up the glen, her spirit had seemed to come forth from all its beauties, and to hold commune with his own.

"She stooped to him
From all high places, lived in all fair lights."

And at this exalted level of sentiment he had been confronted with the scene just described.

The antithesis was obviously grotesque; but it was not its grotesqueness which struck Cosmo. A certain shock, to be sure, is involved in the idea of Psyche engaging in a boisterous sport with the full-fleshed children of men; and it may possibly have been a slight shock to Cosmo to behold the heroine of his day-dreams translated to similar conditions. But our modern Psyche is muscular. It is a wholesome fact with which we are all familiarised; so that he could not have been seriously affected by that consideration. What really affected him was, that she who had moved through his reveries in a halo of perfections had been there contemplated only in relation to *himself*. There were but two inhabitants in his psychical paradise—Esmè and himself. No other individuality intruded itself between them; she was there for him alone. Whereas here, dreamland dissolving, she was beheld as the joyous central figure of a bright and joyous life—beheld in a hundred new aspects and connections, not one of which had any relation to *him*. How complete was his nothingness to her! how wide the gulf which yawned between them! how remote and insignificant the orbit in which his life circled around hers!—such were the immediate convictions which displaced in his mind the fair fabric woven, through many a week, by the dreams of fancy and hope. Nor was this the worst. It was sufficiently desolating, indeed, to feel that he was nothing to her; it was even distressing to be convinced that she must be much to others; but a far keener anguish was involved in the suspicion that another might be much to her. The egotism

of his love, aroused and wounded, was not likely to leave unused against itself certain suggestive incidents in the little drama which had passed before his eyes. There was an eclipse in his mind of all the morning's brightness; wintry twilight reigned instead; harsh discords rent the melodious flow of his thoughts; the outer world was transfigured, the light seemed to fade in the valley, and all the voices of nature jarred together, like sweet bells jangled out of tune. Sadly he addressed himself to his journey; his step was heavy on the hill; the heather had lost all its spring; and in this sad plight he approached his solitary abode.

CHAPTER XXII.

The shooting-lodge of Finmore was charmingly situated: it stood high on a breezy plateau; no neighbouring hill overtopped it, nor was it stifled by surrounding woods. Behind and around, and far and near, the eye could range over glowing undulations of moorland, reaching at one point a distant range of hills, whence the river which watered Glenerlacht streamed down through the heather tracts, passing below Finmore, and in view of the house, till lost in the pine-woods which closed around it, as it approached the tragedy of its career, at the great fall above the castle. When next visible, its ordeal was past, and it was gliding through the lower glen where we first made its acquaintance, so that the castle and its sacred precincts were not to be seen from Finmore. The lodge—originally a farmhouse—had been added to in such a way as to make it commodious and comfortable as well as picturesque; and, altogether, it was as cheery and enviable a shooting-quarter as man need wish for. Cosmo had already spent many happy days there, but this afternoon there was no happy recognition in his eye as he approached it. After all, the lodge and the shooting were now mere pretexts, which had no interest apart from the real object that had brought him here; and, since gloom and darkness enshrouded that object at present, he could see nothing in the place but a centre of desolation. Even the sportsman's instinct—so hard to suppress—failed to assert itself. The "muir-cock" gabbled its ineffable music, as he passed over the muir; covey after covey whirled up from his very feet, and deployed their rich brown phalanxes before his eyes; the blackcock *vedette* rolled

his burnished plumage leisurely against the sun,—but Cosmo's pulses were unstirred. A flight of wild duck sailed over his head, so close that he could plainly see the green neck of the leading mallard, and almost catch its eye; yet even this supreme incident failed to rouse him. A mallard, and within shot! What stronger evidence could be given of morbid and unnatural apathy? Grange, his confidential servant and *factotum* of many years' standing, who had accompanied him on his many travels, and "understood him" better than most people, met him at the door as he arrived, and was vexed to see that the air of listless depression which he had latterly shaken off had returned. Philipson, his *shikari*, who had never seen him in such a mood before, was at his wits' end to account for such gloom on the eve of the shooting season; and when he strolled round to the kennels, old Davidson, the keeper, was perplexed, mortified, and outraged by the callousness of his tone in dealing with topics of the sacredest interest.

Davidson was a Lowlander transplanted to the Highlands by his absentee master, with some idea that in the "antagonism of races" he might find a safeguard against spoliation. He was a long-headed, persistent old fellow, with a keen eye to the main chance, and a foible for getting his own way, and of wearing out opposition by a sometimes maddening prolixity; but he was eager about sport, and, if dishonest, was too clever to let one have the annoyance of detecting him, so that he was, to a very fair extent, the right man in the right place, as far as the tenant was concerned.

"How mony guns wull there be the morn, sir?" he inquired, after he and Cosmo had exchanged greetings.

"Only my own," said Cosmo.

Davidson gave a start of surprise and disapprobation, and said, "We wus reckonin' on fower."

"Were you? I really don't know why you should."

"Weel, sir, ye see, wi' nae mair than ae gun, there's nae sort o' justice can be dune the muir ava.'"

"We'll try it, at all events."

"Maybe some ither jantleman will be expeckit sune?"

"No; I don't expect any one, this season."

"Peety me! That's bad, that's dayspret bad. Ye see, sir, the muir's big, and the birds is plenty; but, if we dinna tak them sune, we'll mibbee no' get them ava'. They're gey strong, the year, and a wee thing wild a'ready; and if so be as the wather comes to brak——whoosh! it's a' bye. Ye'll no' win within twa perishes o' them. Ye may as weel gang grouse-

shuting in Loch Lomond. Ae gun's no' fit to dae mair than kittle this muir. Beggin' your paurdon, sir, it's clean wastry. Mr Pheelipson, your ain sportman, wus geein' his opeenyun this mornin' that we suld begin wi' sax guns at the laist—that's what *he* thinks. 'It's ma opeenyun,' says he, 'that——'"

"Never mind Philipson's opinion; I must do the best I can with my own gun. There will be all the more birds for next year; that's one thing."

But a plethora of birds next year had no bearing on the "tips" of the present season, which, at this rate, promised to be a minus quantity; so Davidson returned to the charge.

"Weel, sir, excaize me; it's no' the birds o' this year, or the next, or the next afterhin', that I'm thinkin' o'. What I aye like is, to contant the jantleman wha is ma maister for the time so bein'—as ye hae been yersel, sir, and sae may ken. And I'll jist exactlee mak sae bauld as to say that ae gun *is* no' fit——"

"How do you find the dogs this year, Davidson?"

"Brawly, sir; the dugs is jist in what I may ca' extra fine condeetion. Eh! puir beesties! it'll be a hard job to fin' aix-erceese for them a', let alane wark, the year. Wi' ae gun it's clean impossible. What's to come o't, I dinna ken; unless, indeed, ye was tae tak the thocht o' gettin' twa or three, or mibbee fower, jantlemen ower frae the caustle, frae time to time. There's a heap o' company there, I'm tell't; and Mr Pheelipson thinks he saw Mr Whydal at the station—Mr Whydal, sir; that's him that was here ance afore. Dod! he's a gran' shot, him!—and—weel, sir, that's the haill chance that I can see for the muir and the dugs and a'" ("keeper's pocket" being substituted for "a'," Mr Davidson's drift and pertinacity are explained); "and that's no' ma ain thocht alane, sir—it's the opeenyun o' yer ain body-sportman, Mr Pheelipson, wha said——"

"Confound Mr Philipson, and you too! Why do you keep bother, bother, bothering about the moor? I suppose I may be allowed to judge for myself?" cried Cosmo, whose exhausted patience was not reinforced by this allusion to the castle and its male inhabitants.

"Aweel, sir, ye maun excaize me; it was for yer ain pleesure I was thinkin', and naethin' else. Ye'll tak a look at the dugs, sir?"

"No; hang the dogs!"

"Aweel, aweel. Beggin' your paurdon, sir, what'na pairt was ye thinkin' o' takin' the morn, sir?"

"Any part; I don't care; it's all one to me."

"If so be as we wus takin' Craig Rona side, sir, I bude to sen' the dugs awa' airly, ye see, sir; an' ye'd hae to stairt braw an' airly yersel."

"Then we'll not take Craig Rona to-morrow."

"It wad be the maist feesablest kin' o' beat for the morn, sir."

"I tell you, I won't go there."

"Weel, sir, there's the 'Three Kimmers'—a tarable heap o' birds thereawa', the year."

"Well, I don't know. I won't decide to-night. Have everything ready to start at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, and I'll make up my mind in the meantime."

"Ten o'clock, sir! and it 'the Twalft'!"

"I said 'ten,' didn't I? Have everything ready at that hour; and when I give an order, obey it, and don't discuss it." So saying, Cosmo turned angrily on his heel, and left the pawky old keeper much marvelling at the change which had come over his once urbane and enthusiastic master.

"I tall ye, Lauchie," he afterwards explained to one of his subs, "the man's clean cheinged. He cam' roun' to the kannels for naethin' ava' that I could see; glowerin' and fuffin' up at ilka word; and naethin' wad please and naethin' wad sairve him—deein' and dammin' a'thing, frae Mr Pheelipson hissel doon to the dugs, puir beesties—him that was aye sae douce and ceevil; and nae kin' o' hert in the sport, and nae kin' o' respek for the day itsel—him that was aye sae keen. Dod! it's maist tar'ble the cheinge that's com'd ower him. Ae gun, too! Niver heed, Lauchie! Wait a wee, ma man! That Mr Whydal 'll be ower to halp us, or I'm muckle mistaen. He's an awfie notion o' the 'Three Kimmers,' that Mr Whydal. 'Davidson,' says he to me when he gaed awa' the last time (he gied me five pun', mair be token), 'aye keep the "Three Kimmers" for me,' says he, 'when ye hear that I'm in thae pairts,' says he. Dod! an' I wull."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Writers whose aim it is to insist upon the tearful aspects of humanity, have made large use of the pathos which associates itself with the abandonment of cherished habits and pleasures,

when bereavement has dislocated a life, and taken the savour away from everything that once delighted it. But mankind are capricious in the bestowal of their sympathy; and though they extend it eagerly to the sorrows of the heart, where death has intervened, have little or none to spare for the sufferings of the lover, however true and poignant they may be. Therefore we shall not attempt the hopeless task of touching the reader's sense of the pathetic, by describing the melancholy evening which Cosmo passed in his lodge on this 11th of August; nor dwell upon that happier time when for him the eve of "the Twelfth" was a vigil, when he watched the stars grow pale and the dawn approach, eager to rush afield with the first practicable light. Suffice it to say that he passed the evening in sore discontent, and that, if his night was sleepless, the fever of sport had nothing to do with it; for he was better than his word, and, to Davidson's great disgust, was not even ready at ten next morning, but kept, what that worthy called "the haill apothek" (including, perhaps, keepers, dogs, and birds' impatient for annihilation) waiting, for a solid hour.

The day was perfect; and to a sportsman in full possession of his senses, such tardiness would have appeared an impossible crime. With no symptom of conscious guilt, however, though with a sad eye and a heavy step, Cosmo at last made his appearance.

"Good morning, Davidson; a fine day it seems."

"A fine day it *wus*, sir; but I'm dootin' the best o' it's gane by. They've been bleezin' awa' on the caustle muir this five hours."

"Ah, well! they've got half their fun over, and mine is all before me,"—a bit of philosophy which Davidson could only meet with the remark—

"Ov coorse, if a jantleman thinks naethin' ava' o' the bag, ae hour may be as gude as anither."

With the view of pointing the moral that a large establishment was criminally wasted upon a single gun, he had paraded a preposterous number of gillies and dogs, and, with fine satire, had even produced a couple of hill-ponies, duly equipped with panniers.

"What the deuce is the meaning of all this?" cried Cosmo, when his eye fell upon the imposing force.

Davidson gave a well-acted start of sudden recollection. "Ach, dod! I clean forgot, sir! Ye see, it's jist whaat's usual here on 'the Twalft,' wi' fower or five, or mibbee sax guns; and it fair escapit me that we wus gaun to attempt the muir

wi' ae gun. Hae, Lauchie; tak hame thae pownies, and—— How mony dugs will ye be wantin', sir?"

"Two couple will do, and another man besides yourself."

"Vara weel, sir. Tak yont thae pownies, Lauchie; and ye'll stay wi' me and the Captin, Aunra, and keep the black setter and the livert pinter, and thae twa young anes, and Rock; and see you, Donald, tak hame thae ither dugs; and a' you men, ye may gang and hag peats, or howk tawties, or whaat ye please. There's nae wark here for *you*, the day; mibbee the year, wha kens?" he added, *sotto voce;* and having thus made his dispositions with an air of being injured, yet resigned, he relapsed into a sulky silence. Cosmo, all unconscious of the poor keeper's wrath, and with a mind occupied with very different subjects, mechanically took his gun and some cartridges, and, followed by the other men, sauntered slowly on to the moor. His eyes turned in the direction of Glenerlacht, and his steps followed his gaze. "We'll haud wast a wee, Captin," suggested Davidson; but his remark was unheeded.

"Wull I lowse the dugs, sir?" he presently asked.

"Yes, yes; of course."

"But we're gaun strecht doon win', sir."

"Never mind."

The dogs were being uncoupled, when a covey rose beside them—a splendid strong covey. Cosmo mechanically cocked his gun, levelled, and drew trigger. Click! He was unloaded.

Davidson's red beard and whiskers bristled with indignation. "Dod! that's maist notawrious," he cried, when he recovered breath; and then, as another covey, startled by the music of the first, rose and swept away down wind—"See till them! jist see till them! Ganging awa' in thoosands! poasiteevly in thoosands! and a' doon to his lordship's grun'. Ae gun's bad eneuch, but ae unlodden' gun——"

"Hold your tongue, Davidson; don't make such an infernal noise." And on they went steadily down the wind—steadily down towards the glen which was magnetising Cosmo. The dogs, hunting on a side wind, got occasional points, which Cosmo negotiated; but sometimes the scent drew them far away back, up wind, upon which occasions he steadily declined to pay any attention to them. Davidson was in despair. "Hae, Captin! Juno's pintin'," he would cry.

"Where?"

"Jist aboot a mile ahint" (bitterly).

"Let her point, then, or call her off. I'm not going back all that distance. Why don't you keep your dogs in hand?"

Then, after a little—"It's the young dug this time, sir."

"Hang the young dog!"

"It'll clean ruin that young dug, if he gets nae nottice taen o' his pints."

But neither Davidson's remarks nor the dog obtained the slightest attention.

"He's clean daft," whispered the keeper to his sub.

At last they reached the boundary between Finmore and Dunerlacht; and at last Cosmo was obliged to "tak wast;" but he did so in the most unsatisfactory manner, for he kept close to the boundary wall, and his head was turned constantly in the direction of the glen, and all the more constantly when the smoke of the castle became visible, rising above the woods.

"Deil's i' the man!" muttered Davidson, "he'll no tak his ain birds. What wye will he be aye keekin' and glowerin' efter his lordship's?"

A fine sunny slope of heather, however, where the birds lay thick, here intervened, and Cosmo's great skill as a shot enabled him to run his score up tidily, notwithstanding his preoccupation, and Davidson was temporarily appeased.

Presently the sound of guns on the Dunerlacht side became audible.

"We'll gang sooth a wee, Captin," suggested the keeper. "The castle folk is comin' this way, and mibbee they'll be thinkin' that we're on the watch for their birds, if we hing sae nigh the march; we'll get the win' brawly, mair be token."

Again the voice of the charmer charmed in vain. A turret of the castle now became visible. Cosmo halted, and had a good long stare at it, indifferent to the fact that Juno was turning imploring eyes backward from the steadiest of points, and that the young dog was "backing," but with every symptom of impatience. Davidson called the dogs off, "took them up," and remained standing motionless—the picture of petrified indignation. Cosmo had his look, and went on again without a remark. The dogs were again uncoupled, and presently Cosmo had another halt and another stare, accompanied by the same manœuvres on the part of the keeper, who was now beyond the power of speech. Thus matters went on, time after time, till, when it was quite two o'clock, Cosmo turned from one of his long contemplations and said ("just as if naething was wrang ava'")—

"I think it's about time for luncheon now, Davidson. Let's see what you've got in that basket."

He was leaning against the march dyke, with his face away

from Dunerlacht, when suddenly something that sounded like the war-cry of Red Indians was bellowed into his ear, and he sustained a shock on the back which shot him forward almost on to the top of the kneeling keepers. Staggering back, he beheld Davidson's upturned face wreathed in grins of delight, and heard him say—

"Maister Whydal! I'm prood to see ye, sir, the day."

"Aha, Mr Cosmo! unearthed you at last; sly old fox! This is what you call the islands of the Ægean, is it? Oh, you miscreant! as soon as you think I'm planted for the autumn, you stand in for Finmore! Shabby, upon my life! too shabby! a great deal too shabby!"

"It was quite a sudden thought," said Cosmo, with some confusion, when he had shaken hands with his friend, whose prodigious vitality and *quasi* geniality had a sort of charm, when in his company, which softened Cosmo's harsher thoughts of him, in spite of himself.

"That's no excuse," replied Tom. "I always measure the merit of an impulse by its opportuneness. Now, to make this impulse of yours a good one, it ought to have exploded in May, down at Como. Never mind. We may be happy yet. I say, Davidson, how are the 'Three Kimmers'?"

"Hech! hech! hech!" chuckled the keeper, in great delight. "The vara words—the vara eedaintical words—I was expeckin'! The 'Three Kimmers,' sir, is brawly; jist smoored wi' grouse, the year."

You'll have me over one of these fine days to give them a toozling."

Weel, sir, they'll waant a' the toozlin' they can get; and I'm share we'll be prood to see ye, sir (beggin' the Captin's paurdon), for ye can see yersel, Mr Whydal, that we're short-handed; and you that kens 'The Kimmers,' kens brawly that wi' nae mair than ae gun——"

"Get the lunch out, Davidson, and don't stand chattering there all day. You'll lunch with me, Tom?"

"Well, I don't know; let's see what you've got."

"Oh! something quite simple—sandwiches, probably, and sherry and cold tea. Is that it, Davidson?"

"That's the apothek, sir; naythur mair nur less."

"I can't say I think much of 'the apothek,' then. No, Cosmo, I won't lunch with you to-day. By the by, I have an invitation for you to join our lunch-party; indeed that's what I came for. Lord Germistoune (I'm with him, of course) asked the keeper a few minutes ago who that was platooning away on Finmore,

and we heard for the first time that you were here; and the old gentleman presents his compliments, and hopes, &c. &c. They're close by. We'd better go at once. There's a *pâté*, but it's not large; and Jack Ruggles, who eats for ten, had his eye on it before I left. Let us go."

"But am I really invited?"

"Of course."

"Then how on earth did you think of staying to lunch here?"

"Oh, if you had had anything really very eatable, I wouldn't have let the other lunch stand in my way. A reindeer's tongue, perhaps. Yes, I think, for a reindeer's tongue, in peace and quietness, I would have let his lordship slide."

"Well, you *are* a cool hand."

"I am; it's the secret of my success in the face of interminable difficulties; cool, sagacious, prompt. Come on."

Cosmo got over the wall and accompanied his friend.

"Good sport, Tom?" he asked.

"Very fair, indeed, I think; but the guns hadn't all come in. My pal and I certainly have done well; but the score wasn't made up when I left. We have eight guns out, including the old man, who won't go for much, and a French Marquis, who is more likely to bag a pony or a gillie than anything else, from what I saw of his start. But it's really a great moor. By the by, when I've taken the cream off it, I'll come and have a look at your 'Kimmers'—seriously, I will."

"That's most kind of you."

"Oh, you may sneer as much as ever you please, but I will."

"All right, Tom—all right; you shall;" and then, with an effort to appear unconcerned, but conscious of a tremor in his voice, he said, "Have you a pleasant party in the house?"

"Ye-es; on the whole, pretty decent. Too many people, though—we dine twenty-five. I hate that. Too many women too; bothering all over the place; won't let you alone for a moment—billiards, lawn-tennis, everything. They're all up here to-day; jolted up in carts, by George! Even that old hag Lady Bugles has come. She will certainly never get *all* her patent teeth, and the whole of her complexion, back to the castle. That's one comfort."

"What do you mean by 'all up here'?" faltered Cosmo, who had turned very pale.

"Exactly what I say. They've come up here with the luncheon, to bother us over it; and they've brought us all the way down to this corner, right away from the afternoon beats, just to suit their own convenience. Women *are* so infernally

selfish! It's all owing to that abominable Mrs Crock, who has her eye on Lord Ribston, and is always scheming things of the sort. She might save herself the trouble, for Ribston's on another tack altogether—Miss Douglas, you know, *my* heiress, ha! ha! I say, do you remember how you flared up about her, that night you had the blues, at Cadenabbia? ha! ha! ha! Well, Ribston is 'on' in that quarter; perhaps *he* might save himself the trouble too. *Nous verrons.* And here they are; and just as I thought, old Ruggles *has* collared the *pâté.* Look at him! the cormorant!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

They had turned the shoulder of a little knoll, and came quite suddenly upon the party, who were disposed in every variety of picnic attitude, in a sheltered hollow. Cosmo was vaguely conscious of a large concourse of people; of a blaze of colour; of a loud hum of talk and laughter, and of the clatter of knives and plates. But he saw nothing distinctly, and paused at the edge of the circle, in a state of complete bewilderment. Then he heard a voice cry, "Unearthed him, you see, Lord Germistoune! caught him in the very act of a sulky luncheon!" And then he was aware of a quaint green shooting-coat, ridiculously puckered up at the shoulders; and of a preposterous grey sugar-loaf hat, decked with a black-cock's tail; and of a pair of shepherd-plaid trousers and yellow gaiters; and of a long bony hand which touched his own icily with two of its fingers; and lastly, of a harsh and metallic voice which recalled him to himself, like a *douche,* and proclaimed that the *ensemble* made up Lord Germistoune.

"How do you do, sir? how do you do?" said his lordship pompously. "Be seated here. Ronald! a game-bag for the gentleman. There is a pasty and a *mayonaise,* and a recommendable *galantine.* Let me help you to something."

His dislike for Cosmo was cordial; but the instincts of heather hospitality are strong, and the resultant of these two forces was a manner in which austerity and fussiness were rather uncomfortably blended.

"And for wine," he went on, "which I never drink on the moor, there is sherry and light bordeaux. These heretics, as

you see, drink champagne. I am too much of a sportsman to do that, or even to recommend the heresy; still, if you *will* be heretical," &c. &c.; and having made superficial arrangements for Cosmo's nourishment, he turned his back upon him frankly, and resumed his conversation with an eager-looking French gentleman, which Cosmo's arrival had interrupted.

Left thus to himself, and with his self-possession somewhat restored, he cast a rapid glance over the party, and at once encountered Esmè's eyes, who greeted him with a gracious bow and a kindly smile, and, as he was staggering up to go and pay formal respects, cried, "Pray don't think of rising just now, Mr Glencairn; pray don't. I am sure you must be dreadfully hungry, after your morning's work. I hope you have had very good sport."

Hungry! sport! what did the words mean? Cosmo, blushing and stammering like an idiot schoolboy, replied *à tort et à travers*, but was generally understood to intimate that, having eaten thirteen and a half brace of grouse that forenoon, he now felt himself pretty much in the humour for sport—a statement which roused the interest of his neighbours, so that he was conscious of a slight titter, followed by a short silence of curious observation; under which circumstances he devoted himself to his luncheon with a false air of appetite and absorption, but tingling all over, and feeling that the merest worm which crawls this earth occupies a high place in the scale of creation compared with his; also, that it would be a capital thing if the hill above would kindly flow down, and overwhelm him and all the rest, and so blot out for ever the history of this accursed moment.

But the silence was not of long duration; for this picnic was unlike the normal picnic, that most *triste* and sodden of festivities. It was really gay. Whether it was owing to the air, or the heather, or the champagne heresy, or what not, Cosmo thought he had never been among people who so laughed and talked, and seemed so generally to enjoy themselves; and when he had long sunk into well-earned oblivion, he began to look about him, and take stock of the party, which, as Tom had said, was large. Though Cosmo had, yesterday, bestowed most of his attention on one group, he recognised a good many of the people who had taken part in what to him was a pantomime, on the lawn-tennis ground: with a good many faces, too, he was familiar, as a town-frequenter, but he saw no personal acquaintance. There were many of the types, male and female, [illegible] to be met with at such, and indeed most, social gather-

ings, at a certain social level: the London "young man of the day," with his fine *physique* and comely features, and that look of hard immobility and indifference, in which our cynics read the selfishness and irreverence of his nature; and the London "young lady of the day," with her eternal gleesomeness, which bears (according to our cynics) the same relation to the fresh joy of youth which her premature pearl-powder bears to its bloom; and that maturer hawk-like lady (inevitable, wherever two or three are gathered together for the *cultus* of Pleasure and Mammon), with her restless look of craning, which suggests that she is hungry for something——, for some one to love perhaps, but much more likely (if she is single) for some one to marry, or in any case to toady; and the shaggy man of distinction, who stands upon his own merits, and is here and everywhere, and indeed in the most incongruous places, because he is a "topic of the day;" and the plump, comely young matron, just under middle age, well-dressed, popular, all things to all men (to their faces that is), but nothing to *any one* man (having chosen the safer paths of gastronomy), except her husband, and not very much to him, who is also here, young-looking, gentleman-like, easy, indifferent, fond of a rubber and a good run, but on the whole merely an appendage to the pleasant selfish humbug who is his helpmate; and the iron-grey club man, whose face is to be seen framed in some window of almost any club in St James's Street or Pall Mall, who "abominates this sort of thing," but braves it, in consideration of the cook and the cellar, and because his doctor has prescribed ozone; and a sprinkling of neutrals, only remarkable as being God's creatures; and—and all the rest of them: except, by the by (and this is a large and important exception), those sprightly matrons who have histories, whether preserved by oral tradition in clubs, or entered in the chronicles of the law courts; except, too, those gay dogs who have helped them to compile their biographies, and have the misfortune to be, for the moment, notorious as their *collaborateurs*. These were quite unrepresented; for Lord Germistoune, independently of the fact that he loved his daughter, was, as we have seen, full of antique prejudice, and belonged to that stale old epoch, when a cracked or dusky reputation was socially as disqualifying as dirty hands or doubtful linen. There were some "locals" too, not so easily to be classed, except in the rough-and-ready way in which Tom Wyedale told them off, as "fellows with the air of having their coats made by their bootmakers, and of cherishing earnest convictions about police rates and the Colorado beetle."

The business part of the entertainment was over, except in so far as concerned Mr Ruggles, who was still in position in front of the *pâté*, appearing to be somewhat swollen and jaded, but with a look in his eye of "die but never surrender." The variegated party had shifted and shuffled themselves into congenial groups or couples. The men, cigarette in mouth, were sprawling, nineteenth-century fashion, among the ladies, at every angle and in every attitude suggested by ease rather than grace, and were languidly accepting the attentions of surrounding nymphs, who did their best to solace and divert "the poor, tired, worn-out unfortunates."

The liveliest group was typical; it displayed a *parterre* of ravishing female heads, and, cropping up in the midst of them, a pair of feet and calves, encased in nailed shooting-boots and knickerbocker stockings, round which the fair heads swayed and bobbed with little screams and cacklings of delight, responsive to certain growing monosyllables which came up from the heather, and intimated that the unseen "balance" of the feet and legs was a humorist, or person "who is *such* fun." Other groups were "in the same fancy," and mirth reigned over all.

Cosmo, although almost crushed into callousness, still felt a relief that Esmè was not one of the devotees of the boots and stockings. She remained with the discreet group who had been about her at luncheon—consisting of a shaggy-looking elderly gentleman, an unattractive young lady, and the lady who had played such an obscuring part on the previous day, and in whom he now recognised Mrs Ravenhall. None of them faced his way, and they were earnestly listening to the shaggy man, who appeared to prose, or at least to lecture, for he was not within ordinary ear-shot. The commonest civility and manners ought now to have taken Cosmo round to pay his respects to his young hostess, and to the only other lady whom he knew in the party. He felt this only too well; but he was rooted to the spot, and not merely sensible of his *gaucherie*, but also of the almost grotesque isolation in which he sat, attempting to carry it off by a ghastly semblance of interest in the structure of a blue-bell, which he peered into and held up to the light, as if its calyx were pregnant with botanical mystery. Lord Germistoune, with his back turned to him, still hammered away to the French gentleman, a good deal in the vein of our Transatlantic cousins when on their favourite theme of "American institutions." But his conversation came to an end at last, and with it some commencement of relief for Cosmo.

Lord Germistoune's "finish" was in this way: "Vous savez, M. le Marquis, que chez nous—chez les Ecossais—il y a des—des—chose!—je prétends qu'il existe, entre le seigneur Ecossais et ses vassaux, un certain lien qu'on ne trouve nullement d'ailleurs. Moi, par exemple, j'aime mon peuple, comme père, comme roi. Mon peuple, de leur part, entretient, à mon égard, une espèce de fanatisme; il me regarde comme un être tout-puissant, illustre, et fier. En même temps ils trouvent, ces pauvres gens, que pour eux, je suis d'une tendresse tout-à-fait paternelle. Je le suis. Ils ont raison, ces pauvres gens. Mais——what the d—l is that man M'Ardle about? What are you about, you great blundering jackass? Go away, sir! Get out of my sight. Where's Hammond? How often have I told him to bring up a proper number of footmen on these occasions! The idea of an infernal savage, like you, tumbling about here, among ladies and valuable china! Be off, sir! Why do you stand staring there? Where the d—l is Hammond?" Hammond not putting in an appearance, his lordship jumped up, and hastily introducing Cosmo to the Marquis, went off to deal with him who was answerable for the appearance of poor M'Ardle—a gillie who, acting as an improvised waiter, had walked into a *mayonaise* with one foot, and, with the other, finally subdued the fortress which had made so stout a resistance to the impact of Mr Ruggles. The Marquis was a good deal mystified by this discrepancy between the theory of the patriarchal relation and its development in practice; but he was too polite to show his feelings, and merely said, with a smile, as he looked after the angry old gentleman, "C'est une plaisanterie—un petit jeu de Papa—*one jock*, n'est ce pas, monsieur?" to which Cosmo assented, and, relieved to have some one to talk to at last, at once entered on the subject of the day's sport. This was the Marquis's first experience of grouse-shooting, and he had enjoyed it very much; he had exploded, he said, many *cartouches*, and felt pretty confident that he had severely wounded several birds, though none had exactly fallen. But he confided to Cosmo that the actual nature of the grouse involved a disappointment. He had expected to see in it an aggravated sort of eagle—larger and more ferocious than the ordinary type; and when he belted on his *couteau de chasse* in the morning, had regarded that weapon as the possible instrument of his deliverance, in a death-struggle with the awful bird of prey.

This kind of *chasse*, therefore, he found to be deficient in the element of glory, and so far disappointing, though, in other re-

spects, entitled to rank respectably among the sports with which he was familiar—including the pursuit of the *merle* and the *alouette*, which latter he described as "une espèce de gibier fort difficile;" and then he prattled on with amazing zest and volubility, which so many Frenchmen bestow on *le sport* in all its developments, and which often makes one wonder at the small amount of wool which is connected with all this vociferous cry. To Cosmo, the Marquis was a real relief, and at first he gave him all the attention which he had bestowed on the bluebell; but presently certain movements took place in the party which caused his attention to flag, and soon drew it off, definitively, to other objects.

The "humorist," who, as far as the general public were concerned, had been for a long time represented by his boots and stockings alone, at last finished his cigar, and rose lazily to a sitting posture, displaying, among the fair damsels who encompassed him, a yawning indifference which suggested the idea of a sultan bored in the zenana, or the "herald of the morn" getting under way for his morning stroll, or, what the humorist actually was, a great *parti*, carelessly dispensing with attentions always at his disposal, and therefore cheap as the cigar-butt which he had just flung away. Cosmo beheld his resurrection, and recognised the individual whose striped raiment and general objectionableness had attracted his anxious attention on the previous day. This was Lord Ribston, of whom Tom Wyedale had spoken. Cosmo did not know him, but shrewdly connected Tom's remarks with what he had himself observed on the terrace and what he now saw, and felt that he beheld the peer who was "schemed for" by Mrs Crock, but vainly, his noble aspirations being otherwise directed. He was very good-looking, though deficient of that "weary look about the eyes," without which we feel that a high-born and much-hunted *parti* is scarcely justified in intruding himself into the pages of a novel. There was nothing of this sort about Lord Ribston, who was a fine animal, of tall stature, with broad shoulders and a fine healthy complexion, and rich, dark, curly hair, and full of that kind of vigour of well-fed youth, when digestion is unimpeded by a single care. He was, moreover, a man who, being pretty confident of having his own way, and when, and how he liked it—particularly among women—was, naturally enough, in the habit of consulting nothing but his own convenience or caprice, in regulating his actions. Thus, though it may at once be admitted that he was smitten with Esmè, and though, therefore, he might naturally have been expected to devote himself to her

on the present occasion, he yet, as we have seen, did nothing of the sort. He had a philosophical conviction that one pleasure at a time is better than two or three commingled. He was also excessively fond of eating; and thus he had felt that he would be unable to enjoy his luncheon satisfactorily were his attention distracted by the immediate presence of his lady-love. Similarly, he had decided that the cigar of digestion would be more comfortably smoked in the attitude of the worshipped, than in that of the worshipper. Hence his separation from Esmè during the meal; hence, too, the tableau of boot and stocking which had supervened. But the pleasures of the table being exhausted, and the pleasant addenda of smoke and incense having had their share of attention, his mind reverted to Esmè, but not, by any means, with the anxiety of a lover who fears that his absence may involve forgetfulness, or another's opportunity. Lord Ribston was superior to any vulgar tremors of that sort; it simply now occurred to him that it would be a pleasant thing to go and look at Esmè's pretty face, and that the artless music of her voice would soothe him, after the harsh *fanfares* of forced laughter. Therefore he arose, regardless of the frank remonstrances of his satellites, and rolled his fine bulk leisurely over to the group which was still hanging upon the utterances of the shaggy senior.

This gentleman, who represented the "man of distinction" or "topic of the day" element, was purring away about fossiliferous strata and the Cambrian schists, and was listened to by Esmè, because she was amiable and his hostess, by Mrs Ravenhall as Esmè's body-guard, and by Miss Milkington—the complementary young lady—because, being dreary and unattractive, and, generally speaking, "out of the swim," she had nothing else to do. He was a bore, however, and perhaps, therefore, deserved extinction, though scarcely in the abrupt manner in which it was administered by Lord Ribston.

"If," the *savant* was saying—"if we hold, with Sir Roderick, and argue from the condition of these schists——" when his lordship plumped down in the middle of the group, and remarked—

"What's a schist? anything good to eat? By the by, Miss Douglas, let me congratulate you on the luncheon,—best done thing I've seen for ages. How we're to shoot after it, I don't know." To which Esmè made a suitable reply, and then said to the discomfited "topic of the day"—

"You were telling us, Dr Pentacle, that Sir Roderick Murchison——"

"I was simply going to remark, that if we hold, with Sir Roderick, that the phenomena exhibited by these schists——" But the word "schist" was intolerable to Lord Ribston; he put his foot down upon it. "For heaven's sake, Dr Pentacle!" he cried, "let us off the schists till the smoking-room to-night. I don't think violent language of that sort ought to be used before ladies. Do you, Mrs Ravenhall?"

"How rude you are, Lord Ribston!" said Mrs Ravenhall, with an appearance of suppressing laughter which wounded the *savant* more than Ribston's brutality, so that he rose and left them, saying meekly that they must forgive an old pedagogue for boring them with his unseasonable lore.

"Got his back up," said Lord Ribston.

"Cruel of you!" said Mrs Ravenhall.

"Serves him right for boring Miss Douglas," quoth my lord.

"I shall go," said Esmè, rising, "and beg him to tell me about Sir Roderick's theory; it is *most* interesting;" and, in this way, having snubbed the snubber, she was going to leave them, when Lord Germistoune—who had returned from worrying Hammond — was observed to meet the Professor, and to take him by the arm, and to carry him off towards the top of the knoll, no doubt giving him plenty of new ideas about the Old Red Sandstone, &c. &c.,—for Lord Germistoune was many-sided, had an opinion upon every subject, and was always right.

"You must postpone *that* pleasure, Miss Douglas," said Lord Ribston, ignoring the fact that Esmè was displeased; "but seriously, do you care to know about schist, and that kind of thing?"

"I think it is always interesting to hear a man talk about a subject which he really understands."

"Ah! now I shall know how to interest you; what I've always wished to do. But do you know, Miss Douglas, I think it *is* rather difficult to interest you."

"Do you find me *blasée?*" laughed Esmè.

"No, no, not that; but you don't seem to care about things —*you* know what I mean."

"Not quite, Lord Ribston; because I do care about a great many things."

"One can interest these others" (with a wave of his hand in the direction of his recent disciples) "about anything; but it's different with you. Yet, somehow, I like your way best; only I *should* like to interest you. Help me, Mrs Ravenhall, with an idea. How can I interest Miss Douglas?"

"Perhaps Tom can help us. Here, Tom! Tom!" to her brother, who was hovering about from group to group.

"Well, what's the matter?"

"Come and sit down here. We are in committee; we want an idea, and you must help us."

"I'll give you an idea; without sitting down, though, because I'm going to see the keeper about my afternoon beat."

"Well, what is it?"

"It's quite frank, I warn you."

"Well?"

"It is simply this, that the Twelfth of August is sacred to grouse and not to small-talk, and that it is high time for us to be taking the hill."

Esmè laughed. "How deliciously in earnest you are, Mr Wyedale!" she said.

"I am, you know," cried Tom, in his eager, aggrieved sort of way; "but don't you think I am right? I know you do, because you believe in earnestness. I look at it in this way, don't you see: I can't well have more than thirty-five or forty 'Twelfths,' at best. Half of these, at least, will be wet, and the other half will be eaten into by illness, the want of a moor, and other accidents. Altogether, it's extremely improbable that I shall have more than two or three such anniversaries of the day as this, in the course of my life. So I'm all for a start. Come, Ribston, here's my idea—you get up and help me to agitate for a move. You are a swell, and will be listened to. Come, *carpe diem!*"

"Carp it yourself, old fellow."

"Tom, you positively *are* a savage," cried his sister. "What you really mean is to drive us all home."

"Not a bit of it; I should recommend you to stay here and enjoy the mountain air."

"All by ourselves?"

"There are no bandits about; besides, you'll have old Spectacles or Binnacles, or whatever he calls himself, and all the other cripples, to look after you."

"A tempting programme, indeed! Come, Tom, sit down."

"I'll move in twenty minutes, Wyedale," said Lord Ribston.

"You shall," cried Tom; "and in the meantime, I'll go and see the keeper."

"No, no, Tom," urged his sister; "sit down and amuse us. We were getting rather *triste*. Come."

"No, I can't; but I'll find a substitute. There's poor Glencairn being bored to death by the Marquis. Look at his wistful

glances! Quite a charity to release him. Hi! Cosmo! Wanted! Come here! Ladies want you!"

So Tom went off, and so, at last, there was nothing left for Cosmo but to harden his heart, and go across to the spot at which he had been steadily glaring, ever since Lord Ribston had flung his free-and-easy form into the group. Most embarrassing at best to meet Esmè! but to meet her now, thus, covered with the ignominy of demonstrated clownishness, was too overpowering. How he got across he could never have told you. Suffice it that the feat *was* performed, and that he presently found himself sitting pretty calmly beside Esmè, and opposite to Mrs Ravenhall, who greeted him with effusion, and opposite Lord Ribston, who, not knowing him, scanned him all over with that look of disapproving inquiry which the youth of the day bestows upon a stranger. There was a certain repose, and, at the same time, a frank unself consciousness in Esmè's manner, which were charming and reassuring even to a wretch in Cosmo's condition; and though there were tones in her voice (for it *is* the *voice* of the charmer which is her most potent charm), which, now and then, set his pulses galloping, its ordinary flow was melodiously sedative.

Esmè made no remark upon his tardy homage, but said, very heartily, that she was glad he had made up his mind to come to the Highlands, after all.

"It must have been *quite* a surprise for Mr Wyedale," she said, "for he was only yesterday talking about Finmore, and about you; and he said,—didn't your brother say, Mrs Ravenhall, that Mr Glencairn had gone to Melbourne to observe the transit of Venus?"

"Oh! Tom says anything that comes into his head, as I am sure you know, Mr Glencairn."

"Yes," said Cosmo, laughing, "Tom deals very largely in metaphors and hyperboles."

"But I *really* believed him," cried Esmè, "because——" she was thinking of the moonlight interview at the Villa Bianca, but paused and finished her sentence otherwise than she had intended, saying, "because he *did* appear quite grave and positive. I am sure," she added, smiling, "that this is a much better place to be in than Melbourne."

"Ah, indeed it is!" cried Cosmo.

"You liked Finmore when you had it last, did you not?" How pleasantly she seemed to remember things!

"I liked it extremely," said Cosmo; "and," plucking up spirits, "I mean to like it still more this time."

"I hope you will; but are you alone?"

"Yes; the fact is, I took it quite on an impulse, and had no time to get up a party, even if I had wished to do so."

"I think you are very much given to impulses, Mr Glencairn," she said, with a smile.

"I—I don't know that I am."

"You were in an impulse of departure when I last saw you, and now that I meet you again, you have just arrived by impulse."

"Ah yes," stammered Cosmo. "Of course—yes, to be sure—Cadenabbia—business—London—ahem! ahem!—things that very decidedly—yes——" and lost his head and broke down; and Esmè also became rather confused, recalling all the revelations which had preceded his announcement of departure, and fearing that he might suspect her of insinuating some banter concerning them.

This pause was taken advantage of by Lord Ribston, who by this time had decided that Cosmo wasn't "his form," and that he hated the sight of him.

"Did you like Cadenabbia, Miss Douglas?" he asked.

"Oh yes, so very much!"

"I suppose there was plenty of schist there?" and this being a joke and also a sarcasm, his lordship laughed inordinately.

"We had plenty to amuse and occupy us without schist," said Mrs Ravenhall. "We had something new to do almost every day—Miss Douglas and Lord Germistoune, and Tom and I."

"How did Wyedale stand it?" asked Lord Ribston, lazily.

"'Stand it!'" cried Mrs Ravenhall, with a look full of meaning. "Tom felt his good fortune in being there, I can assure you. I never saw Tom so happy, *never;* and *so* sorry to come away, although I must say we all enjoyed the Engadine very much—quite as much, indeed, I think."

"What! have you all been caravaning about together, the whole summer?" cried Lord Ribston.

"Yes; we have been *quite* inseparable, have we not, dear Esmè?"

"Yes, I am glad to say that we have. It has been delightful being with you."

"It could not be more so to you than it has been to *us*," with another look at Lord Ribston which was meant to express, "so you needn't hope to upset what you can see is a cosey little family arrangement—nearly as good as settled."

And his lordship did look a little reflective, and pondered

over Tom's relations with the family, which were certainly a little puzzling, and to some minds might have been suggestive. Cosmo, too, did not *quite* like the ring of Mrs Ravenhall's voice, but was in too pure an atmosphere of bliss, thus seated beside Esmè, after all these months of absence and longing, to be disturbed at present, though probably Mrs Ravenhall's words might come back to him in the lonely evening, and not exactly as a soporific.

For some ten minutes the conversation went on in the same sort of vein, principally in dialogue between Esmè and Cosmo relieved by occasional flashes of humour from Lord Ribston, who sprawled at Esmè's feet, and gazed into her face with looks of the frankest admiration; while Mrs Ravenhall "watched the case" for her brother, interpolating such occasional remarks as she thought might tend to his interests, or to the discomfiture and disadvantage of the two other men. It was brought to a close at last by the arrival of Lord Germistoune, whom Tom had got hold of and brought over to his way of thinking.

"Now, Mrs Ravenhall," he cried, "you know it is 'the Twelfth,'—that is to say, the only day in the year which has not for its motto 'Place aux dames;' so I hope you will not think me a bear, when I tell you that the carts are ready for you, and that *we* must be starting, which we can't do till we have packed you comfortably, and seen you off."

Whereupon Mrs Ravenhall jumped up with the greatest alacrity, vowing that, for the last hour, his lordship's extraordinary kindness in allowing them to remain so long had been a marvel to her; and then they moved towards the carts, Esmè detaining her father for a moment, to say—

"Poor Mr Glencairn is all alone at Finmore, papa; wouldn't it be kind to ask him to dinner?"

"Tut! tut! tut! impossible; we shan't be home till nine. No compliment to ask him to dine on a day like this."

"Ah! I forgot; perhaps not. But you might ask him for to-morrow, and then he would see the gillies' ball too."

"Ahem! well, there is no positive objection to that—no *positive* objection, that I can see. Yes, I'll ask him. He's no addition to a party, though—silent and stupid. He hadn't a word for *me* at luncheon to-day."

So, when they overtook the party, Lord Germistoune tendered his invitation, and it is needless to say that Cosmo joyfully accepted it, notwithstanding the fussy austerity of manner with which it was offered. Then Lord Ribston, true to his system

tended by others, and went away to see about his beat, with the parting injunction to Esmè to take old Pentacle in the cart with her, and, if possible, work out the Cambrian schists before dinner, so as to give him the chance of an evening's innings; and Lord Germistoune having detached Mrs Ravenhall, Cosmo had five minutes in heavenly *tête-à-tête* with Esmè.

"I am so glad you can come to-morrow," said the latter, "although it is an uncomfortable hour for dinner. You must know that to morrow is my birthday, and the people always have a dance to celebrate that great occasion; and as we like to go and see them for a little, we are obliged to dine early. I am afraid the shooters will grumble dreadfuly."

"What! on YOUR birthday?" cried Cosmo.

"I fear that will scarcely console them; and, indeed, it is rather a pity that we must have it on that night; but it would not do to disappoint the poor people, for they have been accustomed to have their annual dance ever since I was born."

Cosmo made a terribly buckram speech, which sounded, even in his own ears, exactly like an extract from 'Pamela,' to the effect that "the man who, on such a day, could grudge," &c. &c.

Esmè laughed, and said, "Then I may count upon your gallantry, at all events, to support me against the grumblers. I shall be glad of an ally against Lord Ribston and Mr Wyedale —they will be the most formidable——" and, before Cosmo could cry out that these men must be soulless, and worthy of the tormentors, she changed the subject, and said, "I hope you can dance reels. We are all expected to perform once at least —even papa, who goes through the trial most heroically."

"I don't think I have ever *quite* danced a reel," said Cosmo; "but to-morrow night I am sure I shall be inspired. I shall succeed by one of those impulses you accuse me of."

"Oh Mr Glencairn!" cried Esmè, with a quick change of manner, "I want to say to you that I hope you did not think me rude when I spoke about—about—your going away from Cadenabbia on an impulse. If I had remembered, at the time, all you said to me that night in the garden, it would have been both rude and unkind; but I did not think of it at the moment —not till I fancied you were annoyed——"

"Annoyed, Miss Douglas? with *you?*"

"I thought so; and you might have been so, very reasonably; but I really spoke without thinking—not that I have ever forgotten what you told me that night, because," and she spoke warmly and earnestly, "I was very, very sorry for you— you were so unhappy, and for such an honourable reason"

(honourable indeed !) ; "but now, I hope, you quite understand that I did not mean to be rude."

Cosmo looked at her and smiled, and his smile was the great charm of his face—smiled dreamily, tenderly, worshippingly, and murmured some half-articulate commonplace, which had no meaning at all, being entirely lost in the eloquence of the look and the smile which accompanied it. Esmè did not at once withdraw her eyes from that mysterious regard. She could not. She felt a strange fascination, something between curiosity and some other emotion altogether new, which held her gaze and made the delicate colour waver and come and go in her fair face. Silence followed for a few moments. Then Cosmo, who seemed to feel the value of time and opportunity, went back to the subject of the garden scene at the Villa Bianca, and said—

"I have often thought, Miss Douglas, with shame, of the infliction to which I subjected you that night." (The serpent !)

"But I told you not to be ashamed ; I told you that I was very much interested."

"You must have thought me so forward and eccentric," cried Cosmo, pressing the case against himself.

"I did think that you might have found a better *confidant*, but I said exactly what I meant. I said that I felt very much for your perplexities, which were so uncommon—at least they seemed so to me—and—and——" (here she made an effort to say what she could have said *without* an effort ten minutes ago, and she made the effort, as if determined not to admit the existence of any obstacle), "and I have often wondered since, what you would decide upon."

Cosmo felt that this was beatitude.

"You gave me your good wishes," he said, in a voice full of tremulous music ; "and I felt, at the time, that that was an omen for good. I hope, now, that I have found the solution I was in quest of."

"Oh, I am so glad ! May I know—may I be allowed to know what it is ?"

"If you care to hear about it, it will be the greatest happiness to me to tell you."

But here they approached the rest of the party, and Esmè said—

"You will tell me to-morrow evening, perhaps."

"If you will listen to me, Miss Douglas. And oh, may I make one petition ?—that you will sing me again that song which you were singing on that same night when I came up, like an evil spirit, as you said, out of the lake to listen ? It

has been ringing in my ears ever since; for I always seem to hear it when I think of you."

Cosmo was certainly not losing much time. Esmè looked shyly up, and again met that indescribable gaze which puzzled and confused her, but which yet left some impression that was not akin to pain, and said, "If you can tell me what it was—what song you wished me to sing—I will gladly sing it for you;" and when she had said this, and received Cosmo's thanks, their eyes parted; but before they did so, the lynx-vision of Mrs Ravenhall detected the love-light which shone in Cosmo's, and she said to herself bitterly, "Another of these *abominable* fortune-hunters!" Then the ladies were carefully assorted, and packed into their vehicles, and despatched—rather a sombre and silent party; for all the Euphrosynes suffered from reaction, and, indeed, every one must feel that old Pentacle and his brother cripples were rather a bathos, after the boots and knickerbockers and intellectual charms of Lord Ribston. Esmè herself was silent and almost *distraite*. "You are tired, darling," said Mrs Ravenhall. Esmè disclaimed fatigue. "I can see it," Mrs Ravenhall insisted; "and it is not to be wondered at. You have been sacrificing yourself all day to the worst bores of the party. Just like your goodness; but your strength is not equal to it. Only fancy, dear Lady Bugles, after giving an hour to Miss Milkington, and at least an hour to Professor Pentacle, this sweet child must needs take pity on that dreary Mr Glencairn, who must have been quite the *coup de grâce*, I should imagine."

"He looks dreary," said Lady Bugles—"very dreary. Who is he?"

"Who is he? Well, now you ask me, I don't think I quite know. Let me see. He used to live, as a youth, when he and Tom were at Eton and Cambridge together, with Colonel Wildgrave. You remember the Wildgraves who had a house in Grosvenor Square? I think, but I am not positive, he used to be *called* Colonel Wildgrave's nephew. He succeeded to his fortune, certainly; but I have a hazy sort of impression that there was a mystery about him. Don't say I said it; but I almost fancy there was an idea that he was a foundling."

"He looks like a foundling," said Lady Bugles—"*exactly* like a foundling." Her ladyship's patent teeth were becoming rather obstreperous, from the motion of the cart, and warned her that brevity, if not total silence, was advisable. Esmè made no comment upon these remarks about Cosmo, but simply repeated that she was not fatigued, had enjoyed the day im-

mensely, and found no one a bore. Mrs Ravenhall intimated her disbelief of this by a compassionate smile, confidentially imparted to Lady Bugles, and let the subject drop.

The reader will not have failed to observe that these protracted operations were undermining Mrs Ravenhall's *morale*, and upsetting the principles upon which her social success was built. Convinced of the imbecility and risk of indulging in backbiting as a pastime, which is inevitably to rouse against one's own reputation secret, and therefore incalculable, forces of retaliation and injury, she would have been incapable, two months ago, of committing herself to such reckless remarks as she had now made about Cosmo. But the continuousness of the strain was becoming severe; and it must be owned that the way in which new aspirants kept cropping up was trying. In two months there had been Count Fori and Lord Ribston, besides a shoal of smaller fry who had been eyed down or otherwise summarily dealt with. And now, here, evidently, was Cosmo, who, her instinct told her, was the most dangerous of all, and therefore to be counteracted by the strongest measures. Hence the "foundling" myth.

How she found herself at Dunerlacht, by the by, requires explanation. She and Tom had remained with the Germistounes at Pontresina till the last days of July, and had come home with them to London, where the party had broken up with many mutual regrets. But their separation was of the briefest duration. On arriving at Ravenhall, she found that her husband, resenting his long deprivation of conjugal solace and observance, had accepted, by way of reprisal, a bachelor invitation to shoot grouse and stalk deer in the Highlands for a month, and that he was on the very eve of departure for the north.

"What," she had asked, "is to become of me?" and had received, by way of reply, a generous permission to remain at home and "look after matters." But this was not her idea of the fitness of things; and, by a happy inspiration, she had written a charming little comico-pathetic letter to Lord Germistoune, describing her forlorn situation—made doubly desolating by the too, too happy days she had recently passed in his lordship's society, and "quite frankly" begging him to allow her to accompany Tom, and inflict herself upon Dunerlacht for a few days, until "her other engagements in the north fell due." She said nothing about all this to Mr Ravenhall, who went away in a fool's paradise, chuckling over his wife's impending incarceration at home; and he had not been gone much more than a day when a letter arrived from Lord Germistoune, backed

by one from Esmè, welcoming Mrs Ravenhall's invasion with the most satisfactory cordiality. The results of which were, that Tom received the same afternoon, in town, a telegram which caused his countenance to fall, and drew from him the remark, "That woman's horrible energy will be the death of me! By heavens! she's becoming a regular Old Man of the Sea;" and that, the same night, he and his adroit incubus were dashing away northwards together in the "Flying Scotsman."

Thus was Mrs Ravenhall again in the field, facing, as she felt, severe odds, and not likely to stick at a trifle, either in word or deed. A pursuit of the sort, to an intriguing nature, increases in interest and excitement as it progresses, and even as difficulties multiply; and success comes to be valued in the abstract as the triumph of skill and endurance, independently of the solid advantages which it represents.

CHAPTER XXV.

Old Davidson was at once struck with a change which had come over his master, when he rejoined him at the "march." With his head in the air, and a light step, Cosmo came swinging over the heather, and greeted the old keeper with a genial smile and a playful apology for his long absence. "Never mind, Davidson," he cried, "give me my gun, and we'll see if we can't make up for lost time. I don't mean to let many of them off, this afternoon, I promise you." And he was as good as his word. What a pace he walked at! The dogs ranged wide and covered a deal of ground, but he was up to the points like lightning. Juno had no anxieties. The fleet foot and the unerring barrels were always "there." The bag swelled perceptibly.

"We'll hae to ca' canny wi' thae hares, Captin, if me and Aunra's to get a'thing hame oorsels. An' ye gang on at this rate, sir, we'll hae to send for ane o' the pownies."

"Oh, I don't mean that you and Andrew shall be able to carry the bags home. You must make a depot somewhere, soon, and send back for the stuff. I'm only just beginning."

Master and men were in the highest glee; and not till the sun had well set, and the dogs were dead beat, was the sport abandoned.

"What's the bag, Davidson?" Cosmo asked, when the keeper came in, at night, for orders.

Davidson's admiration of his master's afternoon performance was so sincere, that he was generous enough to suspend, temporarily, his disapprobation of his single-handed escapade. "'Deed, sir, it's a tremendyus birds—jist tremendyus. Fufty-sax brace grouse, acht blue hares, three snipe, and a juke!"

"After all, not so bad for 'ae gun,' eh, Davidson?"

"It's a tremendyus birds to ae gun. There's naebody fit to tak and contradick that—that's conseederin' a' things—maist feck o' hauf the day lost, and your hert no' in it (beggin' your paurdon, sir) the fore pert o' the day. Stull and with a', I maun say that to dae justice to this muir——"

"Yes, yes, Davidson, I know all about that. We'll get your friend, Mr Wyedale, over to help us one of these days, and I've decided to ask a friend to come down from London to join me immediately. We'll shoot early to-morrow—start at eight sharp. I shall have to knock off at four. Good-night."

So Davidson went away greatly comforted. "Dod!" he confided to an underling, "he was clean sully in the mornin', but he bruskit up brawly afterhin'. I doot they maun hae gien him something ower by at his lordship's—sh'mpeen, mibbee."

On his way home, Cosmo, inspired with a magical delight which it would have been hard to analyse, but which excluded all considerations of prudence, policy, and so forth, glowed with philanthropy and all good-fellowship, and, in this happy frame, decided that it would be a kind thing to give poor Phil Denwick a chance of some fresh air and a run on the hills, before he settled down to the routine of office life in London; and he now sat down and wrote, inviting him to come at once. "Bring your 'Ready Reckoner' with you," he said, "and other commercial implements, as well as your gun, and in this quiet place you will be able to mingle business with pleasure." Then he went to bed and slept the sleep of the blessed, and all night long through the world of his dreams, this refrain seemed to echo—

> "I strove against the stream, but all in vain;
> Let the great river bear me to the main."

Another splendid day. From roseate dreams Cosmo awoke to behold the hills again blooming under an unclouded sky, and also to find that the sudden fabric of his own mysterious happiness had not been absorbed into some kindred vision of the night, and had not departed along with it. As yet there was

no reaction. Again to-day his vigour and energy on the moor were great,—somewhat feverish indeed; but if the rapidity of his movements symbolised his impatience to overpass the interval which separated him from Esmè, rather than the enthusiasm of sport, the material results were highly satisfactory; and when the hour for "knocking off" arrived, old Davidson's disapprobation of "anither o' thae hauf days" was softened by a bag of really imposing dimensions.

A full hour before it was necessary, Cosmo returned to the lodge to dress for dinner, and though he did his best, as he thought, not to be premature, he reached the castle some time before any one appeared in the drawing-room. It was a fine old house, in all respects worthy to be the seat of an ancient and historical family. There were arms and armour enough in the entrance-hall and wainscoted gallery to equip a clan of fighting men, and above these weapons quite a clan of portraits —of the warriors, doubtless, who had borne them, intermingled with those of the fair ladies who had inspired their deeds of chivalry. In the drawing-room, some of the best of the family pictures were hung; and Cosmo amused himself for a quarter of an hour in inspecting them, and tracing the origin, development, and recurrence of this and that peculiarity of feature which formed, as one so often sees, a connecting-link between many generations. By one of these pictures his attention was strongly arrested. Strange to say, it was not the portrait of a peerless dame whose features had been reproduced in her latest female descendant. We feel that this is what it ought to have been; but it was quite otherwise, being the representation of a rather grim and haughty-looking cavalier—neither young nor specially handsome, but with a remarkable expression of concentration, and power, and purpose, which, independently of the great merits of the picture, arrested the attention. Cosmo was impressed by all this, but by something more; for the moment he looked at it, he was struck with a feeling that he was familiar with the face, and must have seen the picture before. He walked from side to side, and got it into a variety of lights, trying to stimulate his memory. The cold, straightforward eyes of the cavalier followed him, with that look of vital movement which pictures borrow from the movements of the beholder. Cosmo could by no means remember where he had seen it before, but he was more and more convinced of his familiarity with the face. He could almost have sworn that he had seen the eyes, and, indeed, all the features, at some former time, and when they were animated in conversation. Vivid,

however, as the impression was, the antique dress of the figure told him at once that the recognition was purely fanciful. A movement took place in the room behind him; but as he was engaged in shifting his position, he did not observe it.

"I seem to know you, my friend," he said aloud, and looking at the picture; "and, indeed, you almost look as if you knew me. Who are you?" He approached nearer, and read on the lower part of the frame—

"Sir Alan Douglas—slain at the battle of Philiphaugh.
Anno 1645."

"A little before my time," he said, with a smile.

There was a musical laugh behind him, and a voice said, "And I fear I am a little behind mine, Mr Glencairn." He turned and saw Esmè, looking, he thought, lovelier than he had ever seen her before—dressed, as he had never seen her before, for the evening, which enhanced, if possible, her beauty, and developed new charms. The little incident that he had been overheard in a whimsical soliloquy, gave a certain pretext for his confusion at meeting her, and he soon recovered his self-possession.

"I fancied," he said, "that I had found an old acquaintance; but I have never been in this room before, and it is not likely, I suppose, that this picture has been elsewhere?"

"No," said Esmè; "I don't think it is likely that it has ever left this house; but it is considered a very good picture, and attracts every one's attention."

"I suppose, then," said Cosmo, "I have been merely experiencing the 'sentiment of pre-existence.' There are some very fine pictures here."

"Nothing but family pictures. Some of them *are* said to be good, and, of course, they are all interesting to us; but I suspect that the whole collection would scarcely bear the inspection of a critic like you. I have not forgotten our conversation at Cadenabbia."

"If I pretended to be a critic, Miss Douglas, I was an impostor, and now denounce myself. By the by, I have not been able in any of these pictures to trace a resemblance to you. I see Lord Germistoune, more or less, in several generations; but *you* are quite original."

"That ought to be gratifying, I suppose," laughed Esmè.

"There *is*, however, a picture—I have seen it often—which was recalled to my mind the moment I saw you at Cadenabbia. It has been a great favourite of mine for years. It is by Sasso-

ferrato—a Madonna—and you might have sat for it. So that you see, after all, you are not quite original."

"Where is this picture?"

"In a collection—rather misplaced—in a village named Montestretto, in Italy. I have made various pilgrimages to see it. It took a great possession of my imagination. I used to amuse myself by putting together the characteristics which I thought would be suitable to such a face."

"And I am so very like it?"

"It is your portrait."

"And the characteristics? But, of course, you don't know me well enough to answer that question."

"Oh, indeed I do!"

"You must be a wizard then, Mr Glencairn, or at least a *clairvoyant*," laughed Esmè.

"Not at all; but I am convinced that you have exactly the same characteristics as I gave to the picture."

"But how?"

"I cannot exactly tell; partly from what I have seen of you, perhaps, and partly by instinct."

"I hope——" but Esmè stopped, blushing as she met Cosmo's gaze, and was perhaps rather relieved when Lord Germistoune stalked into the room with his pompous "How do you do, sir? how do you do?"

There was no fussiness in his manner now, it was pure austerity.

"I have been admiring that picture of your ancestor, Sir Alan Douglas, Lord Germistoune," said Cosmo.

"It is a good picture. We have always thought highly of it. Ah! my dear Mrs Crock, here you are! I am glad to see that you are still alive. I was watching you in that last game of tennis with Lord Ribston. Your agility is marvellous—distinctly marvellous. I almost think you are one too many for Ribston."

Mrs Crock devoutly hoped that, in another sphere, she might prove to be so, but disclaimed athletic superiority, and announced that she was perfectly fresh, and meant to dance any quantity of reels that evening.

"They are so inspiriting and picturesque and delightful," said Mrs Ravenhall, who now flowed into the room; "we must all dance them."

"Any dance which Mrs Ravenhall dances must be picturesque and delightful," said Lord Germistoune. Mrs Ravenhall dropped a playful curtsey, and challenged his lordship to be her partner.

This privilege, however, could not be conceded. Lord Germistoune explained that his reel-dancing was rather an affair of state, and that the honour of his partnership was, by a sort of feudal arrangement, always conferred upon the wife of the oldest tenant on the estate — a certain Mrs M'Haffie. Mrs Ravenhall affected to pout; Mrs Crock vowed she should be consumed with jealousy of the farmer's wife; and even Lady Bugles, who had now arrived, was understood, by a sort of whistling sound (for two of the incisors *had* gone), to convey that Mrs M'Haffie's monopoly was afflictive to her.

The rest of the party arrived by degrees; dinner was announced, and Lord Germistoune marched off with a very deaf dowager, notifying to Mrs Ravenhall that he *insisted* upon having her support on his other hand at table, with a slight imploring gesture which seemed to place her in a delightful antithesis, not merely to the deaf dowager, but also to the rest of the party. Yet, though this was a distinction which might well have preoccupied a head less cool, it did not prevent Mrs Ravenhall (who had studied the order of march and precedence with Esmè) from whispering to the young lady to whom Cosmo had been assigned, "Remember that Mr Glencairn is *quite* worth your attention; ten thousand a-year; matrimonially inclined; a score of people dying to marry him. I advise you to make the most of the opportunity." And thus incited, Miss Hungerford-Snapsley "went for" the "foundling" (which *sobriquet*, born of Mrs Ravenhall's reckless speech in the cart, had been adopted as appropriate by the young ladies in divan assembled) with the skill and determination which seven seasons of sedulous practice supply; and tried him all round, and in every vein, and in every class of topic, beginning with religious æsthetics and ending with riskier subjects, such as modern stage millinery. She gave him of her fulness, but nothing from her cornucopia seemed to interest the "foundling." He was *distrait*, for ever answering at random, and often at cross-purposes.

"Anticipated! the wretch is in love!" this astute maiden said to herself, and promptly gave him up, and consoled herself by "having a round," for practice' sake, with a very young Oxford lad, son of the deaf dowager to whom Lord Germistoune was in thrall. Cosmo could scarcely help being *distrait*, considering all things; for, though far away, Esmè was in full view, and his eyes were turned in her direction as often as was permissible, within the limits of a not very vigilant prudence. The classic grace of her small head, with its rich auburn hair

whose luxuriance could not be concealed by the severest simplicity of arrangement; the brightness and kindliness of her smile; the patrician grace of her fair neck; and a hundred charms of movement, pose, and expression—all so artless, but so full of unstudied harmony,—might well fascinate the gaze of artistic perception quickened by the power of love. No wonder Miss Snapsley found herself, as she afterwards complained to Mrs Ravenhall, "quite out in the cold."

Lord Ribston sat beside Esmè, but seemed rather sluggish and sleepy (which was just as well), and most of her conversation was given to the gentleman on her other hand, whom Cosmo could not see, but knew to be delightfully old and infirm, so that there was little to disturb his pleasant waking dream, albeit carried on in the midst of twenty-five banqueters. The dinner passed off like other dinners of the sort, the only public incident being the arrival of Tom Wyedale when it was half over. He had, of course, been unable to tear himself away from the grouse at the proper time, and now arrived, hurried but *nonchalant*, and marched up to make his apologies to Esmè, "as if," Lord Ribston thought, "the whole place belonged to him." In his hand he bore a bouquet of wild-flowers, to which he smelt jauntily as he marched up the room. These (a collection made that afternoon by Mrs Ravenhall) he presented to Esmè with a comic air of reverence, and cried—

"It is shocking, Miss Douglas, to be late upon your natal day, but it would have been shockinger to be in time, yet without a birthday offering. Deign to accept these humble flowerets. Let them plead my excuse."

"Oh Mr Wyedale, how kind of you! how beautiful they are! how very, very good of you to think of getting them for me, and actually to sacrifice some of your shooting to gather them! I know what the sacrifice *must* have been, and therefore understand the full value of the offering. Thank you, so very much! It is a most appropriate bouquet for a Highland ball!"

And then Tom went gaily to his seat with a grin of suppressed meaning, but was presently damped by finding that his sister's eyes were pouring upon him the lava of burning wrath and contempt. Was it for this public exhibition, this travesty, that she had furtively toiled and over-fatigued herself in the glen that afternoon? Tom was, to use the mildest expression, a hopeless marplot.

The ladies had not very long left the dining-room, when Lord Germistoune rose, and said he must go to see the factor

about some arrangements which he had forgotten; the gentlemen might, however, do exactly as they pleased. Those who wished to join the ladies might now do so, while those who desired more wine might remain. "It is Liberty Hall," said his lordship; "and since that *viveur* Wyedale will stick to the bottles as long as he can, I leave him in command here," and so departed.

Then Cosmo displayed real generalship; for, finding Professor Pentacle (who now sat next him) to be in a rapture of prose about a Roman urn which had been recently dug up somewhere, and was to be seen in one of the public rooms of the castle, he encouraged the *savant*, by a fraudulent show of interest, to enlarge on the theme, and at last vowed that he was possessed with a burning desire to see the vessel in question—and at once; and did Dr Pentacle know, exactly, where the treasure was? The Doctor did; and since neither he nor Cosmo wanted any more wine, they most naturally went to inspect it. It was found in a glass cabinet in an octagon room which formed the interior of one of the flanking towers, and terminated a suite of drawing-rooms opening one from another. Here there was an organ as well as a piano; and these and other symptoms announced that the room was sacred to music. It was now, however, empty; and the Professor, getting hold of the urn, and opening a lecture which promised to be formidable, Cosmo began to feel that he was in for a bad time of it. But (was there ever anything like the luck of this fortunate fellow?) Lady Bugles and another dame had expressed a wish to see the music-room, just at the proper moment, and, when Pentacle was in full and ardent cry, entered the room, followed by their young hostess.

"What is going on here?" whistled Lady Bugles; "a lecture?"

"Yes," cried Cosmo, "a most interesting one;" and, when he had manœuvred Lady Bugles and the other lady into the position of an audience, he manifested the sincerity of his interest by at once dropping from the circle and joining Esmè, who had gone to pick up some music which lay on the floor, at the other side of the room.

"This is the music-room, of course?" said Cosmo.

"Yes; and it is a very good room for it, and very easy to sing in."

"May I venture to remind you of a promise which you made to me yesterday?"

"What is it? Oh! the song? Certainly. I will perform

my promise, if you wish; but have we time? And shan't we disturb the Professor?"

"Nothing disturbs the Professor," said Cosmo, confidently; "and there is an hour to spare before the ball, or nearly so."

"I wonder if the others are all amused? I must just go and see first."

She went, and returned, bringing with her the dreary Miss Milkington, who, gravitating naturally to the dreary, at once joined the Pentacle group.

"They are all very good," said Esmè, "and quite to be trusted in my absence; so now, if you can tell me which song you wish, I will sing it."

Cosmo described the first song she had sung on that enchanting evening by the lake. Then she sang it; and with its first notes, all the scene, where he had first heard it, came back to him, and with it the recollection of that wild and stormy burst of revelation which had swept over his mind, evoked by the sound of her artless voice, as she sang this simple little lay—

Spring breathed on Winter's ice and rime,
And freed the flowers from Winter's thrall,
And woo'd them on, that Summer prime
Might deck her bowers withal.

Spring gave the song-bird back the song
That late in wintry durance lay;
Shall I, then, after waiting long,
My heart, again be gay?

Alack! there is no Spring for thee—
Song died because the flowers were ta'en,
And all the wild-wood minstrelsie
Came with the flowers again.

But to give back *thy* music lost,
It is not Spring that has the power;
Spring cannot touch the bitter frost
That holds thy captive flower.*

When she ceased, Cosmo remained silent. Esmè looked up and saw in his face a look of strange intensity which puzzled her.

"It does not bear repetition, I fear," she said; "and besides, it is too melancholy. I know that you like melancholy songs *sometimes;* but not always, I hope."

* The music, by Miss Catharine Eliott-Lockhart, will be found at the end of this volume.

"Oh, this song is beautiful! it is not melancholy; it is altogether delightful," and with great earnestness he begged her to sing it again, which she eventually did, though rather under protest, and, when she had finished it, she remarked—

"I cannot understand, Mr Glencairn, how you can say it is not melancholy."

"Whatever the air may be," cried Cosmo, "it touches me with associations—mysterious, perhaps, and strange as it may sound to you—which have nothing at all to do with sadness, but with everything that is delightful."

"Not gay, surely?" laughed Esmè.

"No, not gay; but gaiety and happiness have not much to do with each other. I *must* get this song. What is its name?"

"It has no name; it is not published."

"Do you think I can get a copy anyhow?"

"I don't know whether there is a copy in existence. There never was more than one."

"How?" cried Cosmo.

"In fact," said Esmè, "I am afraid your approval is making me very conceited. I am going to make a confession which I have never made before; but you must keep my secret. I am afraid I composed the air myself."

Then, when Cosmo's raptures threatened to get beyond the bounds of discretion, Esmè checked him by saying, "So, you see, Mr Glencairn, that, as I composed it for sad words, my feelings as a composer are not gratified when you insist that the air is not melancholy."

"Ah, but I fall back upon my associations! and, since the song is so much to me, will you think me too bold and too troublesome if I ask the composer to make me a copy?"

"Oh," cried Esmè, "I shall be delighted! I am too vain of your approval not to be delighted to copy it for you, if you *really* think it worth having, but you must keep my secret."

Worth having! her song and her secret! Two gifts in one too blessed day! Surely his cup of happiness was running over! For the present, at all events, it was to receive no farther drops of bliss.

"Ah, my dear child, *here* you are. We have been looking for you *everywhere*. I had no idea that you had retired to the music-room for a *duet*, ha, ha!" Cosmo and Esmè now, for the first time, observed that the Pentacle group had disappeared.

"Lord Germistoune is rather in a fuss, dear. He says we ought to be with the people by this time. I think you really

must come now. He seemed quite to vex himself when he found you were not in the drawing-room with the others; and of course no one could *divine* where you were. I really think, darling, that you had better come."

"I am quite sure I had, dear Mrs Ravenhall, if papa has begun to fuss. But where are the Professor and Lady Bugles and Miss Milkington? They were here just now."

"Time flies fast on young birthdays, dearest. They have been in the drawing-room for half an hour; and indeed it was from them that I heard you *had* been here, *ever* so long ago—so I came to look, quite as a forlorn hope, I confess. I certainly did not expect to find you *still* here. Well, dear, do let us go. I suppose a gillie's ball is scarcely in your line, Mr Glencairn. Are we to say good night?"

Cosmo laughed rather heartily at Mrs Ravenhall's very palpable ill-humour, knowing so well its cause, and replied—

"By no means. I really don't know, Mrs Ravenhall, why a gillie's ball should not be in my line! I hope, on the contrary, to enjoy it extremely."

Mrs Ravenhall looked unlovingly at him. He met her glance without anxiety; yet she was not the sort of woman one would choose as an enemy.

CHAPTER XXVI.

At the conclusion of our last chapter, Mrs Ravenhall had just broken up, with a considerable display of animation, a *tête-à-tête* between Esmè and Cosmo, which had been pleasantly progressing in the music-room of Dunerlacht Castle. When she and they rejoined the rest of the party in the drawing-room, Lord Germistoune was not present, but returned shortly afterwards, with many suave apologies for detaining them all. It would thus almost appear that Mrs Ravenhall had drawn, to a considerable extent, on her imagination in describing his lordship's extreme vexation at Esmè's prolonged absence. Be that as it may, he certainly made no unpleasant remarks, but led the way to the grand function of the evening, in the blandest of moods.

The visit to the tenantry and gillies, on that annual occasion, was timed so as to take place at the conclusion of the supper, which formed part of the evening's entertainment; or, to speak

more correctly, the supper did not technically terminate until the visit had been paid, and until, the healths of Esmè and her father having been toasted in their presence, a speech from the latter, acknowledging the compliment, had terminated with a formal invitation to commence the revels; for all the arrangements at Dunerlacht were as liturgical as possible.

The dance was to take place in a spacious barn forming part of the offices, which were close to the house, and had, at one time, been connected with it; the supper was served within the castle, in an ancient stone-hall of imposing dimensions, which had stood, in the olden time, for the baronial hall of banquet. In a corridor in the vicinity of this apartment the party were met by Mr M'Kenzie, the factor—a plethoric, red-faced man, with a very important manner — who, acting as a sort of marshal, formed them into a regular procession; and at the head of this, Lord Germistoune, who loved all sorts of pomp and ritual, placed himself, and gave his arm to Esmè, apologising to the other ladies for this selection, on the ground that the entire proceedings were feudal, and therefore exempt from the social ordinances of modern life. A couple of pipers were then, after a good deal of tugging and jostling, got into their due position in front of his lordship, and, all being ready, Mr M'Kenzie placed himself in front of the minstrelsy, and gave a guttural shriek (echoed from the rear of the column by a miniature view-halloo from Tom Wyedale), and hereupon, in a storm of pipe-music, the procession started. As it entered the hall, another shriek from the factor brought the assembled guests—who, to the number of about a hundred, were ranged round two long tables—to their feet, and the party advanced, with immense solemnity, half-way down the hall, to a low platform, which was opposite the great central fireplace. The pipers marched on round the hall till they faced this *estrade*, when they halted, continuing to play while the party took their places on it. This done, the music was silenced by a signal from the factor, who then cried out, in Gaelic:—

"You will give three great strong cheers for his lordship, and three more for Miss Esmè, and three more for the ladies and gentlemen — that is nine altogether; and let there be no mistakes."

"Suas i! suas i! suas i! Hurrah! &c.
A rithist! a rithist! sa rithist! Hurrah! &c.
Aon uair eile! Hurrah! &c." *

'Up with it! up with it! up with it!
Again! again! again!
Once more!'

The cheers were loud and hearty, and executed with only a few irregularities on the part of the females, noted by Mr M'Kenzie, and brought home to the offenders by menacing gestures on his part, which seemed to produce a profound impression, the factor being evidently terrible and autocratic, as is the way of those who wield delegated authority. The people were then commanded to sit down, and a silence ensued —a silence of expectation—which lasted so long as to suggest that a hitch had taken place. And this was indeed the case; for it turned out that Mr M'Haffie, the senior tenant, whose duty it now was to let off the speech of the evening, was so overwhelmed by the terrors of the situation, that he had subsided into a state of partial coma, from which neither the remonstrances of his friends nor divers small "exhibitions" of whisky had been as yet able to recover him.

"Mr M'Haffie!" shouted the factor sternly, but without effect. "Mr M'Haffie!" he repeated in a still more dangerous voice; and when this also was unavailing, he descended into the body of the house, and, after a good deal of moral, and even physical, hustling, succeeded in getting the old fellow on to his legs, who at last, in a quavering voice, contrived to deliver himself as follows:—

"My lord and Miss Esmè, and my lord and all the ither gentry—and—and Mr M'Kenzie too—and the tinantry and ither folk. Miss Esmè was born to-day; and I do not mean that she was born this ferry day, but some years back: and it was a ferry good day for us that day when Miss Esmè was born" (cheers started by M'Kenzie); "and I will say, and we will aal be saying always in this glens, that she is the Flower of this Glens, and that is not a great deal, to be sure; but then I will say more, and say that she is the Flower of aal Scotland, for I suppose there is not annybody annywhere into this whole world, that is like to Miss Esmè, and we aal love her, and we would aal die for her ferry gladly,—and that is true, and iverybody kens that that is true" (loud uninspired cheers). "Miss Esmè, I am drinking to Miss Esmè's health and to her happiness, and may God bless you, Miss Esmè. My lord, his lordship was not born to-day, but it is a good day for us when we see you" (cheers led by factor), "and it is a ferry great honour to me to be his tinantry, and to every one here to be it; and I do not mean the leddies and gentlemen, because they are not the tinantry, but the tinantry; and he has been ferry good to us when the big spates was, and——" (here a long pause, no doubt of fruitless effort to recall other good deeds on the part of his

lordship, interrupted at last by an impatient cheer from Mr M'Kenzie, which sent the old fellow on with a jerk)—"and that was fery good for us; and I hope, and we aal hope, that his lordship will live for a great long time; and when he is taker away—because I am afraid even his lordship himsel will have to be taken away some day" (pursings of the factor's mouth and elevations of his eyebrows, as though this position were, perhaps, debatable, but in any case offensive)—"I hope that Miss Esmè will take a good nobleman for her husband; and it is ferry certain that aal the nobeelity will be trying to get her, so that she will be able to pick the best out of it, and bring a fine lord to be the lord at Dunerlacht; and I am drinking his lordship's health, and I do not mean Miss Esmè's husband, because it is too soon to be drinking at *him* to-night; but I mean our own lordship that is still alive and here to-night; and I could have said all this readier in the Gaelic, because I am an old man, and have not got anny book-learning, but that would not do, because it is not a genteel kind of langidge to be talking before the leddies and gentry; so I will say no more to them, but I am drinking aal their healths, and Mr M'Kenzie's too. Here is Miss Esmè and his lordship, and the ither leddies and gentry—and Mr M'Kenzie too. Suas i! suas i! suas i! hurrah!" &c. &c. When the cheering had subsided, Lord Germistoune stood forth, looking awfully feudal, and though one might have heard a pin drop, Mr M'Kenzie shouted for silence in a terrible voice, and his lordship began, and spoke words stately and sonorous, being about as intelligible to the majority of his audience as if he had addressed them in Arabic.

"My good tenantry and friends, I am always glad to meet you on these annual occasions, and to receive these evidences of your loyalty and gratitude, which are as creditable to you as they are agreeable to me. It ought to be the wish of the lords of the soil to see their dependants happy. It is the duty of those dependants to be happy and grateful. I am distinctly anxious that my people should be contented and prosperous, and I am glad to say that you, my people, recognising this, show yourselves to be happy, grateful, and obedient. To such seemly relations existing between us, are due many of the blessings enjoyed on these estates. We have to be thankful that Radicalism is unknown in this district; we have to rejoice that the upas-tree of dissent has been uprooted here; we have to congratulate ourselves upon a head of game which shows proudly in the statistics of northern sport; nor is it indifferent to me that the noble red deer descend into the arable parts of the

property, with perfect confidence, and in enormous numbers, for this shows that my people welcome their presence, and regard them as a picturesque adjunct to our unrivalled scenery. This is as it ought to be; this is worthy of a humane and enlightened tenantry." (At this point the cheering being a little languid, Mr M'Kenzie descended into the body of the hall and resolved himself into a sort of patrol of observation.) His lordship went on: "The feeling on these estates has always been, that what is good for the landlord is best for the tenant. It is this sentiment which guarantees the harmony of a community like ours, and I am glad to say that it continues unabated. While this is so, the voice of controversy and discontent will not disturb us; and while in other districts we have to deplore the progress of selfishness and disloyalty among the lower classes, here all will be peace, happiness, and contentment.

"My good tenantry, I am touched by the enthusiasm of your personal affection for Miss Douglas and myself. Miss Douglas, I may venture to assure you, is also touched.

"Mr M'Haffie has permitted himself to indulge in certain rather irrelevant speculations as to the duration of my life, and as to certain arrangements for Miss Douglas, into which it may or may not be thought expedient to enter at some future time. I feel bound to say that Mr M'Haffie did not display his usual discretion in making these remarks." (Here the factor "moved into position" near M'Haffie, and opened on him with a battery of indignant and scornful looks.) "I may say that they were wanting in that good taste and reverence which I have a right to expect from the oldest tenant on these estates." (Hear! hear! hear! from the factor.) "Mr M'Haffie ought to remember that my life is in the hands of the Almighty, and that Miss Douglas's future destiny is not a subject which should be approached in a spirit of reckless levity, at any time, and least of all in my presence. Mr M'Haffie has distinctly disappointed me to-night. I am willing, however, to forget the incident, in the expectation that he will probably refrain from such ebullitions for the future."

There was very little doubt that Mr M'Haffie would. The poor old man, though he but half understood his lordship's tremendous sentences, was horribly aware that he was, so to speak, in the dock; and sat, the picture of conscious guilt, rolling his eyes fearfully from his lord to the factor, who was glaring and puffing at him, like a cobra about to strike.

"And now, my friends," his lordship concluded, "you will do me the favour to go and spend a happy evening in the ball-

room which has been prepared for you, and where I shall have the satisfaction of visiting you in a few minutes. Mr M'Kenzie, have the goodness to conduct the tenantry at once to the ball-room."

The factor, with the assistance of some of his subordinates, got the people away with great promptitude, moving them off in single file by successive benches, and when all had departed, Lord Germistoune led his guests round the hall, and explained it to them, architecturally and historically.

Mrs Ravenhall thought it was "quite too delightfully medieval." "I can see," she exclaimed, "the knights in armour ranged around these tables."

"I can distinctly see them," said Lady Bugles.

"How are they looking?" cried Lord Ribston — "pretty jolly?"

"Do sit down, Lord Ribston," murmured Mrs Crock, "and then I shall know exactly how the knights looked."

"Am I your idea of a 'knight of old,' Mrs Crock?" laughed Lord Ribston.

"Don't fish for compliments, Lord Ribston," replied the widow, with a glance which made any sort of fishing superfluous.

"This hall," said Lord Germistoune, "served also as the baronial court of justice, and the 'tree of dule,' or 'hanging tree,' is close at hand; so that my ancestors were able to adjust any little difficulties with their people, very conveniently."

This was duly explained in French to the Marquis, who, however, continued to be very dense about the patriarchal system, and rose freely to Tom Wyedale's suggestion, that what he called the "affaire M'Haffiz" might probably have disastrous consequences for the aged vassal.

Presently the thunder of a cannon shook the castle. "That," said Lord Germistoune, "indicates that the bonfire on Dunerlacht is lighted, and that they are ready for us in the ball-room. Let us go."

They moved out into the courtyard, and halted there to admire the bonfire, which had blazed up into sudden maturity on the neighbouring height, illuminating the woods and the fall with a splendid effect, and casting a weird light upon the castle walls. As they looked, there shot up, in rapid succession, and apparently from the heart of the fire, nineteen rockets of various colours. The sound of distant cheering followed.

"My clock has struck," said Esmè. "I never feel that my birthday has really come, until the rockets have gone up."

"Why is that?" said Ribston.

"Oh, don't you know? Because there is a rocket for each year of my life. So that now all the great world of Glenerlacht knows what a formidable age I have reached. Nineteen! It *does* feel formidable!"

"I had no conception that there was so much difference between our ages," simpered Mrs Crock.

"Are you younger or older, Mrs Crock?" asked Tom Wyedale, with profound gravity.

"Oh! ever so much older. Five years, at least."

"So that Mrs Crock," Lady Bugles whispered to Lord Ribston—"so that Mrs Crock must have married at eleven, and become a widow at thirteen! Astonishing precocity!"

Whereat Lord Ribston laughed out with hearty frankness, after his kind.

"It is a pretty fancy," said Mrs Ravenhall, "recording your age in this way, darling Esmè; but, by-and-by, you will shrink from such public admissions."

"Some of us here would do so to-night, I am *very* sure," says Mrs Crock, with a withering glance at Lady Bugles, whose whisper she had pretty fairly interpreted by Lord Ribston's mirth.

"If we were honest enough to send up the right number of rockets, which surely *you* would never recommend, dear Mrs Crock," replied her ladyship.

"I have not yet offered my congratulations," said Cosmo, who now joined the group. "I hope all the future years of your life will be as bright as the rockets which chronicle them when they are past."

Mrs Ravenhall's sharp ears caught the words. "That is another pretty fancy!" she cried, with a ring of sarcasm in her voice, and closing in upon Esmè.

"Let us now go and see the people," said Lord Germistoune, who had just concluded a long mystifying statement to the Marquis concerning Highland war-beacons and the fiery cross.

"Allons! marchons! partons! marchons!" sang the gay Frenchman.

The pipers struck up "Lord Dunerlacht's March," and a few paces brought them to the scene of the revel, where they were received with the same liturgical salute, under the fugledom of Mr M'Kenzie, "Ni sibh iolach tri uairean—ard agus ladair—airson a mhoralachd," &c.

The barn was large and brilliantly lighted; it had an excellent wooden floor, and the walls were ornamented with such simple yet picturesque decorations as hills and glens afford. Each light, with its sconce, formed the centre of some floral device,

in which heather and broom played prominent parts; and, every here and there, Esmè's monogram was displayed, or the crowned heart of the Douglasses, woven in heather, white and purple, and inclosed in wreaths of bog-myrtle—the family badge of Dunerlacht. The company assembled included many who had not been present at the supper—"old established people" from neighbouring estates, and others, who had no feudal title to sit at meat in the baronial hall. In all, not less than two hundred men, women, and children were present, many of them in the Highland garb; so that, what with the brilliant light, and the colours on the walls, and the bright hues of the tartan, the *coup d'œil* of the room was most striking and effective.

At its upper end there was an *estrade* similar to that in the hall, upon which chairs were arranged, and over it, all the decorations in the room culminated in a tremendous work of art, wherein claymore, dirk, and spear formed a glory round the word "ESMÈ," which blazed colossal in variegated lights.

At the opposite end, three or four fiddlers seemed to cower apologetically, dwarfed, as it were, by the splendid swagger and general efflorescence of a good many brother minstrels of the pipe, who had congregated from near and far, to support Lord Germistoune's piper, old Hector Douglas, a magnificent patriarch, who wore countless medals, trophies won at every "gathering" in Scotland, and wore them with an air which would have done credit to the insignia of the Garter.

The castle party moved up to the *estrade*, Esmè stopping now and then to shake hands with, or say a kind word to, some special favourite; and when they were established in their places, eight pipers, under the leadership of the great Hector, swept round the room with that combination of *élan*, grace, and dignity, distinctive of first-rate pipers, in rapid march. They played the "Dunerlacht Gathering," and after three circuits of the room, wheeled up, with military precision, and, fronting the *estrade*, changed the measure to that of a strathspey. The *morceau* was Hector's own production; it had been inspired by Esmè's twelfth birthday, and was known to more than local fame as "Miss Douglas's Favourite." The music was most spirited, and nothing could be more admirable than its execution, for the performers were together like one man. The effect on the company was electric—literally electric; for, on three-fourths of the people, some kind of spasm was observable,—some twitching of the hands, or movement of the feet, or vibration of the head, obedient to the irresistible rhythm of the pipes. Obviously, but for the awful presence of the magnates, the dance would have

burst forth spontaneously all over the room, like the eruption of a volcano. Nor were they unaffected by it. The most benighted Sassenachs on the *estrade* owned its spell.

"It sounds like devil's music," said Tom Wyedale; "but it would make an oyster dance. Hector must be own brother to the 'pied piper of Hamelin.'" The Marquis, who had stopped his ears at the first blast, presently uncorked them, and fell into a state of dangerous ecstasy.

"I must *dance;* I *must* dance," cried Mrs Ravenhall.

"I *positively* must dance," echoed Lady Bugles, whose desire to ditto Mrs Ravenhall occasionally ran away with her discretion.

"If every one is so impetuous," said Lord Germistoune, "we had better begin at once;" and he made a signal to the pipers, who stopped abruptly, and, scooping the atmosphere away from their faces with their right hands, by way of salute, faced to the right about, and retired down the hall.

"M'Kenzie!" cried his lordship, "Meester M'Ken-see," echoed a score of voices, and the factor came up and got his orders. "We are ready now. Form the sets in the usual way, and when all is prepared bring up Mrs M'Haffie. You will dance opposite Miss Douglas, as usual." Then he explained to the circle that this dance also was hedged in with feudal restrictions, so that no one could participate in it, save himself, his daughter, and immediate dependants. "I am afraid, therefore, ladies, that you will have to repress your ardour for a little." Whereupon Mrs Ravenhall assured him that she had been only joking, and had no thought of dancing, which naturally evoked from Lady Bugles the confession that her dancing project was also but the figment of a sportive fancy. The Marquis, however, announced his firm resolution to assist in the second dance; "A la guerre!" he cried; "comme à la guerre!"

The factor seemed to have got the people into a marvellous state of drill. All eyes followed his movements, and as he turned from the *estrade*, he gave a slight signal. Whereupon, without any hunting for partners or other confusion, twenty sets of four at once fell regularly into their places, and when this was done, the factor lifted up his voice and cried "Mrs M'Haffie!" "Meestriss M'Haffee!" echoed the room. "Maintenant," murmured the Marquis, "l'affaire M'Haffiz va se dénouer!" But he was again cast back into the mists, when a little elderly, respectable-looking woman made her appearance on the floor, and advanced timidly, with downcast eyes, towards

the factor. Mr M'Kenzie awaited her, looking very awful and uncompromising, as though it were now his duty to pinion Mrs M'Haffie, before conducting her to "the drop;" and, indeed, the poor woman looked every inch the terror-stricken criminal, her nervous agitation being evidenced by the trembling of her lips, the twitching of her fingers, and the quivering of a perfect forest of wholly unreasonable spikes and pendicles of ribbon which garnished her head-gear. When Mr M'Kenzie had, so to speak, taken Mrs M'Haffie's body over, he conveyed it to the *estrade*, on the edge of which Lord Germistoune stood, looking still more awful and uncompromising than the factor.

"How do you do, Mrs M'Haffie? how do you do?" said his lordship. "You will do me the favour to dance in the reel with me. Esmè, we are ready; M'Kenzie, take your place, and give the signal to the pipers."

M'Kenzie obeyed and clapped his hands; the sets sprang to "attention;" "Miss Esmè's Favourite" burst from the pipes with tremendous volume; the spell of restraint which hung over the party vanished as by magic; the delirium of the dance seized every one at once, and, in an instant, the room was alive with rhythmic motion. There were many fine performers on the floor, and every style had its representative, from the "orgiastic" dancer, who danced with all his body, and waved his arms, and shouted like a bacchanalian, to the disciple of a chaster school, who kept his body rigid, and with thoughtful eyes watched the movements of his own feet, as though each dainty step and twitch and twirl expressed some *nuance* of an artistic conception. But varied as the styles were, all the dancers were "together" as far as time went; and what with this, and the music of eight pipers, and the *thudding* and shouting of eighty performers, all "going like steam," and the swinging and fluttering of kilts and plaids, and the flashing eyes and animated faces, it would have been difficult to find a scene more infectiously gay and exhilarating. The ladies and gentlemen were all enthusiastic, and on the *estrade* there were cries of "Bravo!" and little view-halloos, and clappings of hands, responsive to the tumult of the dancers.

The Marquis gradually worked himself into a state of terrific excitement, and was for beginning at once.

"Maintenant j'y suis!" he cried. "Madame de Bugells—Miladi Bugells! il faut commencer! allons donc! allons! commençons!" And he would have haled her ladyship to the floor had she not beaten him off with her fan. In front of the *estrade* Lord Germistoune's set had its station, and notwithstanding that

Esmè's fairy form adorned it, no dispassionate observer could have beheld it with gravity. Lord Germistoune, stiff as a ramrod, his left hand on his left haunch, his right perpendicularly aloft in the air, in the attitude of a fakir under a vow, shuffled his feet about, with no reference to the music, but like, as the Scotch saying is, "a hen on a het girdle;" while, opposite to him, Mrs M'Haffie, with her gown "kilted" so as to afford a liberal view of a pair of white woollen pasterns, and all the sensitive paraphernalia of her head in the wildest tumult, let loose her nervous excitement in a perfect cataract of nimble steps, astounding in a person of her years and demeanour. On the other side, Esmè's ethereal movements were in fine contrast to the performances of Mr M'Kenzie, who danced in the most apoplectic manner, with both his arms held straight above his head, his eyes fixed and protruding, and his feet hammering away without variation of step, like the feet of a man going through the treadmill at "the double."

The strathspey turned into the reel proper, and, with the change, the spirit of the dance became, as usual, faster and more furious; and when his lordship shouted for the "Hoolichan," and the music changed to that most frenzied of all the measures, it seemed as though every one had suddenly acquired a new lease of fire and vigour. "Hoolichan! Hoolichan!" shouted the dancers. "Ouragan! Ouragan!" shrieked the Marquis; and, no longer able to restrain his ardour, he dived into the very centre of Lord Germistoune's set, and, reckless of the feudal system, cut in between him and Mrs M'Haffie, whose performances had excited his liveliest admiration. "A moi, Madame M'Haffiz!" he cried; "à moi! Ouragan! Ouragan!" and proceeded to execute, in front of the bewildered woman, a frantic combination of the "Tarantella," "Cancan," and other dances of ecstasy. There was a shout of laughter on the dais. Lord Germistoune halted, looking black as thunder. "M. le Marquis!" he cried, sternly. "Ha! ha! ha! Ouragan! Ouragan!" screamed the Marquis; and seizing Mrs M'Haffie, in the turning figure, swung her off her feet, and round and round and round, till her white woollen extremities colliding frankly with his lordship's legs, all but levelled that awful potentate with the floor. "M'Kenzie, M'Kenzie!" cried his lordship, with a gesture of rage and despair. Whereupon M'Kenzie shouted and waved to the pipers, and, with the sudden collapse of a tropical hurricane, the hurly-burly closed.

Lord Germistoune, ascending gloomily to the dais, was met with a torrent of congratulations. The dance had been either

"soul-stirring" or "fetching" to the last degree; while his lordship's share in the transaction had, of course, been worthy of himself and of a great nation.

"But I think," said Ribston, who had no reverence—not even for Lord Germistoune, "the Marquis has the highest score." The Marquis could, at this moment, be seen in the distance, adding to his score by gallantly kissing Mrs M'Haffie's hand in the way of adieu.

"The Marquis," said his lordship, severely, "has certainly made himself conspicuous; but I should be sorry to hazard a repetition of his buffoonery, so I think it will be discreet if we now withdraw, and leave the people to themselves. M'Kenzie, we are going."

Way was at once made, the pipers formed, the march struck up, and the party moved out of the hall, under another salute of "three great strong cheers." In so far, however, as the repression of the Marquis's buffoonery was concerned, the move was not a success, for neither he nor Tom Wyedale retired with "the quality," but continued with the proletariat till far into the night, winning golden opinions, especially the Marquis, who, in performing "The Flowers of Edinburgh," twice achieved the feat of throwing his right leg clean over Mrs M'Haffie's head, without disturbing a single pinnacle of the mysterious edifice which crowned it, and added about a foot or so to her legitimate stature.

"He's an awfu' man, yon!" was invariably the remark of Mrs M'Haffie for several years after, when this ball was alluded to.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The abbreviation of the state visit to the people's ball left some part of the evening still to be disposed of, and when the party returned to the drawing-room, dancing was proposed. Mrs Ravenhall, always obliging, and an indefatigable player of dance-music, volunteered for the piano, and in a few minutes eight or nine couples were floating round the room in the dreamy rapture of the valse.

Cosmo, full of courage, would have entered the lists for Esmè's partnership, but Lord Ribston was too quick for him, and bore her off triumphantly just as he approached. He fell

back, therefore, upon Mrs Crock, the only disengaged alternative being Lady Bugles, whose complex mechanism was not the sort of thing to involve one's self with unnecessarily.

"Only for a turn or two, of course," said Mrs Crock; "it is the fun of an impromptu that there are no formal partnerships, but that every one keeps changing about continually." Her eye rested upon Esmè and Lord Ribston as she spoke; and Cosmo, with *his* eye on the same couple, said that he quite understood the theory, inwardly hoping to carry it into practice with the smallest possible delay. Then he took Mrs Crock for a circuit of the room. She danced badly, and was a little cross, and inclined, as is the wont of bad dancers, to blame her partner, and soon intimated to Cosmo that she thought the moment had arrived for a change, which he promptly admitted, and left her gazing, with her eyes full of vain expectation, across the room to Lord Ribston. Cosmo had a turn or two with Miss Snapsley, and one with Miss Milkington, and one with another damsel; and still Lord Ribston monopolised Esmè, either dancing, or sitting apart, with her, in apparently confidential intercourse—still doing so, although the dancing had gone on so long that Mrs Ravenhall had already had an interval of rest. Mrs Crock and Cosmo were both afflicted; a common sorrow drew them together; or, to speak more correctly, Mrs Crock having no one else to dance with, signalled to Cosmo, and he went to her.

"Pray, give me another turn," she said; "none of these wretches will look at me."

There was a straightforwardness about this which was irresistible, and Cosmo complied. When they stopped, his partner said, "I never saw anything like this before; they are all as faithful to each other as if they were under a vow to dance with no one else. It spoils all the fun."

Cosmo fully sympathised with her complaint, though, as a matter of fact, the system of change, except in so far as Esmè and Lord Ribston were concerned, was carried out very regularly. They had another turn. At its conclusion, the situation was unaltered. Mrs Crock glared at the offending couple, and then said, with considerable venom, "Miss Douglas really ought to know better. It is her part to set the example. No doubt her present temptation *is* great; still a girl in her position ought to know better. It is against all etiquette monopolising one man in this sort of way."

Cosmo felt that it was against all etiquette, monopolising one *woman* in this sort of way, but practically they were agreed.

"We really ought to break up that *tête-à-tête*," said the widow. "Let us go and look at them, and make them ashamed of themselves."

Cosmo made no objection, and they went and looked. The manœuvre was, however, on the whole, abortive. The couple were not ashamed; and though Mrs Crock took her partner twice past them, and delivered a broadside of meaning glances on each occasion, the only effect produced was that Ribston, on receiving the second volley, said sleepily, "The widow looks as if she were on the war-path, don't she? She'll have her knife into some one soon, I expect."

Mrs Crock then changed her tactics. "After all," she said, "I daresay Miss Douglas is not to blame. I suppose she is too unsophisticated to know how to get away from Lord Ribston; and he is so lazy he will sit still for hours wherever he is planted. I do think it would be a kindness to her if you were to go and ask her to dance; besides, it will take the drag off the evening; it *is* dragging dismally now; don't you think so?"

Cosmo entirely agreed with her, and did as she suggested.

"Miss Douglas," he said, presenting himself in front of the couple, "will you have a turn with me now?"

"No, no, no!" cried Lord Ribston; "Miss Douglas is engaged to me—is dancing with me."

"Has been," said Cosmo laughing; "and I am told that there *are* no engagements, and that every one dances promiscuously with every one, change and change about; I have twice received my *congé* on this principle, and if I have been taken back, I quite felt that it was as a *pis aller*. The fact is humbling; still I am entitled to use it in my favour now."

"No, no!" cried Ribston, rather hotly; "my good sir, one don't argufy about such things. It's a matter of choice."

"Well, that is true, of course," said Cosmo; "and as I could hardly expect you to choose to give Miss Douglas up, I lay the matter before her. May I have one turn, Miss Douglas? Think," he added laughing, "of Mrs Crock's disgust, if I have to inflict myself a third time upon her."

"I shall be delighted," said Esmè, rising. Whereupon Lord Ribston, unaccustomed to be thwarted, glared furiously at Cosmo, muttered something to the discredit of Mrs Crock, and, without so much as a glance at that lady, retired to sulk over a book at the other end of the room.

And then Cosmo, dancing with Esmè, had his first true experience of the poetry of motion, seeming to glide through some rare medium of existence and movement, apart from

this gross earth, suspended above it, in an atmosphere of melody.

. . . . . .

After three circuits of the long room they stopped, and Cosmo, without speaking, looked into Esmè's eyes. There was no tumult or trouble in his gaze, only an expression of rapt serenity and love and happiness, which gave great beauty to his always noble but often too sombre face. Esmè did not turn away her eyes, in which there was a look of half-dreamy bewilderment and inquiry.

"Heavenly!" Still looking into her eyes, Cosmo uttered the word, so that, unconsciously perhaps to himself, it had the force of a double significance. Esmè made no reply for a moment; then she hurriedly withdrew her gaze, looked down, and said, with a manifest effort to return to the commonplace—

"Yes; I delight in the 'Doctrinen;' and does not Mrs Ravenhall play charmingly?"

"Charmingly!" echoed Cosmo; and then there was an abrupt and lengthened pause in the conversation. Presently the music changed. Mrs Ravenhall now played the 'Geliebt und Verloren,' and, at a certain passage of thrilling pathos, which all who know that exquisite valse will at once identify, Esmè and Cosmo turned to each other, as if by a mutual instinct, and, without any words, again floated away together into the mystical realms of beatified reverie.

. . . . . .

They came back to the cold world of fact; again, but intensified, there were the same phenomena—looks of rapture meeting looks of shy bewilderment, meaningless phrases merging in silences full of meaning; all these things being the outward and visible signs either of tumultuous thoughts, vague and indefinable as yet, or of tumultuous thoughts fully comprehended, but as yet unutterable. Mrs Ravenhall, playing with her back towards the dancers, little knew what spells she was helping to weave with her deft fingers, little recked what irony for herself there was in every note of the music which she made.

She had looked round once and seen Esmè and Cosmo dancing together; she had looked round a second time, and observed them standing in apparently harmless silence; but, on the third investigation, she beheld them at the moment of their arrival from dream-land, and detected the perfectly frank revelation, which to any interested on-looker could not have failed to be discernible in Cosmo's face. And then the plaint of the

"Geliebt und Verloren" came to a sudden and rather spasmodic termination.

"Esmè!" cried Mrs Ravenhall, "I am *so* sorry to stop, but my right wrist is dreadfully cramped. Would you get some kind person to take my place? or will you take it yourself, dear, for a little? So sorry!"

Whereupon Esmè ran to the piano with an alacrity which rather pained Cosmo, and began to play with an energy that had something feverish in it. And now, if Cosmo had been discreet, he would probably have paid Mrs Ravenhall the cheap compliment of asking her to dance; or similarly mollified Mrs Crock, who, like a lioness bereft of her cub, was furious with everybody and everything; or even harnessed himself to the risky complexities of Lady Bugles; or, in fact, done anything rather than what he did—which was to go and stand at the piano and look at the fair performer, not wisely, but too well. For Mrs Ravenhall, sitting with the two other malcontents, saw it all, and pointed it out to them, and was ferociously merry at the expense of "The Foundling," and said epigrammatic things about him, which were too good not to be repeated; and, in short, being now thoroughly convinced that Cosmo meant mischief, and might be mischievous, began seriously to mobilise her forces of reprisal.

There was a pause in the music, and a conversation took place at the piano which *looked*, in the distance, far more serious than it sounded—and another pause, similarly occupied; and at last Mrs Ravenhall could stand it no longer.

"It is dreadfully late, I am sure," she exclaimed; "and it is quite evident that *that* man has no intention of going." So saying, she rose and went over to Lord Germistoune—who had just sustained a series of crushing defeats at "Gobang" from Dr Pentacle, his pupil in the game, and was rather cross in consequence—and said that it was dreadfully late, and that she, being much fatigued, would now say good night, and slip away, without a word to the others, so as not to disturb the revels. Lord Germistoune detested (as she knew) late hours, and he at once rose and said it was time for them all to be in bed.

"But," objected Mrs Ravenhall, "Mr Glencairn has not gone yet; and indeed he looks as if he had *very* little inclination to go."

"I suppose," said Lord Germistoune, "he can take a hint. Esmè! Esmè! I think, my dear, that will be enough of music. Every one is tired, and it is time for so many fair ladies with bright complexions to be in bed."

Upon this there was a general move; and Cosmo, at once making his adieus to Esmè, said hurriedly, and in a low voice—

"I have to thank you for the happiest evening in my life. You will not forget the song?"

"No. I will copy it for you to-morrow."

"And when may I hope to get it?"

"The next time you come here."

"I am afraid I am dreadfully impatient. When may I come?"

"Whenever you please, Mr Glencairn, of course. The song will be copied to-morrow morning."

"Good night; and I wish," he murmured, "I had words to thank you with." Then he turned away, concentrating, in one long look, all his gratitude and love and worship. The rest of his adieus were quickly made to a cold or hostile company, and he left the room accompanied by Lord Germistoune, who went, less with the air of a host performing a hospitable courtesy, than of a man uncertain of the honesty of his departing guest.

"I thought," said Mrs Ravenhall, rubbing her hands and beaming on the company, as if in congratulation on their relief from so terrible an incubus—"I thought that *dreadful* man was never going!"

"I confess I feared the stupid creature was going to be a fixture," echoed Lady Bugles.

"And neither a useful nor an ornamental one," added Mrs Crock; "he talks like a stick, and dances like a poker."

"A fellow of that sort is not meant to dance," said Lord Ribston; "and he certainly doesn't seem to know when he's in the way."

This sudden attack upon one absent—upon one so quiet and inoffensive to others, so gentle and chivalrous in manner (she put it thus) to herself, so superior to these small people—she felt at the moment, that they were very very small—who were sneering at him, roused Esmè's generous indignation so that her colour rose, and there was a flash of dangerous light in her eyes. Mrs Ravenhall continued the attack. "I would have saved you from him if I could, dear Esmè, but I really could not offer to take the piano again, because of my stupid wrist. I felt for you, however, I assure you; I did, indeed—deeply; so did Lady Bugles."

"Deeply, deeply," moaned Lady Bugles. Whereupon all the conventionals sustained a shock to their moral and nervous systems, for Esmè answered, with much spirit—

"I am afraid you have been sadly wasting your compassion,

Mrs Ravenhall. I was in no sort of distress, I assure you. Mr Glencairn is by far the best dancer I ever danced with in my life, to begin with; and *I* certainly think him the last person I ever met with who could be called stupid. Of course that may be because I am stupid myself. Still I think so; so I have no right to your compassion."

Mrs Ravenhall's countenance changed. Here she found herself, for the first time, confronted with those characteristics in Esmè of which, as she had told Tom in the early days of their association, she feared that she beheld the symptoms — her straightforwardness and self-reliance and independence of conventional considerations, when these interfered with what she thought was just and generous and true. Mrs Ravenhall's sense of the proprieties was, of course, terribly lacerated by what she inwardly called "this exhibition;" but she was far more affected to find that she had made a grave tactical blunder.

"Darling Esmè!" she replied, in cooing tones of conciliation, "I *really* thought you looked dismally bored; but now that I know I was mistaken, I am penitent for having, under a misapprehension, depreciated your *new protégé*." This little stab was also dealt with in the same thorough style.

"Thanks, Mrs Ravenhall—I am sure you are; for I am sure you know me well enough to know that I do not like to hear absent friends run down—any more than you would yourself."

And now, Lord Germistoune returning, the party broke up, and the ladies went to bed.

But Mrs Ravenhall entered Esmè's room with her, and tried to retrieve the error in her tactics by another little demonstration against Cosmo.

"You are not vexed with me, my love?" she said, sweetly.

"No, dear Mrs Ravenhall; how can you think so? If I had any cause to be so, you have made the *amende*."

Then they embraced.

"You see, darling," resumed Mrs Ravenhall, "I naturally thought you must be bored with *him*."

"Why '*naturally*,' Mrs Ravenhall?"

"Well, *unnaturally*, dear," laughed Mrs Ravenhall, with another kiss; "and perhaps—though, of course, *here* it does not matter in the least, not in the very least—I was just a little annoyed to see you so conspicuous with so hopeless an ineligible, —so hopeless that I *need not*, of course, have worried myself, if I had only reflected; but if I spoke sharply of him, it was only out of my love for you. I am a silly old goose; but it's your own fault for being so lovable. Now, darling, good night."

"But what do you mean by 'conspicuous,' Mrs Ravenhall? I don't understand how one is to avoid being so, if it is 'conspicuous' to take two or three turns of a valse with one gentleman in the drawing-room of one's own home. At all events, I can't see that, if that sort of thing does make one conspicuous, it can do one any harm. I am sure I did the same thing with Mr Wyedale the other night, and to-night with Lord Ribston. Was I conspicuous with them, too? How often ought one to change partners so as to avoid this dreadful calamity?"

"The lady doth protest too much, methinks,"

thought Mrs Ravenhall; but she had shot her bolt about Cosmo's ineligibility, which was all she intended, so she cried gaily, "You shall dance for a hundred or a thousand turns, darling, with one man and with the same man if you please, and I shall always vow that you are right. I had no idea that you could take things *au sérieux* like this, you silly child. Now I must go to bed;" and, with another silencing embrace, she escaped in flight from further discussion.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

If Esmè had been brought up with the advantages which so many girls conventionally educated enjoy—that is to say, of being surrounded by female mentors for ever (and often prematurely) inculcating the precepts of that diplomacy which concerns itself about the relations between the sexes,—for ever and often prematurely harping upon matrimony in all the ramifications of that important subject,—Mrs Ravenhall would not, perhaps, have had so much cause to complain of Esmè's lovableness, and Esmè herself would have been saved from many of the confusions in which she now found herself involved. For, in addition to the fine arts of "drawing on," "discouraging," "holding in suspense," and otherwise "playing" the suitor, in addition to a correct appreciation of the matrimonial tables of weights and measures, she would have had, codified, so to speak, and at her fingers' ends, the various symptoms, in all their *nuances*, which bespeak the presence of the tender passion. But Lord Germistoune was not a likely source from whence to derive lore of this sort, nor yet was the admirable

lady who had brought her up from her earliest years, and who, in educating her young charge, had acted on the old world principle that it was her duty to develop a rational being, rather than to construct a marrying automaton. And thus it befell that the events of to-day and yesterday, and a world of new emotions and problems arising from them, suddenly confronting this inexperienced young heart, overwhelmed it with a bewilderment inconceivable, perhaps, and certainly laughable, to girls her juniors in age, but moulded, which Esmè certainly was not, "to the fashion of these times."

Cosmo had interested her from the very first; so much will be remembered. There was something unusual about him, and his ways of life and thought, and even in his manner, which touched her imagination and her sense of the romantic. Then the strange revelation of his troubles had, in the very confession of his weakness, not only disclosed the nobleness of his aspirations, but thrown a bridge of sympathy over the distance which separated her from him, intellectually, as she believed. Nor could it fail to touch her that this man, whose somewhat proud reserve kept him apart from others, had unbent for *her;* that he had given to her the secret of his moral conflicts, and thereby interpreted to her much in him that was enigmatical, perhaps, to every one else. She had felt much interest in him during the brief period of their first acquaintanceship; she had constantly remembered him with interest during their separation, and perhaps it was not merely on Cosmo's part that the feeling of a *rapport* existing between them had grown in the interval. She was very happy to meet him again; but since they had met—in these two short days—what had happened to make him no longer the object of a tranquil, if of a warm, interest? This perplexed her. She did not consciously put the question to herself, but the perplexity which it represented was there. What had happened? What *had* happened was, that Cosmo had thrown into evidence before her the full volume of his unspoken passion; that, without restraint, he had expressed it in every look, and implied it in every tone, and, even involuntarily, conveyed its declaration through the mysterious medium of magnetic sympathy. What *had* happened and what *was* happening was naturally producing a change in the character of the interest which she felt for Cosmo Glencairn. But she was perplexed, knowing not the signs and symbols of these strange matters. She tried to formulate her impressions and her feelings. "He likes me very much, and I am glad that he likes me. I am sure that he likes me, because

he looks as if he were very happy to be with me. He said that my song had been always ringing in his ears, and that he had thought of me very often. He thanked me for the happiest evening of his life. But why should he like me? and why should he have been so happy? I only sang him that trifling little song. Could *that* make him happy? But I am sure that he likes me, and I am very happy that he likes me. And I am sure that I like him; and I am glad that I said he was my friend—because he *is* my friend,—and defended him against all these ill-natured people. What right had they to speak of him so? They don't know what he is. If they only knew what I know of him, they could not speak so. I wonder why he likes me more than he did at Como!—if he *does* like me more, and I think he does. Yet it is only two days! And I wonder why I seem to know him so much better, and to like him more, I think—I *do* think—much more—and that is so strange, because it is only two days! And I wonder if he likes many other people *much!* And—but surely I have thought enough about him."

"I wonder, and I wonder, and I wonder!"—to this refrain the innocent young heart explored a labyrinth without a clue; and through all her wanderings, the eyes of Cosmo haunted her bewilderingly, and his sweet, grave smile seemed to lead her on; and, though the eyes wore not the look of a *friend*, and though that sweet smile was not *friendship's* smile, yet was the ever-recurring conclusion of her guileless reverie only this, "I am sure that he likes me very much, and I am sure that I like him. And I wonder why it seems so strange to-night!" It will be seen that she was as ignorant of the philosophy of love, as she was unlettered in the science of matrimony; and that "ineligibles," "conspicuousness," and so forth, were terms of a language which had little meaning for her ear.

Was Cosmo acting heroically? Was he true to himself?—to his principles?—to his resolution? Let us remember that he had decided that the only condition on which any sort of hope of winning Esmè was admissible—even to himself—was the achievement of personal distinction so complete as to obliterate the stigma on his birth, which seemed at present to place a barrier between her and him. How, then, could he reconcile with this his presence here? or, if that were explained away, how could he reconcile with it his demeanour towards her, whom his every look and tone wooed with the fervour of a master-passion? It must be admitted that he could not reconcile these things. It must be further owned that he did not

attempt to reconcile them. The casuistry of love had gradually levelled his pedestal, till now, heroic no more, but altogether human, he moved only in obedience to the dictates of the divine delirium, and not to those of reason. The nearest approach to a compromise with his own resolve which he had made was this—and he soon saw and was ashamed of its selfishness,—that if, by any means short of an *éclaircissement*, he could assure himself of Esmè's love, then he would be satisfied; then he would go silently away, and, strong in this inspiring certainty, achieve that renown whose alchemy, transmuting baseness to nobility, should entitle him to approach her worthily. But, when this was condemned, he sought no substitute; and though he was now following his father's advice, he did so unconsciously, abandoning himself upon no principle whatever to the swift-rushing current of delight, concentrated on the present, reckless of the future, fearless of all the catastrophes to which he might be gliding.

Alas! there is no defence for him, although Esmè's surpassing charms might perhaps be admitted as extenuating circumstances of special force; no defence, save that contained in the trite old aphorism (old, probably, as Love itself) which levels the hero with the hind, and confounds the simple with the sage —"Love conquers all."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Old Davidson would have required the patience of Job to stand the various disappointments to which Cosmo subjected him. The morning after the ball at Dunerlacht was as fine as its two predecessors, and at last, the keeper thought, there would be an end of "nonsense" and half-measures. He had quite decided in his own mind that this morning he would take his master over one of the wilder and more distant beats, which would be less easily and productively shot after "the weather broke"—that contingency which hangs like a nightmare over Scotch keepers. Deep, then, was his disgust when, in reply to a suggestive message which he sent up to Cosmo's bedroom, and by which he craved to know "whether the Captain would take Craig-Rona that day, or content himself with the Kaims," he was informed that the Captain, for his content, required

neither the one nor the other, nor *any* other beat, not being minded to go out at all that day. Davidson turned his face heavenwards, and raised both his arms high in the air, as if calling heaven to witness that he washed his hands of this squanderer of its bounty. "Maist notawrious!" were his only words, as he went sadly away.

The idea of shooting had never crossed Cosmo's mind, because he assured himself that it was absolutely necessary that he should call at Dunerlacht that day, as the merest matter of etiquette; but, independently of that, the song was to be ready that morning, and if he did not reclaim it at the earliest opportunity, would not his indifference be justly regarded as brutal? There was but one obvious answer to this; and, with difficulty restraining his impatience till something like the canonical hours of visitation had arrived, he went. He went on foot, and he had a delightful walk, albeit moving at speed; for, buoyed up with blessed anticipations, he trod upon air, and beheld the outer world by a beautifying inner light which no cloud veiled.

The door is reached; the bell is rung; there appears to be a delay of about six calendar months; and at last a leisurely footman, who has obviously been disturbed at a meal, and is still in the act of mastication, appears. The insensate being seems to be a little aggrieved, and almost to take a malicious pleasure in delivering his overwhelming announcement. Not at home! No one: not even Lord Germistoune; not even Mrs Ravenhall, for whom, actually, in his desperation, Cosmo asks! Most of the gentlemen have gone shooting, the rest, with *all* the ladies, have gone for a picnic.

"A picnic!—what! another picnic!" cried Cosmo, in a tone of such frank disapprobation, that it brought the rudiments of a grin to the footman's face; and after trying that official's patience by remaining for some time silent and motionless, he woke up, and saying that he would not leave cards, but return to-morrow, went away, moving with a crushed and bewildered air, in strange contrast to the energy and eagerness of his arrival. Slowly and purposeless he loitered down the glen. The progress of his life was virtually arrested for twenty-four hours. The only event worthy of the name, or which could advance his history by ever so short a stage, was postponed for that time, and the interval—that long and weary interval—must be passed in a feverish middle state, between dream-life and waking consciousness, monotonous but without repose,—monotonous from the domination of one idea, but of an idea whose fierce activity reigned in perpetual tumult. Slowly he went down the glen,

held by love's attraction within sight of Esmè's home; lingering in the scene upon which her beautiful eyes constantly rested; making oracles of the hills and woods which had mingled with her thoughts; seeking association with her in every leaf and flower, and indulging in all the wild and picturesque fantasies of a poet-lover's pantheism.

Hours passed, and still he lingered—now down by the river, now up among the woods. At last, descending to the highroad, where it was in the middle of an ascent, he heard the distant sound of wheels, and turning, beheld a large carriage slowly ascending towards him. It was a brake, full of people, and blossoming with the bright hues of ladies' hats and parasols. There could be no doubt that this was the Dunerlacht party, nor any that they would be up with him in about three minutes —a limited allowance of time wherein to recover one's senses, after a descent from the visionary world; and flight to the thickets was his first impulse.

But *she* must be of the company, so that flight was impossible; and feeling that it would not do to be found mooning and stationary on the highroad, he compromised the matter by turning back in the direction of the castle.

They gained on him; the sound of many voices grew more and more distinct; the breathing of the horses was audible above the beating of his heart; he drew aside; they were abreast; he looked round. And first he saw Lord Ribston, who took no notice of him; and then Mrs Ravenhall, who sweetly and silently bowed to him; and then—a lowered parasol; and then Lord Germistoune, who rolled out his usual formula, "How do you do, sir?—how do you do?" and this attracted the attention of all, and compelled the elevation of the parasol and the disclosure of Esmè's beautiful face, made all the more beautiful by a vivid blush, which it seems almost brutal to chronicle, but which, as a matter of fact, had been taking place for some little time, behind the parasol,—indeed, from the moment when her eyes (before all other eyes) had caught sight of Cosmo. He, keeping pace with the carriage, saluted the party comprehensively; and then, crossing to Esmè's side, made special inquiries as to her condition after the ball, also as to that of "the eternal Mrs Ravenhall," who sat beside her—all in orthodox form, astonishing in a man whose thoughts were the merest chaos.

"I called at the castle this forenoon," he said, after walking along for a little in silence; "but as I hope to do so again to-morrow, I did not leave my card."

"We shall be at home to-morrow, I think," said Esmè, "though most of the gentlemen will be, of course, on the hill."

"You cannot be such a devotee to sport as your friend Tom, Mr Glencairn. Two days away from the hill in succession! that sounds very lukewarm—quite *surprisingly* so!" said Mrs Ravenhall.

"Oh, I have had so much of it in my time—I am no longer a ravenous sportsman; but my keeper quite agrees with you, Mrs Ravenhall; he thinks me a monster of insensibility. By the by, would you kindly say to Tom that, if he cares to go, and will go and shoot at Finmore to-morrow, I shall be very much obliged to him. If some one doesn't shoot there, I don't know what will happen to old Davidson: I believe he will shoot *himself*. But if Tom can go, he will be appeased. Tom is a great hero of his."

"It can't be a stratagem," thought Mrs Ravenhall; "for that wretch" (Tom had become "that wretch" since "the Twelfth") "could make no one take the trouble to scheme against him." Then she said aloud, "I will give him your message," speaking glumly, feeling how hard it was that this man should come and take so naturally to the part which all her skill and tactics could not get Tom to play with the slightest life or continuity.

"I suppose," she continued, "Tom is to go to your lodge? I suppose you will shoot the first part of the day with him?"

"Unfortunately," said Cosmo, "I expect that a friend will probably arrive from town to-morrow forenoon, and I must be at home to receive him. If he should arrive, Miss Douglas, may I bring him over with me to the castle? He has not been in Scotland before, and I should like particularly to show him so very fine a specimen of the old Scotch architecture. He will be greatly interested in it."

"Pray bring him," said Esmè; "and won't you come to luncheon?"

"Thanks, I shall be delighted, if he arrives in time."

"And then," she said, "he can see all our lions outside and in. Papa," she continued, turning to her father, who always contrived to abstract himself aggressively, by alien conversation or otherwise, from any sort of intercourse with Cosmo—"papa, Mr Glencairn is perhaps going to bring a friend who is much interested in architecture" (Phil Denwick!) "to see the castle to-morrow, and perhaps they will be able to come to lunch. Shall you be at home?"

"You know, my dear, it is impossible for me, short of a

definite engagement, to say that I shall certainly be at luncheon on any given day; but if Mr Glencairn does us the favour to visit the castle with his friend, there will be luncheon for him whether I am at home or not."

And with this somewhat ungracious ratification, delivered without a look at Cosmo, the summit of the ascent was reached, the horses broke into a trot, and Cosmo was again alone with the music of her "good-bye" ringing in his ears, and the ineffable witchery of her smile thrilling in every fibre of his heart.

"So much for the FOUNDLING!" said Mrs Crock; whereat there was boisterous merriment, all over the party.

"Who?" said Lord Germistoune.

"The Foundling," repeated Mrs Crock, amid renewed mirth.

"And may I ask who the Foundling is?" said his lordship.

"That man we have just left behind. He still looks a little lost, doesn't he?"

"As if he would be the better of being found over again? Eh? ha! ha! ha!" cried Lord Ribston.

"But why do you call him 'the Foundling'?" asked Lord Germistoune.

"I? Oh, I don't know; because he is one, I suppose. Didn't some one say so?" said Mrs Crock.

"Mrs Ravenhall knew the people who found him, I believe," said Lady Bugles.

"My dear Lady Bugles, how *can* you say so?" said Mrs Ravenhall, aghast at being involved so far beyond what her diplomacy contemplated.

"In the cart, you know," suggested Lady Bugles; but this hazy *aide-mémoire* threw a fresh mist over the subject; for Lord Germistoune cried out, impatiently—

"Yes, yes; but *who* found him in the cart? that's what I want to know."

"Mrs Ravenhall——" began Lady Bugles; and the loud laughter of the whole party stopped the inquiry for a time.

"Indeed I didn't," laughed Mrs Ravenhall; "but I said—and it just shows how foolish one is to say things—that I *fancied* I had heard that there *was* a *sort* of suspicion, that there *was* some *little* mystery about Mr Glencairn's birth. If I used the word 'foundling,' it could, of course, have only been as a joke, for I know nothing about it."

"Hum!" said Lord Germistoune, delighted to scent something to Cosmo's disadvantage; "this is mysterious; you don't know what his origin is?"

"No," said Mrs Ravenhall; "I cannot say that I do."

"And your brother does not know?"

"I should suppose not."

"Oh, then, he may be a foundling after all. There is no smoke without fire. Now, Mrs Ravenhall, does it not occur to you that there is a slight recklessness in all this, on your brother's part—I think I may say, an unpardonable recklessness—in introducing, right and left, a man he knows nothing of? Wyedale should not have done this. I must speak to him about it. I am distinctly disappointed in Wyedale."

"But, dear Lord Germistoune," said Mrs Ravenhall, beginning to get alarmed, "*did* Tom introduce him to you?"

"I—I apprehend so. Well, let me recollect; perhaps not precisely, but practically, your brother was his voucher. Now Wyedale takes upon himself a heavy responsibility. Wyedale doesn't know what he may be answering for. At this rate Wyedale may find himself standing sponsor for crime, even,—what?"

But now the matter was getting much too serious, and Mrs Ravenhall was obliged absolutely to dispel the mist, as far as in her lay, not only for Tom's sake, but for her own, as the launcher of the unfortunate epithet. "My dear Lord Germistoune," she said, "you are altogether mistaken; Tom and Mr Glencairn have been friends since their childhood—at school, at college, and in society. Mr Glencairn is perfectly well known in society. He has been in the army; he is received everywhere. His uncle, Colonel Wildgrave, was extremely well known in London. This nephew of his inherited his fortune and his social position. You are really taking the matter far, far too much *au grand sérieux;* and all because I can't say that I know Mr Glencairn's origin; or rather, because of this comical mistake of Lady Bugles."

There was really nothing to be said after this; but Lord Germistoune had taken kindly to the "foundling" theory, and parted with it unwillingly. Besides which, when he had boiled up to the pitch of the didactic and the awful, he could not be expected to boil down again all in a moment. He remarked, therefore, that that was, no doubt, all very satisfactory and very true, so far; but, for his part, he thought Wyedale was bound "to probe the mystery,"—for he adhered tenaciously to the existence of a mystery. Then, *apropos*, he related an anecdote of a ticket-of-leave man, who had been recently going about in London society as a foreign nobleman. "So," he concluded (and thus perversely suggesting a possible connection between Cosmo and the ticket-of-leave class), "we can never be too careful. I shall certainly speak to Wyedale."

This he accordingly did, in the drawing-room, before dinner.

"I wish, Wyedale, to ask you something."

"Not a conundrum, my lord, I hope?" said Tom, gaily.

"Not a conundrum," said his lordship, in a tone which discouraged levity, "though it concerns what appears to be somewhat enigmatical. There was a good deal of discussion to-day, in the carriage, about you friend Mr Glencairn, and my curiosity is piqued about him. Ahem! Lady Bugles and Mrs Crock appeared to have the impression that he was—ahem!—a foundling."

Here Tom burst into an extravagant fit of laughter, which could not be quenched for some time, and during which Lord Germistoune began to stiffen palpably about the neck, and to look dangerously aquiline.

"This seems to amuse you," he said, grimly.

"Oh yes, indeed it does; and I beg your pardon," gasped Tom, with the tears running down his cheek. "I *must* tell Cosmo. It is the awful dignity of his face, when he hears his origin, that I am thinking of, and that kills me. A foundling! ha! ha! ha! Capital! Lady Bugles, you deserve a medal."

"But——" Lady Bugles began, in remonstrance.

"The whole thing, Tom," said Mrs Ravenhall, eagerly, "was simply a misunderstanding arising from my being unable to say exactly what Mr Glencairn's origin is; the word 'foundling' was simply a little joke of Lady Bugles's—or—or some one else's—it doesn't matter who."

Lady Bugles was astounded to find herself being shoved deeper and deeper into the "foundling" *imbroglio;* but she never could get a chance of righting herself.

"If you will allow me to say, Wyedale," said his lordship, with his ears well back, in resentment at having the word taken out of his mouth,—"if you will allow *me* to say—what I would have said some time ago, *if* I had been permitted,—there was no serious question as to his being a—ahem!—a foundling. That, I believe, was admitted to be a pleasantry which Lady Bugles allowed herself. But, leaving that aside, I venture to say, and I venture to repeat, that there is a certain recklessness in answering socially for a man about whom there is a mystery. You understand me?"

"Certainly; but where is the mystery?"

"About this friend of yours."

"There is no mystery about him."

"No!"

"None whatever. I have known him all my life."

"But his family?"

"Well, I knew his uncle—capital fellow his uncle! tipped Cosmo's friends with a catholic hand; and his aunt too—a capital specimen of the aunt—and——"

"Yes, yes, yes, Wyedale; but had your friend a father of his own? and if so, who was he?"

"You asked me that, I remember, once before, Lord Germistoune; and I can only say, what I said before, that he not only had, but has, a father, though I don't happen to know him. After all, there's nothing mysterious in that. I don't know everybody's father. Very glad I don't. Fathers, as a rule, are a mistake. Present company always honourably excepted."

"Then," said Lord Germistoune, "I suppose we must give him the benefit of the doubt. We must conclude that Lady Bugles's jest had no serious foundation."

"There's no doubt about Cosmo Glencairn," cried Tom, heartily; "and no mystery, except that he is a mysteriously good fellow to be going about loose nowadays; and Lady Bugles must have dreamt——"

"But," cried Lady Bugles, "I never——"

Here, however, dinner was announced, and the conversation was broken off, Lord Germistoune perversely nourishing a sort of hazy half-belief that there was something amiss about Cosmo's antecedents, and that Lady Bugles could unfold a tale, if she only chose to do so. So that this one little spiteful word of Mrs Ravenhall's, let slip in a moment of undiplomatic vexation, was near producing a dangerous commotion without doing anything to further her views—indeed, probably much the reverse. For the abuse of the absent—even of the absent unknown—is always distasteful to a generous nature; and Esmè was beginning to think that there was a general disposition to attack and decry Mr Glencairn whom she knew and—and respected; and what the effect of this upon her feelings towards Cosmo might be, it is unnecessary to discuss. It may be mentioned, however, that the same evening, when Tom Wyedale was making one of his light cynical speeches as to the general inexpediency and hollowness of human friendship, she said to him with great warmth, "No, Mr Wyedale, I am sure you don't think so, because *you* don't turn your back upon absent friends; and I can easily forgive your theories when your practice is—is what I admire." Tom opened his eyes: he had forgotten all about the Cosmo episode, and merely said, "I'm so glad you're glad I'm admirable;" but after all, he was entitled to some credit for disap-

pointing Lord Germistoune's palpable prejudice, when we recollect that the great bulk of the "mixed shooting" was still unexhausted, and that the "Three Kimmers" were a certainty for him, in any case.

CHAPTER XXX.

On his return home Cosmo found a telegram from Phil Denwick, announcing that he would leave town that night and be at Finmore on the following forenoon; and on the following forenoon Phil made his appearance accordingly. He was a very different-looking individual from the shabby lounger whom his friend had so recently found on the brink of the abyss, and rescued with so much promptitude; and as Cosmo recognised that the true cheery ring had come back to his voice, and saw the old light sparkling again in his merry eyes, he felt a thrill of pure unselfish happiness, which, as he said to himself, was the best return his money had brought him for many a long day.

"Here you are, old Phil!" he cried heartily, as his friend drove up; "awfully good of you to come!"

"Here I am, Cosmo, with commercial promptitude and despatch—also as per invoice, wired. I didn't lose a single train, you see."

"No, that was right. The grouse want shooting, and the sooner they get it the better. Come in; have you breakfasted, and can you hold on till luncheon?"

"Breakfasted! yes—and I can hold on till midnight. I say, what a glorious country! what air! what scenery!"

"Yes, and I am glad you have it so fine for your first experience."

"Fine! it's heavenly." Then he went on with his old boyish eagerness. "And I've already seen grouse! grouse upon the wing! A covey of fourteen actually raced with the train—kept up with it too. It was a thrilling spectacle for a Cockney sportsman. It quite set me trembling all over. By the by, what queer fellows your Scotch second-class passengers seem to be! I playfully confided my agitation about the grouse to a fellow-traveller. He looked me all over very carefully for about two minutes, and then said judicially, 'A rack'n ye'll be easy fley't!' which, whatever he may have meant, seemed

inconsequent, and to a foreign ear has a truculent sound, has it not?"

"What did you say to him?" asked Cosmo, laughing.

"Say to him? Oh! I said, that for the matter of that, I fancied I was pretty well able to take care of my skin—which seemed to puzzle him, for he shut up. But then another fellow stood in, and shouted at me what might have been a war-cry, and which sounded like 'Whaur-i-ye-fae,' and kept shouting it at me over and over again, and louder each time, till at last it was a regular bellow, 'WHAUR-I-YE-FAE?' I told him that he might howl away till he was blue in the face, but that if he expected to get a rise out of me he was mistaken; and that choked *him* off too, but he seemed pretty savage. They appear to be a rum lot. I say, old boy, you're looking awfully thin. What have you been about? Taking it out of yourself on the hill?"

"No, not too much; haven't had time yet. But tell me all about yourself, Phil."

Then, as they walked about the garden, Phil gave his friend an account of his educational progress, and made him laugh with several funny stories about Mr Hopper in his capacity of commercial mentor, and the compliments which Mr Hopper paid his disciple, and the "prodigious trading instinct" which he had discovered him to possess; and rattled away in his exuberant vein till he had exhausted the topic, and then said—

"Now, Cosmo, I'm not a bit tired. Is there any just cause why we should not go out and have a shoot this afternoon? Splendid day! pity to waste it!"

Whereupon Cosmo blushed and explained that they were engaged to lunch at Dunerlacht Castle, and looking at his watch, said that they must start in twenty minutes; so that if Phil wished to freshen himself up a little after his journey, now was the time. Then Phil's face fell as be begged off, swearing that he abhorred castles, and abominated society, and would rather stay behind, and enter himself with the grouse. He was overruled, however, and of course carried of.

"You are supposed," said Cosmo, as they drove along, "to be going expressly to lionise the castle, and to be deeply interested in architecture; so mind you be interested."

"All right," said Phil. "Who does the place belong to?"

"Lord Germistoune."

"Never heard of him."

"You'd better not let him know that. He is rather a dangerous old gentleman. In fact, generally speaking, you had better be very careful."

"Oh, hang it, Cosmo! you speak as if I were going into the witness-box. You'd better let me down, and I'll go back to the grouse. Remember I don't know the ways of the country."

"Don't be alarmed, Phil. All you've got to do, is to be very amiable—which comes natural to you."

"I see; employ the soothing system; agree with everything he says."

"That," said Cosmo, laughing, "will certainly be the safest plan."

"All right; even if he says 'whaur-i-ye-fae,' I shall say that that exactly represents my view of the matter, and that the sentiment does him credit. I would rather have tackled the grouse, though."

"You shall tackle them to-morrow, to your heart's content."

They arrived rather late, and luncheon was already in progress. The party was not in strong force. Some departures had taken place, and most of the gentlemen were on the hill. Lord Germistoune was, however, present, and his capricious temper appeared to be in unusually good order. Things looked promising. Cosmo found a seat near Esmè, and Phil was installed beside her father.

Phil was one of those lucky fellows who prepossess most people they come across, even the most dissimilar people. He had that frank simplicity of manner and expression, which is the charm of children, and irresistible in the grown up, when, as in Phil's case, combined with intelligence and geniality. At present he showed to great advantage, for he was brimming over with the happiness of reaction, and as fresh and eager as a schoolboy out for his holiday. Even Lord Germistoune, notwithstanding the auspices under which Phil was his guest, soon unbent, and became very civil and even cordial; and it was fortunate that Phil knew nothing of the relations between his introducer and his host, so that he was quite unconstrained, and had only a humorous recollection that it was his duty to coincide with his lordship's opinions upon things in general.

"Your first visit to Scotland, Mr Fenwick, I believe?" said Lord Germistoune, after he had quite thawed down.

"I am ashamed to say that it is," said Phil, "though I won't say that I am sorry, for I am enjoying all the pleasures of a first experience, and they are very great. This is a glorious country!"

"I think that we may consider it a glorious country."

"I would give anything to have a property here."

"Ah! that is a different question: that is a very prevalent

feeling. Our land is very much sought after in the market—offensively so."

"Indeed!"

"Hucksters from Manchester are always on the watch—the harpies! They bid anything for land in this quarter."

"Ah! I'm not surprised at that."

"They swoop on us like vultures, with their ill-gotten gains."

"And purchase the land?"

"And mob out people who are entitled to be landholders. The whole of the neighbouring parish of Auchinfeoch has recently been acquired by a huckster."

"Really! From Manchester?" asked Phil, sympathetically.

"From Manchester; of the name of Runnicles—which might account for almost anything. I flatter myself Mr Runnicles knows very distinctly the view I take of *his* conduct."

"You resented the purchase as—as an intrusion?"

"I resented it, sir, as a scandalous abomination. How would you like to have German Jews walking about in kilts in your district?"

"It would be highly unpleasant, of course," said Phil, stifling his laughter with great difficulty.

"Unpleasant! It's enough to demoralise the whole district. You are comparatively exempt from such pests in the south. I presume, however, you are what in England is called from 'the North'? There is no mistaking your name; it has the true border ring."

"Still, Lord Germistoune, I am not a Borderer."

"Not perhaps immediately, but certainly of Border lineage."

"I am not aware of it."

"Oh, but there is no question about it. I interest myself in family history, and your name is simply a corruption from 'Of Alnwick;' drop the 'O' and you get Falnwick and Fenwick."

"But you have mistaken my name, Lord Germistoune, which is not Fenwick, but Denwick."

"Ah, really! Well, but is it not obvious to you that they are the same? Denwick is simply d'Alnwick, so that you don't get away from the Border, nor from the Fenwicks. It only throws you a stage further back, and proves you to be a Fenwick and a Borderer of the oldest and most inveterate description. I am never at fault in such matters. Your family possessions are not in that district, however?"

"No," said Phil, thinking that, if anything, he was for the time a Highland proprietor, all his worldly possessions being contained in a battered old portmanteau now at Cosmo's lodge.

"No, but I should be happy to re-establish that sort of connection with the Border."

"There may be openings there. I understand you are greatly interested in architecture. Any building projects in view at your own place?"

"The old fellow is determined to make a swell of me," thought Phil, as he laughed, and disclaimed both place and project.

"Only an abstract lover of the art? Well, I shall be happy to show you our old house. There is a bit which goes back certainly to the twelfth, some say the eleventh century. I shall be pleased to get the opinion of an expert."

Phil was a good deal puzzled by the unexpected consideration which he was receiving; but the explanation was very simple. Lord Germistoune was, as we have amply seen, a man of sudden personal prejudices—violent and unreasonable for, or against, their objects. Fair examples of his system were to be found in the cases of Cosmo Glencairn and Tom Wyedale respectively; and Phil Denwick was fortunate enough to share the happier experiences of the latter. Hence this complaisant garrulity, and this mysterious imputation of pedigree, property, and lore; which were merely so many ways of expressing that his lordship fancied him, and therefore assumed him to possess the advantages to which a man thus distinguished was entitled, according to the fitness of things.

Meantime, at the other end of the table, there was no great flow of conversation. The talking men of the party were on the moor; and many of the ladies only took the trouble to talk when the right men were present. Esmè was somewhat silent and constrained; conversation languished and flickered; and Cosmo felt a certain chill creep over his spirit. He began to feel that coming to luncheon had been a mistake—the meal had better have been omitted. After divers flashes of silence, Mrs Ravenhall, who had made gallant efforts to keep things going, at last said, pettishly—

"How deadly-lively we all are to-day! I wish these tiresome men would sometimes stay at home and amuse us."

"If it were *only* for a change," moaned Lady Bugles.

"Some of them are coming back early to play lawn-tennis," said Mrs Crock.

"I should be sorry to count upon *that*," said Lady Bugles, who watched for Mrs Crock.

"Oh, but it's a promise!"

"I wouldn't give much for their promises."

"Very likely not; but my faith is stronger than yours. I suppose faith depends a good deal upon experience." With which trump it was felt that Mrs Crock took the trick from her ladyship, who had not long ago figured disastrously in a rather racy breach of promise case.

"Well, what *are* we to do this afternoon?" said Miss Hungerford Snapsley.

"I'm going sketching," mewed Miss Milkington.

"'Sir, she said—sir, she said,'" hummed Miss Snapsley; "but that won't amuse *us*."

"And I shan't amuse you by writing letters, of which I have a bushel to get through." said Mrs Ravenhall. "Why not play lawn-tennis *en attendant?* I daresay Mr Glencairn will help you."

She now saw the necessity of being more circumspect in her measures as to Cosmo; and besides, it is obvious that a man who means mischief can do less of it when panting at lawn-tennis than in quieter aspects.

"I shall be delighted," said Cosmo.

"*Till* the others come," said Mrs Crock, quickly, and added, "because when they do, it's a fixed match, you know. Perhaps your friend plays?"

"Oh yes, he does."

"Very well, then, I will take you, and we'll challenge Miss Douglas and your friend."

When they went out, however, Lord Germistoune, finding Phil a sympathetic peg on which to hang his prose, claimed him for his prey, and carried him off for lionising purposes; so one of the "cripples" was taken instead; and another set was made up by Miss Snapsley, who had, however, to content herself with the same unsatisfactory *personnel.*

"I can't play very long," said Esmè, "because I have promised to take Miss Milkington to her sketching-ground."

"How you sacrifice yourself to that creature!" said Mrs Ravenhall, beaming approval, however.

Then the game took place, but it was a hollow affair, Cosmo and Mrs Crock being both experts, and Esmè unable to support the heavy handicapping of the "cripple."

Other games were played, the "cripple" being tried in every combination, but with the same results; and when it was beginning to get a little hopeless, joy suddenly flashed into the face of Mrs Crock, for Lord Ribston and two other "nice" men falsified the predictions of Lady Bugles by appearing on the scene.

"They sent whisky instead of brandy, and forgot the soda altogether," explained Ribston, with his usual candour, "so we were obliged to come home. But now that we've refreshed, we're on for a match. Miss Douglas, you and I against Mrs Crock and Berkeley."

"Oh, *that* isn't the match, Lord Ribston! it was you and I against Miss Snapsley and Captain Berkeley," said Mrs Crock.

"That isn't a law of the Swedes and Prussians, is it?"

"*I* can't play, Lord Ribston; I have another engagement," said Esmè.

Whereat the noble lord, who had descended the mountain partly for her sake, though mainly for the brandy, was mightily disgusted, and was not at all a pleasant partner for the widow Crock.

"I am afraid I must say 'good-bye' now, Mr Glencairn," said Esmè. "I have kept poor Miss Milkington waiting so very long."

This was terrible! Cosmo had hardly exchanged a word with her during the whole visit; so he took heart of grace, and said —"Will you think me too importunate?—but I daresay you have forgotten all about it—the song——"

"Oh, indeed I have not forgotten it; it is copied, and if you care to have it now, I will give it you. Will you come up to the house, or shall I send it down to you here?"

"Pray let me go to the house," said Cosmo, eagerly. "How very good of you to remember it!"

"Oh no," said Esmè. "I promised, and though I have rather repented of my promise, I am going to keep it, of course."

"But why have you repented?"

She did not answer for a moment, and then said, "I never meant any one to know anything about it, and—and I don't know why I told you—and I think—you know there *is* really nothing in the song—and so it seems absurd to give it to any one."

Cosmo felt an indescribable restraint; and when he said that there was much in the song, and that he should value it very highly, the words sounded, even to himself, dry and chilly.

They walked to the house in silence; and when they reached the door, Esmè begged him to wait while she went up and fetched the copy. Presently she returned, accompanied by Miss Milkington, and presented him with the song, saying, "You will keep my secret," and then checked his raptures which threatened to break out, by adding, with a laugh, to Miss Milk-

ington, "You don't know what a confession of guilt I have been making to Mr Glencairn!"

"Tell me about it," said Miss Milkington, lackadaisically; "I do so like to hear about guilt!"

And this made both Esmè and Cosmo laugh, and the cloud rose a little.

"I wonder where my friend has hidden himself?" said Cosmo.

"I think," said Esmè, "it is quite certain that papa has taken him to the ruin. No one escapes the ruin."

"Are you going in that direction?"

"Yes, we are. Miss Milkington wishes to sketch the Fall from a point in that quarter."

"Then may I be allowed to place myself under your guidance, so far? I must go and look for Lord Germistoune and Denwick."

"Oh, certainly; but would you not rather stay and play lawn-tennis till your friend returns?"

"No," said Cosmo. I can play tennis any day, but I can't walk with a composer and an artist any day."

"Hush!" said Esmè, laughing. "Remember!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

They wound up the hillside, through the woods, by a path which was unfortunately so narrow that they were obliged to move in single file, in which formation, with the strong non-conductor of Miss Milkington's person interpolated between Esmè and himself, Cosmo felt that he might as well be promenading alone on the other side of the glen. But, after about ten minutes of silent pilgrimage, they diverged by another path to the right, and, again descending, came upon an open plateau, where they halted. Far beneath them, the river was just escaping from the eddies of the Fall; over against them, on a higher level, it made its first leap towards the abyss; and higher still, ivy-bound, and encircled by a few ancient and writhen trees, the venerable keep seemed mournfully to contemplate its impending doom in the anguish of the caldron down below.

The great and solemn sound of the waters lent a fitting voice to the weird sublimity of the scene.

For a moment they all contemplated the grand *coup d'œil* without speaking; but Miss Milkington, who was a sketcher, and not an artist, rather impatiently broke the silence, and clamoured for her "point of view"—*the* point of view whence as much as possible of the scene could be utilised, and condensed into her caricature.

Esmè took her away some little distance, placed her in position, set her to work, and then, returning to Cosmo, said—"If you think you have time, and don't object to a scramble, you can get down from here to the level of the river, where there is a splendid view of the Fall. But I warn you that the path, which is known as 'Jacob's Ladder,' is difficult; still, if you care to venture it, I will show you where to begin the descent."

As there seemed no prospect of angelic society on the descent, Cosmo felt that he had better adhere to the heavenward end of the "Ladder," so excused himself on the plea of time.

"How," he asked, "can I get round, and up, from this to the ruin?"

Esmè described the route, which *was* rather intricate, but Cosmo feigned stupidity with great success; and after many attempts to make him understand, she desisted, laughingly, and said—

"I see you have no bump of locality, and would inevitably lose yourself, so I will take you to a point, after which you can't make a mistake."

This was, of course, exactly what Cosmo had been scheming for, and they started. He was resolved to break down, from the first, the sort of constraint which seemed threatening to rise between them, so he forced himself, with an effort, to talk fluently.

"We seem destined," he said, "to meet 'on the heights,' and to meet in wonderful scenery."

"You are thinking of Lake Como, and that lovely walk behind the Villa Bianca?"

"Yes; I got quite a new view of the lake by that walk: I never *really* knew its beauties before."

"I think it *is* the most beautiful view I know of the lake."

"And I have got quite a new view of the Erlacht Fall to-day."

"I think here, too, we are fortunate, and have the best of it beside us."

"So that I have to thank you for twice 'lifting the veil.'"

"Or rather, for the humble fact of living behind the veil, in these two cases. What a different scene this is!"

"Yes," said Cosmo, "and how characteristic of the two countries! There, there was nothing hard, or sharp, or obtrusive; hundreds of beauties, of different kinds, lay around us, but diffused, and disposed in a sort of easy, languid grace, so that nothing was insisted upon. Here it is all concentration, eagerness, energy—like the national character. It is a battle. Look at the malignant fury of the waters; the rocks are the very picture of stern and cruel resolution, and these sombre woods and that sad old ruin can be nothing but the grim spectators of the tragedy. Everything is forced upon you; you can't forget it for an instant, for the roar of the water cries everlastingly 'Come and see our combat!'"

"And which do you like best?"

"Like you, I have my moods, and every mood has a different preference."

Esmè looked up and laughed. "How," she asked, "do you know that *I* have moods?"

"Do you forget that I am a *clairvoyant?* Don't you remember our conversation about the picture the other night? or rather, do you think I forget our conversation on the last walk I had with you?"

"Oh, Mr Glencairn, do tell me more about the Sassoferrato picture!"

Cosmo, nothing loath, complied, and there ensued a long conversation of dialogue and dissertation which, lightly floating over a hundred subjects, extracted from each some subtle implication of Cosmo's love and homage.

Conversations of the sort are apt to be engrossing, so it is not wonderful that Miss Milkington came to be forgotten, and that, without observation on either side, Esmè ended in being Cosmo's guide all the way to the ruin. Recalled by reaching it, she was for hurrying back at once, but Cosmo suggested that, now she was here, a few minutes more or less could make no difference, and assured her laughingly that, since her father and Phil were not visible, he gravely mistrusted his unaided bump of locality to guide him back again. So she consented to remain for a few minutes, during which they explored the old castle and its precincts.

"This takes one very far back into the old world," said Cosmo.

"I think," replied Esmè, "about six hundred years."

"It has always been in your family, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Esmè; "or rather, it has always come back to us, for it has been confiscated four or five times — which

shows that we have not been a well-conducted race, does it not?"

"Or rather, it shows that you have not been a neutral race. It shows that your ancestors have been mixed up (which every one knows) with the history of the country, and helped to make it. To me there is something most enviable in such a descent."

"Do you think it so very enviable?"

"Perhaps because I do not possess it."

Esmè, with all the innuendos about Cosmo's birth so fresh in her recollection, involuntarily betrayed her interest by something like a start.

"No," Cosmo continued, "I won't give that as my reason, for I am convinced of its real advantages. I think that ancient and honourable birth must be a great incitement to nobility of life, and a great help in reaching it. The man who possesses it must feel an inspiration when he looks into the past. The past must have a special voice for him, to encourage and warn him. It is impossible that he can forget that his fame or dis-fame affects a grand series of traditions and not merely himself. If he has any loyalty or reverence in his nature, he can't help feeling that he is the latest link in a chain of pure metal, and that *he* must not be the first to debase it."

"If every one felt so, how noble nobility would be!" said Esmè.

"But depend upon it, that if vast numbers did not feel so in some degree, nobility would be much less noble than it is. I do not possess it, but I can see its value. For a man like me, of brief and obscure pedigree, the past has no special voice appealing to the reverence or the romance of his character; there is no accumulated force of traditions to propel him. He must rely on himself alone. Like the more fortunate, he has, of course, the *supreme* inducements to lead a noble life; but they have a host of minor ones which touch human nature very attractively, and help it, and add something of the picturesque to duty." Cosmo paused for a moment, and then added—"Therefore, I envy the fortunate people who possess long and illustrious descent."

Esmè said, "No doubt, if looked on as you look on it, it would be a very ennobling thing; but if one does not require such incitements—and I am sure *you* do not—I do not see that there is much to regret in the want of a long pedigree; it is only a romantic sentiment—provided, of course, one is of gentle birth."

"And what constitutes that?"

"Mr Glencairn, surely you know better than I."

"No, I don't, Miss Douglas—indeed I don't. I wish I did. Do you suppose that *I* am of gentle birth?"

Esmè looked terribly confused, and changed colour and said —"Of course, Mr Glencairn. How can you ask such a question?"

"Because I have grave doubts about my own case. You shall have it before you. I am well-born—extremely well-born, on the mother's side; on the father's, my pedigree is untraceable after three generations. There may be surmises, but I have no right to think of my pedigree except as absolutely a blank beyond that limit. Now, how do I stand? Is that enough? Am I of gentle birth?"

Esmè half smiled at his vehemence. "I should think," she said, "that no one could deny it; for it cannot matter on which side the ancient descent is, and the worst side is—is" (she was thinking of its remoteness from the disgrace alleged by the foundling story) "respectable. You must be very difficult to satisfy."

"It is enough?" repeated Cosmo—"you say that it is enough?"

"Of course I do, Mr Glencairn."

"Then, for myself, I am satisfied. I require no higher patent."

"I fear," she said, smiling, "it is not a patent of much authority. My father, for instance, always accuses me of being a Radical—ever since, in a rash moment, I quoted to him that 'kind hearts are more than coronets.'"

A change came over Cosmo's face, and he said, involuntarily, and almost with a groan, "I can well imagine it."

"Well," she said, as if defending herself against Cosmo himself, "I suspect I *am* a Radical, if that kind of sentiment makes a Radical. I suppose the length of my pedigree entitles me to say what I think about the claims of long descent?"

"Undoubtedly so."

"Well, you have spoken of its advantages. I say nothing against what you say; I only doubt that they are used as you think (and *I* think) they ought to be, and might be used; but I retain my radical opinion."

"What?" said Cosmo; "'The rank is but the guinea stamp'?"

"I say nothing against the rank; it is a splendid thing—because it is a great power—if it is nobly used; but it is a pitiable thing—and still because it is a great power—if it is *not* nobly used. Do you agree with me?"

"Indeed I do."

"And I *do* believe in that kind of nobility and gentlemanhood which patents and pedigrees cannot make—of heart and actions and manners. I place them above the others. I *do* prefer the substance to the symbol. You shudder at me as an unromantic Radical. I can't help it."

"You forget, Miss Douglas, that I am not entitled to shudder at such sentiments; but, if I could be supposed to speak impartially, I should say that they were very generous and noble. As to their being unromantic, however, I am afraid that is the last description they would receive in the world you live in, and which I also—perhaps on sufferance, perhaps only because I have money—inhabit."

"Oh, money! that is a dreadful passport to depend upon!"

"Yes, it is—though it is the passport in this country, nowadays, to most things; and I find now, in that conviction—that it is a despicable, and, in my case, even an insufficient passport—the incitement, which I cannot derive from old traditions, to try to reach, by my own achievements, a standing-ground in the world which cannot be gainsaid."

"Of course I think it is admirable to wish to be great, to determine to be great; but if it is only to assure a position in society—which, after all, is quite assured already—that seems rather a small ending for a great beginning. But I am sure I have mistaken you; *you* cannot mean *that?*"

She looked quickly up at him at last; for in all this time there had been none of those strange meetings of the eyes which had filled her with so much bewilderment,—she had avoided them by a conscious effort,—and, looking up at him, she met his gaze, intensified beyond all its former intensity so that it held her riveted with a power which she could not resist.

"You are right," said Cosmo, speaking in a low and earnest voice which was full of music and pathos, "and you are wrong. I desire it, not for the petty advantages of social life, but as a means to an end—an end which I *must* reach, or life, with all its aspirations, and hopes, and promises, and possibilities, will become to me only a longer or shorter interval of pain or torpor,—it will be death in life."

He paused; they remained silent and motionless, rapt each on each; and to each it seemed that the beating of their own hearts was audible above the thunder of the waters shouting their battle-cry far below.

Silent and motionless, and desperately in earnest. What

would he say? what would she say? who would speak first?

These problems were not solved. The irony of Fate brought an interruption.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"'Last May a braw wooer cam' doon the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave me;
I said there was naething I hated like men—
The deil gae wi' him to believe me, believe me!
The deil gae wi' him to believe me!'

Blessin's on your bonny face, Miss Esmè! it's a weary time ye've been awa'; and here's auld Maggie at her post to gie ye welcome."

Thus singing, and thus speaking, a strange-looking woman suddenly presented herself before Esmè and Cosmo, as they stood in the critical situation described at the close of our last chapter. The noise of the waterfall, and their own deep abstraction, caused her approach to be unobserved; and her presence, close beside them, was announced by the first high and harsh notes of her song.

She was old, and, though neat and clean in her appearance, had that restless light in the eye which proclaims an unsettled brain. The ordinary expression "half-witted" would be unjust, for Maggie had plenty of wits, only they were dishevelled, and exercised irresponsibly and at random. It was her privilege to act as *cicerone* to such stray tourists as came to visit the Fall; and, on the days when access to the castle side of it was permitted, she was always to be found lying in wait for her prey at the farther end of a light bridge which spanned the river a little above the ruin. Her discourse, on these occasions, was diversified by fragments of local legend and sudden digressions into song, and even dance, which, in her wandering imagination, had probably some illustrative connection with her themes, and which, at all events, never failed to amuse her clients. From this description, old Maggie, who still lives and plies her vocation, will no doubt be recognised by some of our readers.

Opportune or inopportune, her sudden appearance rudely dissolved the spell which held Esmè and Cosmo in the silence

of deep emotion. The former started from her abstraction in a confusion so deep that, at first, she could find no voice to return the eccentric salutation. The old woman gave her time, however, by breaking into another snatch of song, and when it was finished Esmè was able to speak.

"I am glad to see you again, Maggie," she said, offering her hand to the woman, who raised it to her lips with all love and reverence, "and happy to see you looking so well."

"My thanks to ye, Miss Esmè; I'm aye weel—praise be blessed!—when the simmer time comes and brings ye back, and," she added, with a twinkle in her eye, "the towrist bodies, wi' their saxpences and siclike. And wha's the bonny gentleman? he'll no be a towrist?"

"This is the gentleman who is living at Finmore, Maggie; and I've been doing your work for you. I've been showing him the ruins, and telling him some of the old stories."

"And maybe it was an auld story he was tellin' you, when I cam' ower the knowe. I'm no a spae-wife, Miss Esmè, and I haena the second sicht—weel, aweel—

> 'My heart is sair—I daurna tell—
> My heart is sair for Somebody!
> I wad dae—what wad I not?
> For the sake o' Somebody.'

And aiblins the bonny gentleman will hae a saxpence in his pouch to gie auld Maggie, for a' he binna a towrist."

Cosmo at once took the hint, responding to it very liberally, in hopes of getting rid of the old woman, whose musical illustrations were so unpleasantly *apropos*.

"Eh! thank ye kindly, sir!" she cried; "eh! but this is nae towrist's fee! Siller, and siller, and siller! There's luck in three, and there's luck in nine! I'm nae spae-wife, as my leddy kens, but I'm thinkin' ye'll be something great and gran' yersel—a belted earl maybe, or a baron bauld, mayhap?"

"No, Maggie," said Cosmo, laughing, "I'm neither belted earl nor baron bold."

"Aweel, ye hae the look o't my bonny lad; and whiles wha isna suld be, and wha suldna be, is; and your time may come some day—wha kens?

> 'Bide ye yet, and bide ye yet,
> Ye dinna ken what may betide ye yet.'

And I wuss ye weel, for if ye hae the heigh look ye hae the free han'; and that's no aye the way o't. His lordship's sel's nane ower free wi' the bawbees. Mony's the time I've tell't him

that. 'The han' o' a Douglas,' quo' I, 'suld aye be tight on the sword, and slack on the purse,' quo' I. Hoots! he'll no heed me; I'm jist daft auld Maggie, ye ken."

"Well, Maggie," said Esmè, "we must be going. I don't think there's anything more here that Mr Glencairn would care to see."

"Troth, Miss Esmè, ye'll be richt—naething mair that he wad care to see, if I ken him ava'—for it's no the ruins, and it's no the Fa', that's brocht *him* here the day. Na, na! it's something else, as ye ken brawly, my winsome leddy.

> 'Oh, luve will venture in whaur it daurna weel be seen;
> And luve will venture in whaur wisdom ance has been;
> But I will doon yon river rove, amang the woods sae green,
> And a' to pu' a posie to my ain dear May.'

Hoots! ye'll no be heedin' me—I'm jist daft auld Maggie, ye ken." And here the old woman varied the entertainment by dancing a pretty long bout of the "Highland fling," humming the notes of a strathspey for music, and conducting the performance with a solemnity of expression in grotesque contrast with the wild vigour of her "footing."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Cosmo, with rage and despair in his heart, when she came to a halt; "and now we must say good-bye"

"What's yer hurry?"

"Well, it's growing late, and I must be getting home. I'll come back another day and hear all your old stories."

"Wait a wee till I dance ye 'Gillie Callum.'"

"Not to-day, Maggie; we must really be going."

"Aweel, I'll see ye aff my ain domain. I couldna dae less, ye ken."

To be forestalled in your own declaration of love by a mad woman, who shouts your tender secret, in transparent parables of grotesque song, accompanied with crazy dancing! *Lugete Veneres Cupidinesque!* Could anything be more crushing to a transcendental lover? And, to a maiden for whose wondering eyes a doubtful light is just beginning to dawn upon the world of love, could anything be more overwhelming than an illumination so garish, brusquely flashed upon the mysterious region which her timid feet are in the act of entering? With a burning blush fixed in her fair cheek, Esmè, with downcast eyes, walked hurriedly and in silence; and Cosmo, by her side, moved also without a word, paralysed by his sudden drop from the pinnacle of high emotion, into the bathos wrought by Maggie's extravaganza. The old woman followed close behind them—

now, fortunately, launched on an endless legend, shouted to ears which did not listen, and enlivened with bursts of song, which rang, weird and shrill, above the water's roar.

In these unhappy circumstances they rejoined Miss Milkington, upon whom Maggie, mistaking her for a tourist, instantly pounced, dancing up to her and chanting her *cicerone's* formula: "Will ye see the Fa', bonny leddy? Will ye see the auld Douglas Castle, bonny leddy? and I'll sing ye a sang, and tell ye a tale, and dance ye 'Gillie Callum,' and a' for a thank-ye and a saxpence, or maybe twa, bonny leddy! Hae! gie me the satchel—I'll carry't for ye," and she was for possessing herself of Miss Milkington's drawing paraphernalia, but that young lady drew back, scared by the wild aspect of the old woman.

"Hoots!" cried Maggie, "what ails ye? I'm jist daft Maggie, ye ken. Hae! gie me the satchel," and she again closed with her victim, who again started back, piping tremulously—

"Go away! go away! you horrid, dreadful person!"

Maggie drew herself up in offended dignity.

"Dreadfu' person!" she exclaimed; "is it *me?* hard ye e'er the like o't? Afore my leddy, too! and me a vassal o' Dunerlacht! and you a towrist body frae Dundee, mayhap, wha kens? wi' a face like soured sowans, and——"

"Hush, hush, hush, Maggie!" cried Esmè; "this lady is a friend of mine; and if you say another word I shall be very angry. Go away at once. I am ashamed of you."

"Dear heart, Miss Esmè! what wye was I to ken? The gentles ne'er misca's me; but I beg the bonny Miss's pardon; and aiblins she'll hae a saxpence for auld Meg, jist to show there's nae ill-wull atween us."

"You shall get nothing more to-day, Maggie. Go away. I am extremely displeased with you."

"Dinna say that, Miss Esmè—but I'll gang: and good-bye to ye, my leddy; and to you, my bonny Miss—I'm wae for sayin' yon aboot the sowans; and to you, my bonny gentleman. I wuss ye weel; and ye mauna look sae dowie;—

'Ne'er break yer heart for ae rebute,
But think upon it still, jo!
Then gin the lassie winna do't,
Ye'll fin' anither will, jo!'"

with which parting counsel Maggie took her departure, and went carolling away back to her "ain domain," having performed to perfection the functions of that awful social pest, the *enfant terrible*, and in his most favourite sphere of action.

And now, if Miss Milkington had been neutral and useless

all her life, she was really serviceable at last; for, without her presence, what could Esmè and Cosmo have done? Could they have returned to the conditions in which the old woman had surprised them? Surely not; the sensitive delicacy of these conditions made that impossible, after Meg's interlude. No; they were both overwhelmed with embarrassment; and they must have either acknowledged this by a desperate silence, or betrayed it in a *fiasco* of commonplace talk—miserable expedients both of them; and to either would have attached this danger, that it might have developed a new point of departure for the relations between Cosmo and Esmè, which had now begun to move, pretty definitely, in a certain direction. Under these circumstances Miss Milkington was a godsend; and it was wonderful to see the sudden interest which both her companions displayed in her and her artistic performances, and the persistence with which their remarks were addressed exclusively to her on the homeward route. This circumstance, and a certain feverish loquacity which they displayed, might have been suggestive to the average female mind; but Miss Milkington's wits were rather below par, and her only emotion at the conclusion of the journey was one of relief at her escape from so unwonted a conversational strain.

Lord Germistoune and Phil Denwick had just returned from some other quarter, and were standing at the castle door when the party arrived. Esmè, with somewhat suspicious *empressement*, hastened to tell her father of their vain search for him at the ruins—even venturing to speak of it as a disappointment—and described the old woman's encounter with Miss Milkington as though it had been the prominent feature in the afternoon's adventures. Lord Germistoune, loftily unsuspecting, and glad of an occasion against old Maggie, whose freedom of speech, but for Esmè's intervention, would have long since procured her disestablishment, "extended" himself with some ardour on this matter, vowing that Maggie was a distinct pest, and that the cup of her abominations was now full to the brim.

"If Miss Milkington desires it," said his lordship, "the woman shall be cashiered at once."

"Oh yes, *please*," lisped Miss Milkington; "she is so dreadfully horrid."

"No, no, no!" cried Esmè; "I won't have her cashiered! It was all from a mistake. Maggie mistook Miss Milkington for one of the tourists, whom she looks upon as her serfs. That was all; and I only mentioned it as a joke—not to get the poor old thing into trouble."

This was really magnanimous, considering the enormity of Maggie's unreported offences, and it prevailed, Lord Germistoune dropping the bone after a little further worrying over it.

"I greatly admired the Fall, from this side, Lord Germistoune," said Cosmo; "it is quite the best point of view I have seen."

"We have always considered it undeniably the best point of view," replied Lord Germistoune; "and if you, Mr Denwick, do me the favour to visit me again, I shall hope to introduce you to it."

Phil expressed his acknowledgments; and as their dog-cart now drove up, the young men made their adieux.

"Good-bye," said Cosmo to Esmè.

"Good-bye," she murmured: her eyes had not met his, since old Maggie's intervention at the Fall, and they were still cast down.

"Good-bye," he repeated, retaining her hand, so that she looked up involuntarily into his face, and there again read the earnest story of his love—legible, *now*, beyond any misinterpretation. A sudden blush flashed over her fair brow, and she drooped those beautiful eyes, in which there was trouble, but no longer any bewilderment.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

While the afternoon had been occupied for Esmè and Cosmo by these strange events, Lord Germistoune and Phil had passed it together in a *têto-à-tête*, characterised by dreary monologue on his lordship's part, and the despairing attention of amiable docility on the part of his companion. They had thoroughly "done" the castle, within and without. Phil had had to pay dearly for his imputed cunning in architecture, by diving into many mouldy dungeons, and scaling the tortuous stairs of many a rickety turret; for everywhere there was an "object of interest," and on each Lord Germistoune descanted at length. Then there were the traditions of the place, complex and numerous; and from each section of the discourse an inference had to be drawn, to the personal glorification of his lordship, who, somehow, contrived to take credit for everything, from a gargoyle to a ghost. Thus it took a considerable time

to exhaust the castle; and when that was done, Lord Germistoune carried Phil off to see the bridge and gatehouse, which were modern, though in the ancient style, and on which the noble proprietor greatly prided himself, stating them to be from his own design. "I found that the architects were making a botch of the business, so I took it into my own hands, and did it myself, with, I venture to think, respectable results." This legend had been current for forty years, so that, by the law of prescription, at least, it was entitled to the honours of veracious history.

As they walked down from the castle, Phil, remarking on the beauty of the scenery, happened to say how grateful he felt to Cosmo for giving him the chance of visiting it; and Lord Germistoune, with "the mystery" still haunting his fancy, thought the present might be a good opportunity for probing it, and set about doing so accordingly.

"You are an old friend of his, I believe?" he inquired.

"Yes, Glencairn is my oldest, and, I may certainly say, my best friend."

"School friendships are very binding."

"We were not school-fellows, but our friendship dates farther back than school days—in fact it is hereditary; our fathers, and even our grandfathers, were friends."

"Hum! country neighbours, perhaps?"

"No, not exactly that. They were very much connected in business, I believe, and my grandfather was guardian to Glencairn's father."

"Ah, indeed! That naturally constitutes a tie."

"It has not made much of a tie between me and old Mr Glencairn," said Phil, laughing; "but, after all, that was probably due to my fault more than——"

"You catch a view of the bridge, here, Mr Denwick, which I think is effective."

"It is indeed," said Phil, "most effective;" and when it had been duly admired, Lord Germistoune resumed—"But I beg your pardon; I interrupted you. You were about to relate some facetious incident in connection with Mr Glencairn's father?"

"Oh no! I once rejected some advice of his, at which he was very angry, and I have not seen him since—that was all."

"It would appear that the gentleman is arbitrary."

"Yes, I believe he is rather an arbitrary man; and when a man of that sort is consulted on a matter connected with his own speciality, he expects to have his advice taken."

"His speciality, you say?"

"Yes, I consulted him about an investment; and I suppose Mr Glencairn is at the top of the tree in finance matters."

"May I ask who, and what, Mr Glencairn is?"

"Oh, don't you know?"

"Is it very remarkable that I should not know?"

"Not at all; I merely fancied, somehow, that you did. He was the head of an important firm in the iron trade, and is now principal shareholder of a company which took over the business; besides which, he is a great—I don't exactly know what you call it; 'financial operator' is, I believe, the expression."

"Why!" cried Lord Germistoune, in great astonishment, "you must mean Archibald Glencairn?"

"Yes, I do. The title of the company is 'Archibald Glencairn & Co., Limited.'"

"I have some reason to know about it; but Archibald Glencairn—surely *he* is not your friend's father?"

"Indeed he is."

"Some one distinctly assured me to the contrary; and besides, I always understood that the individual in question is a bachelor, and a kind of hermit, living alone in some remote quarter. I know it is next to impossible to get a personal interview with him,—a symptom I have never liked in the man—a distinctly suspicious symptom."

"Well, he is Glencairn's father; he lives as you say, and has been long a widower. But you know him after all, Lord Germistoune?"

"In a business way, I do; but only in a business way. His firm had all my Ferniehall minerals, and my Welsh field into the bargain; and in consideration of this, on the formation of the company, I was induced to become a shareholder to a considerable extent. I trust my confidence was justified."

"I have full confidence in the company; and I speak as a prospective shareholder."

"Oh, indeed! Well, you know, the dividends have not been what we anticipated—there has been a continuous diminution."

"But we must consider the general stagnation of trade," cried Phil, who had heard Mr Hopper in apology a hundred times; "and then, there is a guaranteed minimum."

"Yes; that is to say, there is Mr Archibald Glencairn."

"Who is a tower of strength. His credit is most assured, and his integrity is proverbial."

"Integrity is a good thing, but it is not capital."

"Oh, but he has an immense capital."

"With which he 'operates financially.' I tell you frankly,

the man did not impress me favourably, very much the reverse. I have only met him once. You can't meet him—he won't let you meet him. He skulks—by the Lord Harry, skulks! and if you *do* meet him, he insults you. My dealings with him have been, with one exception, by correspondence, and his tone on paper is never what it ought to be—curt and self-sufficient, and in addressing me, quite devoid of that recognition of my status in the world, not to say in his Company, which I have a right to expect; and I shall not soon forget the way he received me, on the one occasion when I succeeded in getting access to him. He didn't rise, he kept his hat on his head, he continued his writing, and actually motioned me—*me!*—to a chair, with his infernal pen, just as if I had been a—a huckster like himself! I at once stated roundly that my time was too valuable to be trifled with in that fashion; and what do you suppose the fellow replied, almost without looking up? Why, that it was his rule (*his* rule!) to transact business by correspondence alone; and that if I chose to force him out of his groove, to his great inconvenience, I must expect inconvenience to myself. Then when I began to remonstrate temperately, but firmly, he held up his hand!—to me!—to impose silence, by the Lord Harry! Of course I at once left him, and you may be very sure I have not repeated the experiment of calling upon him. The man is arrogance personified, and arrogance is the parent of recklessness, a quality which is not reassuring in the chairman and guarantor of a company. I have my uneasy moments about the man, I can tell you. And so *he* is your friend's father? Hum!"

"I have always heard the highest opinions of his honour and sagacity, but his manner is certainly brusque and disagreeable—so very unlike his son's."

"Hum! The son is not connected with the business—with the company?"

"Oh no, he has a large private fortune; though, by the by, indirectly through me, he is now becoming connected with the company."

And here true-hearted Phil, full of enthusiasm for his friend's generosity, impulsively related what noble things Cosmo was doing for him. The narrative failed to evoke the admiration anticipated, on Lord Germistoune's part, who said drily, "When you have reached my time of life, Mr Denwick, you will know that there are many wheels within wheels in financial matters; and that in transactions like this—though I trust your case may be exceptional—a *quid pro quo* is invariably extracted."

"Impossible in my case. Glencairn knows only too well that he couldn't get a *quid* out of me. I feel certain he would have given me the money as an unconditional present, if he had thought it for my good—if I would have accepted it, that is to say."

"Ha! hum! indeed! There now, take the whole effect of that bridge and gatehouse, and say what you think of an architect who would have placed the gate on this side?"

Lord Germistoune had got the information he desired, and Cosmo's merits not being a congenial theme, he changed the subject abruptly. He had got the desired intelligence; and though the foundling theory lay in ruins, it afforded his prejudice some consolation to learn that Cosmo was the son of so objectionable a parent.

"Well, I have probed the mystery about this Mr Glencairn," he said that evening to Mrs Ravenhall.

"Have you *really*, Lord Germistoune? How clever of you! Now, *do* tell me. I suppose Lady Bugles was mistaken. I am afraid you are going to dissolve the little romance. There *is* something so divinely romantic about foundlings! Well?"

"There is nothing romantic about his origin. Quite the reverse. His father is a City man of the most flagrant and offensive description—purse-proud, arrogant, a speculator."

"And vulgar, of course?"

"Vulgar! the man is distinctly a brute." Then he repeated the history of his cavalier reception by Mr Glencairn.

"Ah," said Mrs Ravenhall, "I felt there was something wrong."

"My instincts never deceive me. I always had my misgivings about the young man."

"How sly of him to conceal all this!"

"That is quite of a piece with the rest of the—ahem!—business."

"Now I think of it, there is something artificial and disingenuous in his manner and expression, though he is certainly well-bred enough. Now everything is explained; the necessity for constant dissimulation puts a strain on the manner naturally."

"But what business has he to go dissimulating about in society?"

"It certainly leaves a painful impression on the mind. A lady, of course, feels it more keenly than a gentleman. She knows so well what hazards there are for her own sex in the devices of clever adventurers."

"Well, 'adventurer' is possibly too strong a word."

"Perhaps it is, but it is hard to find a milder substitute."

"You see the young man is wealthy, and 'adventurer' implies the reverse."

"True; but, dear Lord Germistoune, pardon me, a man may have designs unconnected with money which are still unjustifiable in his position; and if he conceals his position to carry out his projects, he is, in a certain sense, an adventurer, I think."

"Very true, very true."

"And I confess it always makes me tremble when I see persons of this sort brought into contact with girls in whom I feel interest."

"Conceivably they might be most dangerous; but fortunately, in this case, our hero seems to have no attractions for the fair sex. I think they seem quite unanimous in making fun of him here. The fact is, a man so enamoured of himself as this gentleman appears to be, *is* devoid of attraction for women. I think," he added, with a dry laugh, "we need have no apprehensions for Lady Bugles's peace of mind."

"Oh, Lady Bugles! ha! ha! I wasn't thinking of *her*. If it were only Lady Bugles, I should be spared much anxiety."

"Trust an old man of the world, Mrs Ravenhall, and dismiss anxiety for any of your young *protégées*. This young man is not the stuff of which lady-killers are made; though possibly some of them might be attracted by his fortune; and, if that were so, I suppose neither you nor I need feel any affliction. But a lady-killer! No, no. I think I ought to know something on *that* subject."

"The less you encourage him to come here, Lord Germistoune, the safer it will be, I assure you," said Mrs Ravenhall, goaded on by his maddening obtuseness to all her hints.

"Encourage him, my dear lady! what are you talking of? I never fancied the fellow; and after these discoveries, you may be sure I shall only have such intercourse with him as the claims of neighbourhood rigorously demand."

"I hope that will not amount to much."

"You may trust me, I think, to know exactly what is fit and proper in such matters," said his lordship, his crest palpably rising at Mrs Ravenhall's pertinacity.

"The egotism and vanity of this old imbecile make him simply impenetrable," she thought to herself; but not venturing on any broader hints for the present, she assured the old lord that his tact and discretion were infallible, and so dropped the subject.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The next day being Sunday, Mrs Ravenhall had one of her "tiresome headaches." In London she would not, for worlds, have been absent from her post in a certain fashionable sanctuary, where the *cultus* of the bonnet was very devoutly performed; but under circumstances like the present, where there was an absence of any real devotional inducement, the tiresome infliction usually supervened, and, as on this occasion, kept her away from church. The quiet and leisure secured to her by the absence of the party, she devoted, like a Ministry outvoted in the House, to the "consideration of her position," which she found to be very far indeed from satisfactory. For many a week, now, she had toiled and spun for her incorrigible brother; sacrifices innumerable she had made of time, convenience, and even money. In return he had amused her with false hopes and endless postponements; and at last, when the rival interest of sport had come into competition, he appeared to have abandoned all consideration of that which ought to have been paramount. And while Tom thus remained inactive, perils thickened from other quarters. Lord Ribston was obviously in the field, and would, doubtless, declare himself before long. Possibly there was not much to be apprehended in that fact; but Cosmo Glencairn was also in the field, and her instinctive suspicion that he was dangerous had now ripened into the firmest conviction. All her manœuvres against him had hitherto failed. She had done her best to make him ridiculous with the party at the castle, and so, indirectly, with Esmè; but her principal aim had not been reached. Her innuendos about his birth had led to nothing but a discovery of the truth, which had done no good; for Lord Germistoune's dislike for Cosmo was a foregone conclusion, which did not require to be quickened. Her hints to his lordship had missed fire; her direct action with Esmè had only roused a spirit of championship in the latter, which Mrs Ravenhall knew to be full of peril. Miss Milkington had apprised her of the excursion to the ruins, and she felt that, if a few such opportunities were to recur, Cosmo, desperately in love and resolute, as he clearly was, might soon succeed in capturing the affections of the heiress.

The situation was discouraging in the extreme. She felt baffled and powerless; and Tom would not help her. She had but one hope, and it was this. Esmè had evidently the most

cordial liking for Tom; she and he were on terms of the easiest intimacy. That, indeed, precluded the idea of *love* on her part. But might it not be possible—before she was thus affected from another quarter, before she knew the meaning of love at all—might it not be possible for Tom to succeed by a sort of *coup de main*, in which surprise on her part, and exceptional energy upon his, should extract from the warmth of her friendship and her inexperience and simplicity, the prize which he aimed at? If once her heart knew what love was, it would be too late. Possibly, not probably, however, it was already too late. In any case, this seemed the sole device remaining—a forlorn hope, perhaps, but the only one. But would Tom entertain it? Well, if he would not, she resolved to wash her hands of him. She dearly loved success for its own sake; and that passion had helped to support her in many trials: but she was growing weary of this long up-hill fight without allies; she was now very much inclined to own herself beaten, and abandon it; and her just resentment against her brother had no small influence in drawing her to this conclusion. "Well," she said, "I will give him this one more chance, and if he doesn't choose to take my view, I'll be done with him and his affairs."

In the midst of these meditations she was disturbed by a knock at the door. Hastily snatching up a Church Service, she invited the knocker to enter, when who but Tom himself should make his appearance. That worthy had also absented himself from church, by a not very remarkable coincidence; but as he had recently been shy of anything like a *tête-à-tête* with his sister, it *was* singular that he should have sought this interview, and timed it so opportunely. His face was excessively lugubrious, and he carried in his hand a bundle of papers, which his sister at once recognised as specimens of a kind of literature with which the post very frequently favoured him.

"Not at church?" said Mrs Ravenhall, very drily.

"No, Lucy, the devil is too sick even to be a monk to-day."

"Well, if you *will* sit up all night in the smoking-room——"

"Hang the smoking-room! that has nothing to do with it. I'm sick of life!" And he dashed his papers vehemently on to the floor.

"Pray don't litter my room; and please remember that I have a headache," said his sister.

"Headache! what is a headache compared with total collapse and ruin?"

"I'm not in a position to judge; the headache is quite bad enough for me, I know."

"What selfish humbugs women are!" cried Tom, ferociously.

"I daresay you're right," said Mrs Ravenhall, languidly; "but don't you think you had better go and take a walk? I don't feel quite equal to tragedy this morning, and that seems to be your programme."

"Don't drive me mad, Lucy. You see before you a desperate man."

"And I invite him to relieve me of the spectacle, which has none of the charm of novelty. I really wish you would go. You can see that I am at my exercises; and besides, my headache is no trifle."

"Very well—good-bye; I'm off finally;" and he gathered up his papers. "You may sneer at my desperation as much as you please; but it's true *this* time. Good-bye; you may as well shake hands."

"Good-bye," said Mrs Ravenhall, and gave her hand with contemptuous indifference.

Tom went resolutely to the door and opened it; but before he disappeared, his sister called to him, "Tom!"

"Well?"

"What do you mean? where are you going to?"

"Out of this cursed country."

"But where?"

"I haven't quite decided. I'm going to emigrate; it may be to—to Paphlagonia—or—or—Otaheite. I don't know. I'm going, at all events."

"And why this sudden resolution?"

"Why! Just look at these letters."

"Oh no, no; please not."

"Then why on earth do you stop me?" and he turned his face again in the direction of Paphlagonia.

Mrs Ravenhall, recognising in his more than ordinary disturbance a possible basis of operations, again recalled him.

"I suppose," she said, "it is only the old story?"

"With a difference—for the worse. Just listen. I wrote to a whole lot of duns some time ago—when I was going to Italy—and said that, as I was obliged to be absent on a mission which involved uncertainty of address, for six months or so, they had better make any financial remarks which might occur to them in the interval to my solicitor. I wrote also to him, and said that I was off on a promiscuous cruise, and that I should feel obliged by his making the best fight he could with any creditors of mine who might apply to him during my absence. I also told him (which was quite true) that I had

instructed my banker to pay to him any remittances which might come to his hands for my credit; and these funds I authorised him to administer, at his discretion, for the appeasement of my creditors.

"Well, to cut the matter short, the solicitor has proved to be lymphatic, and without breadth of view; unequal, in fact, to the strain. He writes—here is his contemptible effusion—that he must decline to have his offices mobbed, morn, noon, and night, by my creditors. He states that one man—a tobacconist, and a very turbulent fellow (I know the beast!)—may really be said to reside in his anteroom; and he can't stand it any longer. The banker, he says, derides (so like *him!*) the idea of remittances; there are four county court summonses out against me, and two judgments; and he adds that his life is made a burden to him;—as if that were a matter of the faintest interest to *me!* He suggests that I should remit to him at once, say five hundred pounds; and estimates that a farther large sum—say a thousand, roughly—will be necessary within the next few weeks or there will be what he calls 'grave complications.' But the sting of the letter is in its tail. If, he says, the named sum is not *at once* forthcoming, he will be obliged to divulge my address, and abandon his business connection with me. There! what do you think of that?"

"Think of it? it is simply disgraceful."

"Yes, it *does* show callousness; still we must remember that the fellow is a half-bred—not entitled by birth to chivalrous instincts."

"You know perfectly well that it is to *you* I am alluding."

"Me!"

"Of course. Your conduct is absolutely revolting."

"I came here expecting sympathy, Lucy," said Tom, with mournful dignity, "and not insult, from you, at least. I shall now leave you."

"And may I ask how this five hundred pounds is to be paid?"

"That, I think, is a problem which we may safely leave the expectant payees to solve among themselves, if they can. It no longer interests me,—not even as an abstract question. I propose to avoid any discussion of it with them, which could only lead to angry recriminations, and not impossibly to the curtailment of my personal liberty, which I could never brook. No! I will escape from these annoyances, and seek an asylum, and a new point of departure, among simpler forms of life."

"In plain words, 'run away from your creditors'?"

"I can quite conceive that the ruffians might describe it in some such way."

"And so you are off, at once, on this reputable journey?"

"Well, there seems to be nothing else for it. If I waited, you see, till Wednesday, or so, I should probably have to receive certain visitors here, whom I would rather avoid. One has a delicacy in receiving any visitors in another man's house; and in this case, it would be specially distasteful."

"Whom on earth do you mean?"

"Bailiffs."

"What! do you dare to bring such people about Lord Germistoune's house?"

"Ha! ha! 'Dare!' unfortunately they don't require 'bringing.' They will have no delicacy about coming uninvited."

"This is a disgrace for all of us!"

"Yes, it is, you know; that's why I came here just now; but your unreasonable heat seems to make any business-like conversation impracticable; so no good purpose can be served by protracting the scene."

"These wretches will actually come here and arrest you?"

"No, they won't arrest *me*—I'll take care of *that;* but they will come here and look for me, and put a watch over the house; probably arrest Ribston or Berkeley, or some other fellow, by mistake, now and then—perhaps Lord Germistoune himself, if they fall in with him in the dark. Of course, I shall be on the friendly billows by that time. Ha! ha! now I think of it, there *is* something awfully funny in the idea of their arresting Ribby, or the old patriarch! Ha! ha! ha! how they *will* swear! The castle will be quite wakened up."

"Monster! have you no consideration for your family?"

"Frankly, no. There must be reciprocity in such matters, and my family have no consideration for me."

"I never heard of such ingratitude!"

"We should never agree about that; so, on the whole, I think I'll go now."

"Tell me why you came here just now?"

"My dear Lucy, because I thought it right so far to consider my family, though they don't consider me, as to let them know, through you, what is impending; so that, if they thought it worth their while, they might save themselves from this little scandal. It was the merest matter of courtesy on my part. The previous conduct of the family makes it evident that I could have no selfish hopes. Now I have discharged my duty and may go."

"Even if the family were willing, I don't know where the money could come from—I don't know who has it?"

"No, no, of course not. Let us drop the subject. Lord Germistoune, to be sure, will blow his bugle pretty loudly over the matter; but after all, that won't break any of the family's bones."

"And here, with this catastrophe staring you in the face, you have been neglecting the only obvious means of extricating yourself!"

"If you refer to Miss Douglas, I deny the neglect; and even were I engaged to her at this moment, pray reflect that I could not ask her father for the money now."

"Ah! in these circumstances we might have come forward."

"You would then have discovered where the money could come from! Well, well, I forgive you. Poor human nature! Go on."

"Well, then, as to not neglecting your opportunities——"

"Your whole view of me in this matter, Lucy, is based on a misconception of my tactics, which have been pursued with the dogged persistence of a sleuth-hound."

"Really? they have been wonderfully masked."

"That's the art of the thing. Listen. You wished me to carry on a thunder-and-lightning courtship; well, I saw, almost at once, that that was inexpedient for many reasons. I therefore changed front, and resolved to proceed by a slower method, but, I think, a surer one—and that was, gradually and almost imperceptibly, to make myself necessary to Miss Douglas's existence."

"By avoiding her persistently, and shooting grouse from morning to night?"

"The art of the thing again! Success has attended my procedure."

"You are necessary to her existence now, are you?"

"Very nearly; but I don't go quite so far as that. What I mean to say is, that she likes me immensely—more than any one else, in her own quiet way. You won't venture to deny that her liking is obvious?"

"Then why don't you persevere?"

"I *am* persevering, slowly and unostentatiously; but it takes time; and just as success seems within my grasp, this horrible explosion takes place, and my scheme is ruined."

"I should have said, 'Just as success was finally escaping your grasp.'"

"Yes, *you* would, I daresay. That's our point of divergence.

I am only telling you what *my* view was, and what my scheme has been."

"Are you serious?"

"Is a man in my situation likely to jest?"

"You think she would accept you now, if you proposed?"

"Very likely; but it would be safer to give her more time. But, of course, that's out of the question now; so what's the good of talking? I say! only fancy if the bailiffs were to arrive just as Lord Germistoune had given me his blessing! Ha! ha! Something like a dramatic situation, eh? Did it ever occur to you, by the by, what a capital Sir Anthony Absolute his lordship would make?"

"Pray let us keep to the matter in hand. As you say, it is out of the question to give her more time. I don't mean because of these wretches who are coming to hunt you: I mean that there are other influences at work—some one else has got his designs upon her."

"Pooh, pooh! nonsense! Old Ribby! She laughs at him."

"Ah! I don't mean Lord Ribston; there is Mr Glencairn——"

"Ridiculous. He repudiated the idea altogether."

"——and others," added Mrs Ravenhall, deeming it hazardous to dwell too forcibly on Cosmo.

"Well, I don't care whom you mean. No one else has a chance."

"You are wonderfully confident."

"With a little more time."

"Which you can't have."

"If these bailiffs could be stopped!"

"I have my very strong opinion, that even if they could be stopped, your only chance would lie in instant action. Your only chance. Other influences are working, and working rapidly; take my word for it."

"Well, well, we needn't worry about it. I must go and see about my packing."

"And leave the family to be disgraced?"

"How *can* I help it?"

"Listen. Here is the very last effort I mean to make for you, and *I* will not make it without a most stringent condition. With the view I take of this affair with Miss Douglas, I say immediate action is absolutely necessary. I may be right or I may be wrong; that is my view, and I mean to make it the foundation of a proposal to you, which is this: If you will now

promise me, upon your sacred honour as a gentleman, to propose to Miss Douglas within forty-eight hours, you shall have the money you require for these wretches. It will greatly hamper me, but I shall trust to being repaid, either by your brother or by yourself, when you are able. What do you say?"

"Lucy! Say! It's awfully sudden; it takes my breath away," stammered Tom, who had, of course, been playing for this stake all the time, but without these terrible conditions.

"That is *positively* the only condition on which I will move a hand to help you," continued Mrs Ravenhall.

"And the further sum—roughly, a thousand pounds—which will be required a few weeks later?"

"Well, I will promise to use my influence about that with your brother, if, after honestly carrying out your conditions, you honestly fail with Miss Douglas."

Tom walked to the window and mused. After all, he was in a terrible hole, and this would extricate him, and leave him something in hand—the sums "roughly" required by his solicitor being probably somewhere about three hundred and fifty, and eight hundred, rather than five hundred and a thousand, the respective balances representing, more or less, the little profit which Tom counted upon making on such cash transactions as his family undertook for his benefit.

Lax morality this for a man who could still respect his word of honour; but the continued pressure of money difficulties, and the perpetual shifts which they involved, had no doubt left their mark upon Tom, as they have constantly left it upon men of a higher stamp. And, besides, Tom had what he called "strong perceptions of the family tie," which involved the firm conviction that his family were, by the law of natural affection, bound to "see him through" his scrapes; and that, since they now pretty uniformly failed to recognise this duty, he was justified in levying on them, and taking any advantage of them which presented itself. Proceeding with his reflections, he felt that he had to face a refusal; he was confident that that was in store for him; but what of that? It happened to lots of fellows; and at this moment, he was by no means sure that it was not preferable to the alternative, with all its prospective advantages. The act of proposal was really the worst of it. While he thus reflected, Mrs Ravenhall arose, and, opening a despatch-box, took therefrom a cheque-book, and began leisurely to turn over the foils thereof. There was considerable art in this suggestive movement. Tom's eye kindled.

"Well, Lucy," he said, "I think it's a risk; but I'll close; I'll take the plunge."

"Upon your sacred word of honour, and within forty-eight hours?"

"Within that time; upon my sacred word of honour."

"Then I am satisfied."

"I daresay: but I'm not; no more are the bailiffs. This is distinctly a ready-money transaction."

"Oh! you require the cheque *now*?"

"Clearly, unless you wish the bailiffs to mix themselves up with my proposal."

Mrs Ravenhall took up a pen and detached a cheque, Tom standing over her.

"There are generally," he said, "some vexatious little law expenses in staying proceedings. I suspect it will be better to err on the safe side, and make the sum guineas. Five hundred guineas—in other words, five hundred and twenty-five pounds. There! that's it. Thanks!"

"Now remember! by this time on Tuesday."

"You have my word of honour, Lucy; but make it Tuesday midnight. You know one can't command one's time during the day here, and the evening opportunities will be more plentiful."

"Very well; but it's the very last concession."

"All right. Now I feel quite faint with all this agitation. I must positively go and rub in a little sherry."

The thieves' compact being thus concluded, Mrs Ravenhall lay back on the sofa, and thought it over. On the whole it was her own scheme, with the slight difference that it was more expensive by five hundred and twenty-five pounds; but she was not disposed to make much of that, every other road to success being absolutely barred. If he should succeed, what a *coup*, what a triumph it would be! Such a brilliant match! such wealth, *prestige*, and position, and all to be acquired by a spendthrift younger son, through the *finesse* of his capable sister! Besides the solid family advantages, there was reputation to accrue from that; ay, that there was! And then, from a minor point of view, Esmè in herself would be so excellent a wife for Tom!—a safe wife, upon whom, even in these risky days, one might certainly depend. Altogether it would be worth far more than all her trouble and sacrifice, if he should succeed. But could he? He seemed strangely confident of his footing with Esmè; and they certainly appeared to be on the best of terms. But could he be trusted to play his cards? There was the main doubt. Ah! she must

rehearse it with him, and send him to the trial equipped, *cap-à-pie*, with the armour of her worldly craft. The die would soon be cast. Forty-eight hours, and then—victory; or, if defeat, at least also a release from a long and harassing campaign.

CHAPTER XXXV.

It took a good deal to damp Tom Wyedale's spirits. Blessed by nature with a very buoyant temperament, neither dyspepsia, nor any sense of the responsibilities of life, disturbed him; and familiarity with the only kind of difficulties which constantly beset him, enabled him, as a rule, to carry himself with cheerful *nonchalance*, in circumstances which usually darken the faces of most men. In the circumstances, however, which now confronted him, his past experience could do nothing to help or reassure him; and as he contemplated them, on that Sunday afternoon, after leaving his sister, his courage gradually oozed away. Sitting alone by the river, in a remote part of the glen, he spent the long hours between luncheon and dinner in revolving various schemes and considerations in connection with the ordeal which lay before him. He felt that it was now absolutely inevitable. Slippery though he was, the words "sacred honour of a gentleman" involved a pledge which he would not have dreamt of violating; and even if he would—(which we are far from asserting)—have attempted to fulfil his engagement in the letter, while practically evading it, by some such device as a burlesque proposal, it was obvious that nothing of the sort would escape detection by his sister, who was evidently in a determined and dangerous frame of mind. It must be fairly done—that was clear. But how? where? when? in what words? and with what results? He felt that he might put an acceptance out of the question; or, if so unlikely a thing were to happen, there would be plenty of time after its occurrence to consider the revolution in his life which would thereby be involved.

But the alternative? Refusal? The fact of being refused was only an essential episode in a drama which, from first to last, was horrible to contemplate; in itself, indeed, it was not half so bad as the act of proposal. For in Tom's soul there lingered certain sparks of chivalrous feeling; he had a strong regard and admiration for Esmè, and in his present rare mood

of thoughtfulness, with the matter fairly before him—no longer vaguely and in the remote future—there did seem to him to be something very repulsive in the idea of mixing up this gentle and innocent lady with so coarse a transaction. Schooled, however, to repress his better emotions, and driven, as he felt, by necessity to the inevitable, he wrenched himself away, as best he might, from painful sentiment to practical considerations. The results of a refusal—what must they be? This reflection now occupied him; and a large portion of the afternoon was spent in considering how the catastrophe could in any way be brought to harmonise with his autumn plans—his shooting projects, and so forth.

His cogitations led him to no comfortable conclusion; and when he appeared at dinner, the total eclipse of his Yorick-like characteristics was patent to all, and dulled the tone of the whole party.

Mrs Ravenhall observed it with lively satisfaction. "It wants point, however," she said to herself. "Why can't he look at Esmè? and oh, if he *would* drink less of that champagne—it is so deplorably exhilarating!" On this latter head her anxieties were not realised. Tom's gloom and silence only seemed to deepen. Lord Ribston drew Esmè's attention to it. "There are no great 'events' on just now," he said, "or I should fancy Wyedale had come to grief again. As it is, I suppose he's only grudging the grouse their day of rest."

When the ladies left the drawing-room, Mrs Ravenhall came up to her with great tragic eyes, and said in a tragic whisper, "Poor dear Tom! what a terrible state he is in! Do, pray, darling, try to find out what is the matter." Whereupon Esmè reported Lord Ribston's theory.

"Ah!" said Mrs Ravenhall, "this is no laughing matter—no joke. I know the play of his features too well. His face frightens me. Take an opportunity, dear, and ask him what has happened. He will tell you anything, I am sure. Do—to oblige me."

When Tom made his appearance, he still wore the same rueful aspect, and seated himself apart in the large drawing-room, resting his head mournfully upon his hand. And then, since there was no sort of reserve, but rather a frank *camaraderie* between Esmè and him, she, in passing him as if by accident, stopped and said kindly, "I fear you have a bad headache, Mr Wyedale."

"No," replied Tom, looking up without a smile—"no, I have no headache."

"What is the matter, then? You look very ill, as if you were in pain."

"I *am* in pain; but I am not ill; horribly unhappy, that's all."

"I am very sorry; but I am sure nothing very serious ever happens to you."

"Ah! but this *is* serious—vitally serious. I can't tell you about it now, but I will to-morrow, or some other time."

"Tell your sister, Mr Wyedale. She is very anxious about you."

"No, I certainly won't tell her. I'll tell you, if you'll listen to me. Will you, some other time?" And she assenting, left him in yet deeper gloom, from the step which he had taken in the direction of the abyss.

Innocent Esmè was quite grieved for the heavy affliction of her cheery friend. "He confesses," she said to Mrs Ravenhall, "that he is very unhappy, and wishes to tell me all about it. So, of course, I shall soon know; and, if he doesn't forbid it, I will tell you what he says."

"Thanks, darling; it will be *such* a relief: but please don't let him escape you. Find an opportunity as soon as possible. I will help you."

Having thus contrived to set the fowler and the prey mutually in quest of each other, Mrs Ravenhall felt that she had made assurance doubly sure, and that it would be hard indeed if the desired opportunity did not at once occur. Next day, however, the "fowler" finding himself in better spirits, or at least able to make more philosophical views of what was impending, thought the inevitable moment might be advantageously postponed in favour of another day's shooting—his last, perhaps, at Dunerlacht—and went forth, accordingly, *malgré* his sister's remonstrances.

The day was fine, and he had a good many hours of something like enjoyment: but with the shades of evening, the shadows fell again upon his spirit; so that his conduct at dinner and in the evening was, as Mrs Ravenhall admitted to herself, "almost beautiful."

"No better! even worse, I think!" she whispered to Esmè, shaking her head dolorously. "Has he spoken to you?"

"There has been no opportunity, as yet."

"Only twenty-four hours now," muttered Tom to himself, as he went to bed; "well, hang it! it will be all over by this time to-morrow—that's one consolation," and so turned in, and slept the sleep which blesses the last hours of condemned criminals.

The inevitable day—the last twelve hours—came at last. Tom, chained by his pledge, had to reject all sporting temptations, and, in every sense, envied the sportsmen, as he wistfully beheld them disappear in the direction of the moor. His sister invited him to come to her room, and receive certain hints as to his conduct in the impending trial; but he would none of this. "It would only confuse me and make me nervous," he said; "and, heaven knows, I'm shaky enough already!"

Then he went and mooned about in the flower-garden, awaiting Esmè's arrival; for he knew that it was her habit to go there, every morning, after breakfast.

Tom could not be said to wait impatiently; but as Esmè had not made her appearance in the garden long after her usual hour, he left it, and strolled down the avenue in the direction of the bridge, with a languid intention of seeing whether anything was stirring in a certain salmon-pool of which he knew. Arrived at his destination, he began to peer into the water, which was clear, though deep, and somewhat troubled with back swirls from the main current. Presently his eye caught the outline of what seemed to be a noble "fish" fitfully visible in the depths, and, with the sportsman's instinct at once aroused, he set to work, cautiously, to get himself into a better position for observing it, and estimating its proportions—an impulse with which keen lovers of the "gentle art" will perhaps sympathise. While thus earnestly employed, a voice from behind accosted him.

"What *are* you doing, Mr Wyedale?"

"Hush! hush!" whispered Tom, holding up his hand; and though on looking round he beheld Esmè, the salmon retained the position of paramount interest.

"If you come here, very carefully," he continued, "you will see him to perfection."

Esmè went over to him very carefully. "What is it?" she said, adapting herself to the situation, by also whispering.

"I'd almost stake my life, he's a thirty-pounder; clean as a whistle, too. Look at him!"

"I can't see anything."

"Why, there, *there*—just over that yellow stone. Oh, Miss Douglas!"

These last words were uttered in a tone of bitterest reproach; for Esmè, in raising a hand to shade her eyes, caused some movement of her drapery which caught the mysteriously-angled vision of the fish, and he was off like a flash of lightning.

"I am so sorry!" she said.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," replied Tom, magnanimously; "we couldn't have caught him, you know. Now I wonder what *his* plans are! I *should* like to have a struggle with a fellow of that sort. He *must* be thirty pounds at least—probably more, perhaps thirty-five."

"Why don't you go and get a rod and try for it?"

"Oh, there would be no chance just now." And then it flashed upon Tom, still recumbent, that another kind of angling must occupy his immediate attention.

"I am going down to the lodge to take these papers to the old people there, and I must make haste," said Esmè.

"I'll walk with you, if I may," said Tom, rising from his post of observation; and they started.

"Tremendous, great, fine fish that!" he remarked, after they had walked a few paces in silence.

"I wish I had seen him," said Esmè.

"Another time you must remember that fish see round the corner, and hear with their tails."

"I don't think I shall forget *that*."

After this, Tom indulged in some reflections upon the caprices and general frowardness of the salmon tribe, speaking with a chastened vitality, though by no means languidly. When he had done, Esmè said, "I am glad to see you are better to-day, Mr Wyedale."

"Thanks," said Tom, nervously; "but I am not better, I'm worse; I've been getting worse daily for some time past."

"I should never have detected it."

"No, no, I daresay not; but the strain of concealment has been very trying. You know what Viola says about concealment, and her damask cheek—or somebody else's damask cheek—and the worm i' the bud, and that?"

"Oh yes," said Esmè, with a painful inclination to laugh, repressed in honour of Tom's lugubrious expression; "but why should you conceal your troubles? You have a most sympathetic friend in your sister; and I am sure you can have nothing to be ashamed of."

"Ashamed!" cried Tom; "quite the reverse—I'm very proud of it."

"Proud of what, Mr Wyedale?"

"*It*, you know, the—ahem!—the trouble."

"Indeed!" said Esmè, in deep bewilderment.

"Yes; and you know sisters are all very well in their way, but one can't confide everything to one's sister."

"No, no, of course not; but why not go to some gentleman

friend; Mr—Mr Glencairn, for instance, or my father? I am sure my father would be only too happy to help you with his advice."

"I am sure he would," said Tom, thinking of the kind of advice his lordship would be likely to give under the circumstances; "but I can't go to him in the first instance."

"Well, then, some one else. Pray, do. We are all so sorry to see you dull and sad."

"Are *you* really sorry?" said Tom, halting.

"Mr Wyedale! can you doubt it?"

"Oh no. I thought you mightn't be, you know—that was all," said Tom, becoming perfectly incoherent; and presently added, in the same vein, "and, indeed, I'd rather *you* weren't sorry."

"Mr Wyedale!"

"I would rather you rejoiced in the whole transaction, you know—that's the honest truth."

"Transaction! I confess you fairly puzzle me."

"I daresay I do. I know I puzzle myself. I'm an imbecile, an idiot; but you won't mind that, will you?"

"What? that you are an imbecile?"

"No; that I'm talking up and down, and across, and round the corner. The fact is, I'm as nervous as the——as can be. Don't you see, I'm trying to tell you all about it?"

"No, Mr Wyedale, I can't say I do. Do you mean about the—the trouble?"

"Certainly. You said you would listen to me, you know."

"And so I will, with pleasure."

"You're sure it won't bore you?"

"Oh, quite sure."

"Very well, then—ahem!—ahem!——" Tom had again halted, and he now came to a dead pause in his speech. Esmè was obliged to turn away her head to conceal her mirth. The preposterous gloom of his face quite overpowered her. "The fact is," Tom stammered, at last, "a dreadful thing has happened."

"To you, Mr Wyedale? to yourself?" cried Esmè

"To me."

"Yes, but—but, pray, what is it?"

"It is a kind of thing which fortunately happens, I believe, only once or so in a man's lifetime. That's the only consolation; though it leaves its mark on him, they say, from—from the cradle to the grave."

"What *can* it be?"

"Well, to be perfectly frank with you, I have become a prey —a prey,—I say—a victim——"

"Oh! to what, Mr Wyedale? Please don't keep me in suspense."

"A victim, I repeat—of course, a willing victim; you clearly understand *that?*"

"Yes, now I do; but to what, or whom?"

"To emotions, Miss Douglas. I have conceived an aff—— I have contracted, that is to say, an attach—— Hang it! I'm in love! There! that's the long and short of the matter."

Esmè's eyes opened very wide.

"You, Mr Wyedale—*you!*" was all she could gasp; and then the torrent of her mirth could no longer be pent in, and she laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. Tom regarded her in discomfited silence. When she had recovered a little, she said, "Can you ever forgive me? I am so ashamed, so sorry; but I could *not* help——" and then, catching another sight of her companion's woful visage, she had another relapse.

"I am sorry," said Tom, with sad dignity, "that you find an honest man's love so ridiculous."

"No, no, Mr Wyedale; it is not so, I assure you. It was the way you spoke, and the way you looked, that upset my gravity. You made such a tragedy of it, I was quite frightened; and then, when you told me what 'the trouble' really was, it seemed all so—so different," said Esme, with symptoms of another break-down.

"I suppose," said Tom, "it *is* ridiculous?"

"No, indeed! why should it be so? But am I to know anything more?"

"Oh yes. I fear, however, that you will only laugh at me."

"No; I promise you I will not. May I ask who the—the lady is? I hope she is very nice."

"She is adorable."

"Do I know her?"

"Intimately."

"Really! Where is she? In Scotland?"

"Yes; she is in Glenerlacht."

"How very exciting! Why, you must mean one of the party at the castle?"

"Yes, certainly, and——"

"Let me guess. Not Miss Snapsley?"

"Very much the reverse; but listen——"

"Not possibly Miss Milkington?"

"You are sneering at me, Miss Douglas."

"No, no; I assure you not. *Can* it be Mrs Crock?"

"Why don't you say Lady Bugles at once?"

"Please don't be offended."

"Miss Douglas!—ahem! Esmè!—listen to me. I feel the madness—the presumption—the hopelessness of my love; but it will have utterance. For long months I have grappled with it—grappled, I say—like a man; but I am beaten now. I succumb. I throw up the sp—— ahem! I love you, and I offer you my love. A poor man's love is a very poor offering; but it is all I have to give, and it is yours, if you will condescend to accept it."

Esmè stared at Tom in complete stupefaction, and said nothing.

"You hesitate!" cried Tom, with some perturbation; "at least, you hesitate! Oh, say I need not abandon all hope!"

"Mr Wyedale," said Esmè, at last, "am I dreaming? or is it possible that you are talking to me in sober earnest?"

"Nothing could be more solemn and sober. Be assured of that. All my—my peace of mind rests on your reply."

"I am distressed—I am infinitely distressed, Mr Wyedale, to hear you say so—if you are serious. But surely—what can it mean?—surely I have done nothing to lead you to suppose that there was, or ever could be, anything between us but friendship?"

"No," said Tom, "that is perfectly true. I said that I was mad and presumptuous."

"And surely—it *is* most mysterious!—surely it cannot really be true that you have been—have been entertaining such feelings all the time you speak of? This must be some strange delusion."

"Not at all," said Tom, doggedly; "it is sadly and bitterly the truth."

"Then, Mr Wyedale, I can only say that I am deeply distressed."

"You can give me no hope?"

"I am grieved to give you pain, and I don't require to tell you how warmly I regard your friendship; but I can accept nothing more than it."

The conviction that it was all over afforded unbounded relief to Tom; but he was greatly at a loss what to say next—how, in fact, to finish off the little drama, *selon les règles*. He remained silent, therefore, looking discreetly woe-begone, and waiting for an idea, or some further utterance on Esmè's part. They had turned—the visit to the lodge had been tacitly abandoned

—and were now slowly walking back to the castle. A pretty long silence was at last broken by Esmè, who, looking at Tom's sad face, and thinking how bright it used always to be, said, with an impulse from her warm heart—"I am so sorry for what has happened, Mr Wyedale. I can't tell you how truly I am grieved."

"Oh, please, don't be distressed, Miss Douglas. It serves me right for my presumption; and besides, everything goes wrong with me; I never expect anything happy to come my way."

"Don't say so, Mr Wyedale; I am sure you are generally very happy, and make others very happy too; and I am sure this little illusion will very soon pass away. I hope we are always to be friends—true friends?"

"Always, and with all my heart," said Tom, heartily.

Esmè held out her hand, which he took; and thus the friendly *entente* was sealed!

"You may be sure," she continued, "that I shall not breathe a hint of what has occurred to any one."

"Thanks; how good of you!"

"And I am sure no one in the house could suspect such a thing—you seem to have such a wonderful power of concealing your feelings—so that you need feel no embarrassment before the party."

"Oh, but, Miss Douglas, I must go away at once."

"Go away?"

"Yes, to-day, or to-morrow at latest."

"Why, Mr Wyedale?"

Tom was only too glad to find that there was any question about it. He had understood that his departure would be considered a matter of etiquette. "Why?" he repeated, rather at a loss for a reply; "oh! you know my—ahem!—my feelings would scarcely permit——"

"Now, Mr Wyedale, we are friends, are we not?"

"Certainly."

"Then I beg you, as a friend, not to go away."

"I would do much to please you, but this is really——"

"No, I will take no refusal; you *must* stay."

She had now quite decided that Tom's declaration was the result of a sudden fancy which had sprung up in his spasmodic mind the day before yesterday, destined to evaporate the day after to-morrow, and which, though utterly undeserving of the honours of a *grande passion*, yet demanded, from her compassion, the healing balm of kindness and consolation, during its brief existence.

"And you know," she added, "there is the great deer-hunt on Saturday. How could you go before that? It would look strange, so sudden a departure—it might cause remark."

"True," said Tom, as if this reflection had weight with him; "there is, certainly, a good deal of truth in that. I fear it might cause remark; but——"

"No, no, Mr Wyedale, I will have no 'buts.' You will stay?"

"Well," said Tom, after some reflection, "I will try to discipline myself. I *will* remain till after the deer-drive, at whatever cost of personal suffering. Your wish shall always be my law."

"And this, I am sure, is for your good. I wish it because I wish you not to suffer, but to enjoy yourself, which I hope and think you will."

Tom shook his head despondingly, but repeated, in the resigned tone of a martyr, that he would remain till after the drive. And now, having reached the house, they separated.

Tom felt that he was entirely master of the situation. His financial strain was relaxed; he had honestly fulfilled his pledge to his sister; he was done with her long importunities; his autumn plans were in the *status quo ante;* and not a soul but Esmè and his sister, neither of whom seemed to him to matter, was a bit the wiser. Peace and contentment steeped the spirit of the rejected suitor; and his only anxiety was for the ordering of his countenance, which, he felt, might be apt to betray the unseemly joy raging within his breast. In this halcyon frame he sought his sister, who, seeing the brightness of his face, clapped her hands, and cried "Victory!" Tom had the decency to sadden his face a little, as he replied, "No, Lucy, alas! not victory,—a cropper."

"What is that? You don't mean that she has refused you?"

"Yes, I do; to her shame be it said."

"Why did she refuse you?"

"Why? I didn't press her on that point; but I presume it was due to some defect in her intellectual arrangements."

"And you joke about it!"

"I don't. I've had an awful time of it, I can tell you."

"You must have mismanaged matters somehow. This comes of your conceit and neglecting my hints."

"No, I managed it beautifully, and came off with flying colours."

"But without the lady, it would seem."

"Yes, but with all the moral results of a victory."

"Stuff! Well, there is ruin before you now."

"I hope not."

"Oh, but there is. You can never hope to have such chances again."

"Well, I couldn't abduct her forcibly, could I?"

"But you might have played your cards like a reasonable being."

"I have told you that I had my own scheme, which was to make a waiting race of it. If you chose to come and force my running, you have only yourself to blame for the catastrophe."

"I am utterly disgusted with you."

"I am sorry for that; but it is not an argument."

"Tell me *exactly* what took place. Remember, I shall get it all out of her."

"I'll tell you exactly; but you'll get nothing out of her—she is far too loyal and good."

Tom then told his story briefly; and when he had finished, she said—

"And when do you leave?"

"Leave? I'm not going to leave, that I know of."

"How?"

"Because I am going to stay where I am."

"You mean this—gravely?"

"And most distinctly."

"You can't be so utterly callous and abominable!"

"Well, I have sufficient fortitude and manly dignity to enable me to protract my residence amidst what Lord Germistoune calls 'our unrivalled scenery.' That, perhaps, is a more graceful way of putting it."

"Wretch! you have no shame!"

"Shame implies a gallery,—and there is none in this case."

"There is Miss Douglas."

"I stay at her special request."

"Oh, that would be a mere form, dictated by good-nature and a desire to let you down easily."

"Not a bit of it. In any case, I have yielded to her importunities. I really can refuse nothing to a woman, even to the woman who is 'red-hand' from refusing me, so I have pledged myself."

"And how, pray, do you expect me to look?"

"Well, I confess I had formed no theory on that subject. But I think, Lucy, you are quite old enough a soldier to look after yourself. Seriously, no one knows anything about the matter except Miss Douglas, and she need never know that you know anything about it; so how can you be compromised? See how unflinchingly I sacrifice my just susceptibilities to Miss

Douglas's wish. Take an example from me, and sacrifice your own morbid *mauvaise honte* to your own convenience."

This so far silenced Mrs Ravenhall, to whom a move at the moment would have been gravely inconvenient; but she wound up the session by assuring Tom that he was heartless, selfish, false, and maddeningly self-sufficient; also that she now formally washed her hands of him for ever.

"But you mustn't forget our compact, dear Lucy," said Tom, sweetly.

"What compact?"

"Touching that tiresome further sum of a thousand pounds, which will require to be forthcoming, almost at once, I fear."

"I'm sorry I promised; but I'm not like you, I keep my engagements."

"I see you are embittered by my disaster. In a limited sense, that is perhaps to your credit; it shows heart, strong family feeling, and so on. But to turn and rend the poor sufferer himself, argues a kind of feminine logic which a woman like you ought to despise."

"Go away, you hypocritical horse-leech!"

And this was the lame and impotent conclusion of all poor Mrs Ravenhall's Machiavellian plots, sacrifices, and endurances.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

For several days succeeding the events just related, Cosmo had to endure a total cessation of intercourse with the lady of his love. Once he had the courage to contrive a pretext and call at the castle; once, in a forlorn hope, and sailing under the tourist's flag, he had revisited the ruins. But on the former occasion, his sole reward was the sight of Lady Bugles engaged in some mysterious process of imitative decoration at an upper window; and on the latter, when he had recrossed the river, half-deafened and crazed by old Maggie's "entertainment," he had the gloomy satisfaction of beholding Esmè, escorted by her father and Lord Ribston, arrive on the scene he had just abandoned. At church on Sunday, where he had hoped to see her, he found himself so placed in relation to the Dunerlacht pew, as to command a perfect view of the heads of Lord Germistoune, Lady Bugles, and Lord Ribston, all placidly swaying in

a harmonious trio of slumber, but nothing else; and although at the conclusion of the diet he was rewarded by a little fluttering bow, smile, and blush—this last, by the by, was not quite a certainty — all these things constituted but meagre fare to appease the hunger of the heart withal. Cosmo was very feverish and restless, and but sorry company for Phil Denwick, who, though he consoled himself pretty well by unwearied devotion to the moor, marvelled greatly at the new indifference to sport displayed by his host, whose otherwise spasmodic ways of life also excited his attention, and eventually his suspicion. And so it came about, that, before long, Phil was intrusted with his friend's secret, and had to endure those terrible outpourings, and those circular maunderings, which Love, the leveller, extracts with equal hand from all his victims. It was hard upon Phil, but a great relief to Cosmo, when the latter had once unbent,—for Phil was both sympathetic and sanguine, and regarding his benefactor with a sort of hero-worship, invariably laughed to scorn the notion that his superlative merit could fail of recognition in any quarter whatsoever, including even Lord Germistoune.

"He may be prejudiced, you know, and that sort of thing, but, hang it! he isn't blind. Men like you don't grow on every hedge. Take a common-sense view of the matter. Remember that we live in the nineteenth century."

Thus Phil: and though Cosmo felt that, in reference to Lord Germistoune, the latter consideration had little virtue, still his friend's confidence assured him, and confirmed him—if, indeed, he required confirmation—in his policy of—

"Let the great river bear me to the sea."

This policy did not, as yet, go the length of leading him to direct and aggressive action. Hesitating and perplexed, he waited upon circumstances and the inspirations of impulse. With all his friend's sympathy and encouragement, these few days were days of torture and unrest; and it was in a tumult of delight that he received, on the Thursday evening, the following note—

"DUNERLACHT CASTLE, *Thursday*.

"DEAR SIR,—A good many of our deer are stated to be obstinately harbouring in the woods, and, for our stalking operations, it is expedient to dislodge them and send them to the forest. Moved by this consideration, and at the urgent request of my friend the Marquis de Saut du Loup, I am induced to decide upon having a deer-drive on Saturday. It

is a form of sport which (viewed as sport) I distinctly disapprove of, but the above considerations prevail with me. Should it tally with your arrangements to join our party, we shall be glad to have your assistance, and that of any of your men whom you can spare for beating purposes. Ten o'clock is the hour decided upon, and the rendezvous will be at the cairn on the western shoulder of Dunerlacht, where the ladies propose to give us luncheon in the afternoon.—Yours truly,

"GERMISTOUNE."

A similar missive arrived for Phil from the laboriously formal old gentleman; and it is needless to say that the invitation was joyfully accepted by both recipients.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Not a cloud in the sky: the misty bloom of sunrise on the mountains: a voiceless breeze hovering over the landscape, and drawing from all its lurking-places the goodly fragrance of the hills: great stillness checkered by faint moorland harmonies—whispering of the heather, and silvery chiming of many unseen rivulets. Thus graciously did the eagerly-wished-for day of the deer-drive greet Cosmo, as he looked forth at the rising of the sun. Nature, as is her wont in our moods of stronger emotion, seemed to enter into communion with him and to offer him her sympathy, and he, as is the wont of the imaginative, drew presages from her aspects. Thus, though he had neither prospect nor scheme for the day in front of him, though he could foresee nothing, in the way of opportunity, which it might bring forth, he yet drew from this fair and solemn sunrise a presentiment, strong as conviction, that a grand turning-point in his destiny was about to be reached. Nor did he confront the prospect with agitation; for, as his eye ranged over the brightening hills, he seemed to read promise in their growing lustre: and from the far and clear horizon—the home of hope—hope's message seemed to come to him, in the balmy breath and murmuring music of the morning. And so, exalted rather than depressed by the sense of an impending crisis, he went forth, in good heart and hope, to the rendezvous on Dunerlacht.

When he and Phil Denwick arrived at the spot they found a large company already assembled. It included all the gentlemen from the castle, besides several neighbours: nor was the fair sex unrepresented; for Lady Bugles, Mrs Crock, and Miss Snapsley (in the secret hope of being permitted to share the vigil of some sportsmen in his *cache*) had protested that they would not for worlds be absent from a gathering which promised to be so rich in picturesque elements. The collapse of Mrs Ravenhall's schemes had so far restored her to herself that she was relieved from perpetual sentry duty, and being once more able to consult her own tastes, she did so by promptly emancipating herself from thraldom to "the picturesque" and other objects of her recent dramatic enthusiasm. Thus, though Esmè in her quality of hostess was present, the scene was not adorned by her, hitherto inevitable, guide, philosopher, and friend.

All but a week—it seemed a year to Cosmo—had elapsed since he had held speech with Esmè. If for him the interval had been a time of trial, for her it had at all events mitigated the painful feelings produced by the events of their last meeting. Thus, though she met him with some obvious agitation of manner, a sudden brightness which beamed in her face suggested not so much embarrassment as some happier emotion, which she had not the power or the art instantly to conceal. Few words passed between them.

"I was beginning to think," said Cosmo, "that I was never going to see you again."

"Is it so long since we met?" replied Esmè, who was, after all, a daughter of Eve.

"To me it appears a century."

"I fear from that that your sport has not been good?"

"Oh, the sport! I was not thinking of *it*. I believe it has been good enough."

"And surely you cannot complain of the weather?"

"No, we can't complain of that—but bright weather can't do everything for us."

"Perhaps the birds have been wild?"

"No, I think not particularly wild."

A pause, during which Cosmo felt his presentiment fading.

"I wonder," continued Esmè, "if there are *really* many deer in the woods just now!"

"Ah! I wonder if there are!"

"Papa is very confident about it."

"Yes, he seemed to say so."

"Do you expect to kill many?"

"This kind of sport is always a lottery."

Here the dialogue was interrupted. What a sequel to a week of passionate reverie and transcendental dreams! What a lapse it seemed to show from the footing on which that horrible old woman had found them by the ruin! Such is love; seeming so far when it is so near, still feigning to retire when it is on the very threshold. But experience and philosophy are dumb on such occasions, and Cosmo felt discouraged and miserable.

The dialogue was interrupted by Lord Ribston. "The ladies," he said, "seem to wish to go through the whole entertainment. Lady Bugles has secured a place in the Marquis's *cache*, provided all the other ladies agree to go. Now, what do you say, Miss Douglas? Will you honour me?"

"Thank you, Lord Ribston, I am sorry that I cannot."

"But why? If it is for some superstition about chaperonage, why not go with Lord Germistoune? Do be sociable! There are long intervals between the beats, and pleasant walks between them. Come, Miss Douglas! have pity on us. Don't deprive us of the light of your countenance."

"Thank you; but it is really impossible. If for no other reason, I have something else to do. I have to visit a poor old woman who is sick on the other side of the hill; but the other ladies are quite independent of me, of course."

"I never knew such a district as this is for sick old women," cried Lord Ribston impatiently. "Why can't the hags die at once and be done with it? And you are resolved?"

"Yes, indeed, I am."

"Then I shall vote against all the others going. Their chattering would ruin our sport."

"Well," said Mrs Crock, who now came up, "is it all arranged? *Are* we to go, Lord Ribston? *Please* don't say 'no,'" she added winningly, as children coax and win.

"I have nothing to do with the arrangements," said the noble brute, gruffly.

"But you said you would arrange it."

"And I have not succeeded. There is only one arrangement I can answer for, and that is, that I am going to shoot by myself." And so saying, he went away, darkly sulking.

"Poor Lord Ribston! Something has vexed him. I am *so* sorry!" said Mrs Crock, tenderly alive to the sorrows of a coronet, and £30,000 a-year, still undisposed of.

"I can't say I share your compassion," said Esmè, with a

good deal of warmth. "He behaves like a spoiled child, and is extremely rude."

Tom Wyedale was of course present to-day, and without a trace of affliction in his face or manner—very much, indeed, the contrary. He had found it impossible to support the part of the disconsolate lover with any sort of consistency; and, after twenty-four hours of sorry acting, had abandoned the attempt with characteristic *sang froid.* And now the pleasant reaction from financial pressure, and that other trouble which had temporarily disturbed him, was frankly evidenced by the more than ordinary exuberance of his gaiety.

The "picturesque" element upon which the ladies had vaguely reckoned, was exclusively represented by the Marquis, who was habited in a wonderful *jäger* costume, combining the more florid features of many eras and nationalities, and secured to his person by a multiplicity of straps, cords, and tassels, which would have done credit to the ingenuity of any age or country. In addition to various other warlike weapons, his equipment included a large-sized bugle-horn; and upon this, while the Marquis was engaged in an animated conversation, Tom Wyedale surreptitiously blew a blast of terriffic volume and dissonance, which awoke a thousand echoes of wood and hill. Lord Germistoune, who was "gouty," and occupied in haranguing his head-keeper on the duties of the day, turned with an angry start. "What is that?" he cried. "Who did that?" Tom had dropped the bugle, and was demurely examining the lock of his rifle. "Who has got that infernal instrument?" continued his lordship. "The Marquis," said Tom, "has got no end of infernal machines tied to his body. I shouldn't wonder if one of them had gone off."

"Il est à vous, M. le Marquis?" cried Lord Germistoune. "Vous avez un cor de chasse?"

"Mais, oui, M. Milor, naturellement—à la chasse, comme à la chasse."

"Et vous l'avez sonné?"

"Non, non! Pas du tout. Ce diable de Torm Wyedale qui est si plein de méchanceté——"

"Wyedale, I am surprised—I consider that you have been guilty of——"

"My dear Lord Germistoune, I only wanted to see, in the interests of us all, whether the horn was real or a dummy. I felt that if it were real, any hope of sport might be abandoned. The Marquis is not the man to have a thing of the sort handy without using it. I do think he ought, so far, to be disarmed."

"M. le Marquis," said Lord Germistoune, "le cor est absolument défendu!"

"Comment, monsieur?"

"Défendu—absolument."

"Mais, monsieur, il faut bien faire sortir les cerfs, n'est ce pas?"

"Non! non! non! Donnez le moi, je vous en prie, monsieur."

After some discussion, the Marquis reluctantly surrendered the bugle.

"Here!" cried his lordship, "some of you men take it away!"

"I'll tak't, my lord," said old Davidson, who was present to assist in posting the guns. "Dod!" he exclaimed, after bearing it off and curiously inspecting it, "what'll he be for bringing neist? A drum, maybe! or a pie-annie—wha kens?" and then added, as he stowed it away in his game-bag, "There! it'll no disturb us noo, onyway."

This high-handed act of confiscation being completed, Lord Germistoune gave them all a lecture on the necessity of silence and circumspection, when posted.

"Our deer," he said, "are singularly acute and suspicious. I have also to request that hinds may be considered sacred; and let me add, that roe-deer are not our object to-day, and ought not to be fired at."

"Vous comprenez, M. le Marquis? Point de biche? point de chevreuil?"

"Parfaitement, M. Milor," replied the Marquis, who, however, approached the day's sport with misty views as to sex and species, and with perfectly catholic intentions as to the use of his weapons.

"It is now time, I think, to get into our positions," said his lordship. "Adieu, ladies! *Au revoir* at luncheon."

The party then started, under the leadership of Innes, the Dunerlacht keeper, with Mr Davidson for his coadjutor. Lady Bugles, with some audacity, accompanied them, attaching herself to the Marquis, whom she had victimised, as she hoped, for the day, and who brought up the rear of the column. This latter circumstance caused her presence with the party to be unobserved for some little time; but it was at length detected by Lord Ribston, who promptly reported it to his host.

"Surely," he said, "that old woman is not coming with us?"

"What old woman!" cried the old lord hastily, and stopping.

"Lady Bugles. There she is with the Marquis—just behind Wyedale."

"Oh! this is contrary to all rule! distinctly preposterous! I must give her her *congé* at once."

Accordingly, when she came up, his lordship said "I think, Lady Bugles, it will be more prudent if you return now. Our path becomes intricate, and you will find it difficult to make your way back alone."

"Oh! but I did not mean to go back. The Marquis kindly insists on my accompanying him on his post.

"It distresses me to thwart you, and disappoint the Marquis. But this is against our rules. Ladies *never* accompany the guns in our drives. Conversation would be inevitable, and our deer are remarkably wary and sensitive."

"I shall promise not to open my lips, Lord Germistoune."

"It distresses me to be inexorable; but even were you silent, your dress would hardly fail to attract the deer's attention." His eye rested on her head-gear, which, roughly speaking, consisted of a huge bird of paradise posed on her ladyship's head in the attitude of earnest incubation. "I fear," he continued, "that we cannot relax our rule. To do so would create a precedent. I fear we must positively say '*Au revoir!*'"

There was no resisting this, and Lady Bugles sorrowfully withdrew, to the unfeigned delight of the Marquis, who, watching the tail of the bird of paradise, as it flashed like a thing of glory in its retreat through the woods, murmured to Tom Wyedale, with his face wreathed in grins—

"L'amour s'en va,
Cahin-caha."

They had a considerable walk, as the scheme was to take the most distant beat first, and work, in a sense, homewards. This involved an ascent of the hill, till they were clear of the woods, when they passed along the lower edge of the deer-forest to the upper extremity of three successive and parallel glens, up which the deer were to be driven to the open hill. The formation of the ground was remarkable, and lent itself to the sport of the day. The three glens—probably the beds of glaciers in the old world, as their dividing ridges would be the remnants of moraines—were deeply wooded, and formed connecting avenues, as it were, between the treeless forest and the woods which, to the extent of two or three thousand acres, covered the vale below. The divisions, of which the glens were the centre, on the mountain side, were prolonged into the valley, either naturally

or by clearance; so that the woods were pretty equally divided into three sections, each with its corresponding glen, and each separated from its neighbours by wide glades. Thus there was a fair chance that, in a well-conducted drive, each beat might, to some extent, be productive.

When they reached the top of the farthest glen, the keepers, Innes and Davidson, at once assumed the air of conspirators, speaking in breathless whispers, moving with cat-like stealth, and repressing any untoward sound by gestures, silent but peremptory. Here the Marquis gave much trouble.

"Enfin! cela va commencer!" he cried aloud, and rubbing his hands.

"Whist, sir! whist!" whispered Innes.

The Marquis then whistled, which was similarly rebuked; and then lighted a cigar from a Vesuvian, which went off with a report like a pistol's; whereupon the keeper came softly up to him, and, to his great astonishment, quietly took away the cigar, and placed it on an adjacent rock, murmuring that it might be reclaimed by the owner at the end of the drive. He then whispered a few terse rules of conduct to be observed by the Marquis—

"You will not taak; you must not smock; you will not whustle anny; and, if you should have ockeshun to blaw your nawse, it will not do to be blawin' it into this glens till aal is over."

"Que diable! qu'est ce qu'il veut dire?" cried the Marquis; but he was met, on all sides, with—"whist! whist! whist! hush! hush! hush!" accompanied by looks of warning and rebuke.

"Ce sont de vrais fous!" he muttered; "feesht! feesht! feesht!—foosh! foosh! foosh! Bah! on dirait que ce sont de canards enrhumés."

Then the head-keeper, after posting Lord Germistoune and Captain Berkeley in ambush in the open, took with him six of the party, handing over the remainder to Davidson, and then each leader started with his following in single file, down opposite sides of the glen, to the various *caches* or places of ambush previously prepared, and echeloned with all engineering skill, so as to guard against accident. Presently Lord Germistoune beheld the head-keeper's division stealthily returning; and Innes himself, halting the remainder at the edge of the wood, emerged on to the open with the Marquis, and advancing to the post of Captain Berkeley, removed that gentleman, without comment, and in his place left the Marquis, to the ever-increasing be-

wilderment of the latter. The subsequent explanation to Lord Germistoune was perfectly simple—"He was offerin' to fire at a rinnin' rabbit in the wood, wi' his rifle and a', so I brocht him back to where he would not be able to do sae mickle misscheef."

The party again disappeared into the woods, over which the deepest silence reigned for the next half-hour. At last, from the far distance, a faint halloo came; and then another and another and many others, rapidly multiplying and waxing in strength. Stealthy rustlings, patterings of hesitating feet and hoofs, with pauses and recurrences; crackling of branches, sounds of quick-drawn breath. Such phenomena soon began to stir the pulses of the sportsmen on the lower posts, and, in obedience to them, many a barrel was levelled in the improvised loopholes—only to be withdrawn—as a mountain-hare went warily by, or a troop of roe-deer trotted up and halted to listen, and trotted on again, offering temptations hard to resist.

The blended shouts of the beaters kept swelling in melodious volume, broken every now and then into short, sharp cries, as some beast of the forest was viewed; but as yet no shot was fired. The tide of sound rolled up the glen. At last individual tones and words were distinguishable, mingled with the crisp rattling of the beaters' sticks against stem and branch. The end was approaching and not a shot fired!

Suddenly a terrific uproar arose all along the line. If lions and tigers had been careering in swarms about the woods, the agitation of the voices could not have been more frantic. There was no doubt as to its meaning. The true quarry had been raised at last, and the beaters, bent on driving it into the fatal defile, were guarding against any attempt which it might make to break back or to right or left. Presently, on a clear space, just below the entrance of the pass, a noble stag emerged and paused irresolute, with head erect and heaving flanks; then, urged by a closer shout, sprang forward across the open, and plunged into the shadows of the glen beyond.

A flash! a sharp report! but Lord Ribston's aim had not been true. The stag bounded into the air, and then, though it carried away a heavy wound in the haunch, rushed madly on, crashing through the coppice, wild with terror and pain. Another report! and, this time untouched, but with ever-increasing speed, the stag dashed on. And now the top of the defile was all but reached, and the free air of the open forest began to promise refreshment, and the rocks and heather of the longed-for sanctuary were before the eyes of the fugitive. One more

bound and it was clear of the treacherous glen, and, with new vigour, sped toward the mountain, where hope lay. But though it had escaped the wood, perils followed after. Ambushed on its upper verge, so as to command the open, Tom Wyedale, warned by the sounds which had reached him, sat cool and alert, expecting his opportunity. Without haste or flurry he raised his rifle as the stag swept past him, half hidden by the trees, and without ceasing to cover it, waited till the doomed animal had emerged to some distance on the moor. Then he fired, and with a mighty leap into the air, the noble beast lay prostrate and quivering in the heather. Tom gave one quick glance at his victim, and then quietly proceeded to reload.

In no such stoical spirit was the incident observed by the Marquis de Saut du Loup, from his coigne of vantage up above. Breathless with excitement he beheld the deer break cover; his rifle went up to his shoulder on the instant, nor is it doubtful that had not Tom forestalled him, he would have at once drawn trigger, regardless that a swarm of beaters, not to mention several posted guns, were in the direct line of his fire. When the animal fell, he jumped out of his *cache*, and was rushing down to inspect it; but some peremptory signals from Lord Germistoune, who was posted within sight, caught his eye, and sent him back to his ambush. Not, however, for very long. For suddenly the stricken stag, albeit in the death-agony, struggled to its feet, and, with lowered head and tottering limbs, again began to stagger up the hill. This was too much for the Marquis. He was out like a flash of lightning, and, tearing down the hill, met the poor beast as it was about to fall for the last time. Before that event took place, however, the Marquis, reserving his fire till within a yard of his mark, let off both barrels simultaneously into the flank of the deer, producing a breach of half a foot or so in diameter. The victim fell stone dead; and the slaughterer, in the absence of the bugle, upon which he would now have sounded the *mort*, broke into jubilant cheers, waving his hat, and dancing round the carcass in child-like glee. A sudden thought then seemed to take him, and, drawing his *couteau de chasse*, he knelt down, and with that weapon, and a small saw which formed part of his mysterious armament, proceeded to decapitate the deer. This done, he bore the head off in triumph to his ambush, on reaching which, he turned in the direction of Lord Germistoune's post, and, with another cheer, held up the trophy for his host's admiration. His lordship acknowledged the compliment by shaking his fist very ferociously at the Marquis. who, doomed

to perpetual surprise and bewilderment, subsided into his lair, muttering—

"Maintenant je prétends que M. Milor est jaloux! Peste! j'en suis content. Ho! ho! le vieux grognard est diantrement jaloux! Ho! ho!"

Presently the keepers, after passing up the defile, and collecting the posted guns, made their appearance with them in the open.

"There will be something down to you, I'm thinkin', Mr Wyedale?" said Innes.

"Something!" cried Tom, who, imperturbably easy in ordinary matters, was now white with indignation. "Something! —there *was* as fine a stag as you would wish to see; but that confounded Frenchman has blown it to atoms, and hacked it to pieces with saws and pickaxes and all sorts of devilish things. There! look at it!"

Indeed, what between Lord Ribston's contribution and the crater-like breach effected by the Marquis, it was a lamentable spectacle. Innes held up his hands: speech altogether failed him.

"Dod!" said Davidson, who, having no deer in his own diocese, took a non-sporting view of the business—"Dod! I ne'er saw meat sae notawriously abaised—I *wull* say that."

The Marquis, breathless with excitement, and brandishing the stag's head, now ran up to the party, as they stood in horrified inquest over the mangled remains.

"C'est moi qui ai tué la bête fauve! Moi! Saut du Loup!" he cried. "Voici la tête! la voici! la voici! Hoorah!" Instead of the congratulations he had anticipated, he was met with a reproachful silence. "Diantre! est ce qu'ils sont tous fous et tous jaloux?" he thought, in much discomfiture.

Lord Germistoune came slowly up in a state of fearful dignity. He could not trust himself to address the Marquis directly.

"Innes," he said, "you will see that this *object* is buried in the afternoon; and take that head now, and throw it into—into perdition. We must try to forget this abominable occurrence. Gentlemen, let us now go to the next beat." Then he moved gloomily off: but before the next beat began, gave private directions to Innes to post the Marquis (who only relinquished the *corpus delicti* after a stout resistance) where there was some reasonable prospect that human life, at least, would not be sacrificed. "I am a courageous man," he said, "but I shall not soon forget what even I have endured for the last hour in that person's neighbourhood."

When Lord Germistoune alluded to a Marquis of the *ancienne noblesse* as a *person*, and to an underling, it may be gathered that his sufferings had been indeed poignant. On the next beat, the Marquis was accordingly posted by himself, and pretty far out in the open, where, from the nature of things, temptation was not likely to present itself. But here, no longer under his host's supervision, he whiled the tedium of his vigil by indulging in all the relaxations forbidden by Innes, besides keeping up a dropping fire with his rifle at such crows and hares as happened to pass within half a mile or so of his post. Thus, though no large game came his way, he amused himself very fairly; and, indeed, the recollection of the *bête fauve* which he had annihilated, would have made *ennui* in any case impossible. This drive was more productive than the previous one: Tom Wyedale was again successful, while Lord Germistoune himself killed a stag; and these two angry sportsmen being thus partially appeased, the third and last drive was approached under happier auspices.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The scene of their final operations was in the glen nearest to Dunerlacht. Cosmo, who had as yet had no sport, was well posted towards its upper extremity, commanding an open ride leading to the moor. Little heart or interest had he in the day's sport. The few words he had exchanged with Esmè had damped him by their indifference; and, self-tormenting, the burthen of his thoughts was all the morning this—that the week of their separation had obliterated the first traces of a warmer interest in him, which he had begun to dare to hope were discernible in her. Some one, perhaps, had been making mischief; and who more likely than Mrs Ravenhall, with her obvious designs? or some one, perhaps, had been successfully using his opportunities. Lord Ribston had possibly abandoned his *nonchalant* method of love-making, and, with devotion and earnestness aiding his overwhelming advantages, might now be winning the place which he himself had manifestly forfeited. Women were fickle, and never more liable to change than during the period of dawning partiality. Cosmo, thus sadly musing, was little affected by the din of the beaters, the rush and crashing of in-

visible deer, the crack of rifles, the silences, so full of mystery and suspense, and all the other incidents and phases of sylvan venary.

The range of woods to be beaten, this time, was considerably more extensive than on either of the previous occasions; and the delay between the posting of the guns and the audible approach of the beaters, was proportionately long. But the interval was not devoid of excitement; for the Marquis, at last posted within the woods, and emboldened by recent immunity, carried on his guerilla practices, and kept such animals as chanced to be harbouring in the upper glen in a state of continued restlessness. More than once had Cosmo been roused from his meditations by the near approach of promising sounds; and at last, and not very long after he had been posted, several roe-deer (the embargo on which had, this time, been removed) came dashing down towards him, from the opposite side of the ride. Cosmo brought his gun to his shoulder. Suddenly the roe halted, then wheeling about, galloped back; and he, following the troop with his barrels, withheld his fire till the deer he had singled out should reach a certain clear space in the wood. It was just gaining this spot, and his finger was closing on the trigger, when, with a loud cry of horror, he lowered his weapon. Good reason had he for his agitation. Across the line of his vision, as he was about to fire, passed the fair girl for whom he would have given his own life a hundred times. Esmè, moving down the ride, unconscious of danger, was watching the roe-deer, as they fled up the opposite bank, and at Cosmo's wild exclamation, she started violently and looked round. His gun was lowered, so she knew not of the escape which she had just made; and when Cosmo ran down to her in speechless agitation, she merely made a hurried apology for disturbing the game. "I thought," she said, "that this glen had been beaten first, and that I could do no mischief by coming back from the cottages through the wood. I will go back now as quickly as I can," and she turned to go. Cosmo's voice shook so that he could not speak, but he took her hand and detained her. Esmè looked up in amazement.

"What is wrong, Mr Glencairn?" she said.

"Danger!" muttered Cosmo; "you must not go."

"Oh! but I must indeed."

Cosmo said nothing; for all his answer he led her back to his own ambush.

Silently, and almost mechanically, he spread his plaid on the ground for her, his hands trembling violently all the while; for, indeed, as he realised the narrowness of her escape, and the

awfulness of the tragedy which had all but befallen both, his agitation became more and more irrepressible. When he had arranged a sheltered seat for her, he turned and motioned her to it. She was startled by the wild look in his eyes, and the ghastly pallor of his face, on which the cold drops stood, and the tremor which seemed to shake his frame like an ague.

"Mr Glencairn!" she cried in alarm, "has there been an accident? have you been hurt? you look dreadfully ill. Do say what has happened." He sank down beside her, covering his face with his hands; but he said nothing; and, for long, the silence was only broken by the sound of his deep and troubled breathing.

"Can I do nothing for you?" said Esmè, at last.

Cosmo looked up but did not answer.

"Are you better now?" she continued anxiously.

"It is no bodily illness," he replied.

"What then?"

"It is horror."

"Mr Glencairn!" Then Cosmo's voice came back to him, and he broke forth in rapid utterance, "You have escaped a deadly peril; you do not know how narrowly; if you had gone on, the danger would have been repeated. You have escaped death by a hair's-breadth—and by my hand. I, too, have escaped death; for how could I have lived, if you had died? I thank God for His mercy. He has saved you and delivered me."

"I do not understand. Something must have happened which I know nothing of."

"My gun was raised, the trigger was all but drawn as you were passing; if it had been drawn, your life must have been sacrificed. Do you wonder now at my agitation?"

It was natural that Esmè, who had not actually seen the danger, and who, moreover, was of no weak and hysterical nature, should be much less affected by Cosmo's statement than was he by the event in which he had been the main actor. And so, though she looked very grave, she betrayed no agitation, and only said, in a low voice, "I am thankful for my preservation." Then, after a pause, she continued—"But now that the danger is past, pray do not be so distressed, Mr Glencairn. Whatever had happened, it would have been by no fault of yours. I myself would have been alone to blame."

"Ah! fault! blame!—I do not speak of that," cried Cosmo, wildly. "In a supreme calamity we think of *it*, not of its cause. There is bitterness which nothing can add to."

"Do be calm, Mr Glencairn. Mercifully, no calamity has

happened. I am sure we are both devoutly thankful to God for that; and now there is no cause for distress, but altogether the reverse."

For a long time Cosmo sat silent, his agitation slowly subsiding, and the colour gradually returning to his cheek. At last he looked up at Esmè with eyes that were calm, and even solemn. And as she met his gaze, the scene by the ruin flashed into her mind, and with it all the emotions—so strange, and yet so sweet—of that strange meeting; and she seemed to know, before they were spoken, the very words that he now would speak, and the very tones in which they would be uttered. The intervening time faded away, and his words seemed to her the immediate continuation of his last sentence spoken many days ago. They came back to her like the phrases of a well-known song which had been interrupted for a moment in the singing, and now went on, in a foreseen sequence, to a conclusion which she seemed to know by heart. Cosmo did not immediately speak, but held her with his rapt eyes, so that she could not break the spell by word or movement—yielding herself to it as to the force of a mighty stream which glides, calm but irresistible, to the inevitable ocean.

At last he spoke. All the deep music had come back to his voice, and all its firmness, save when, now and then, it died in a pathetic cadence, or thrilled for an instant, following, with sensitive inflections, the tumult or pathos of his thoughts.

"I told you," he said, as if to him also it seemed that their last interview had been only for a moment suspended,—"I told you that I would seek distinction, and the social advantage which it gives; I said that I would seek it, not for the mere sake of that advantage—which would be a paltry ambition—but as a means to an end; I told you that if I failed to reach that end, my life would be paralysed. You remember that I said all this?" Esmè's lips parted, but no sound came from them. Cosmo continued—"A few terrible moments, here, in this wood, have shown to me, not how true these words were, but how poorly they expressed the truth. Language cannot tell the measure of what is immeasurable even by thought—and these poor words tried to express the measure of a devotion which has not any limit at all."

Cosmo paused for a little: thus far he had spoken, as if strongly controlling himself; but when he resumed, his words came forth with far more fervid utterance, as though the energy of his emotion had swept away some barrier by which he had sought to restrain it.

"But I will not speak in enigmas. I feel that I now stand

on the threshold of my fate, having come to this, through many conflicts and confusions. I have tried to listen, all my life, to the voice of duty; but at last that oracle has failed me, and now it is dumb. I have listened to the voice of prudence, but I cannot hear its words now; they are drowned in an overwhelming music, and with them all the whispers of my own unworthiness. That music has filled all my life, till it has become my life; and as I breathe the breath of life, I cannot choose but utter it. You are its keynote, and its theme is the love which I now offer you."

He ceased, but Esmè spoke not a word. Lights and shadows of colour and expression passed in swift changes over her beautiful face, and her breath came faster, as Cosmo's glowing utterances rushed on to their climax; but she did not turn away. Only when his last words were spoken, a dewy lustre came into her eyes, and the strength of her emotion was confessed in one long tremulous inspiration. Cosmo continued—

"I offer you my love and I offer you my life: the one has no bounds, the other is little; but if you take the first, you will help me to make the second better and greater." He took her unresisting hand and added, "Esmè, dearest Esmè! that is my offering; will you take it, and trust me to make it not worthy —for that is impossible—but less unworthy of you, which, God helping me, I will try to do?" He gazed at her, as though his life depended on her answer; but she did not speak. "Tell me! tell me!" he cried; "do not keep me in this cruel suspense. Has my dream been too wild—the dream which has haunted me, day and night, since first I saw you?" But still she was silent. "Alas!" cried Cosmo, "you cannot love me. I am lost!"

Then Esmè's eyes drooped, and she murmured at last, "Nay, if my poor love can save you, you are not lost."

"Oh Esmè! Esmè! I left the paradise of dreams to meet my fate; I meet the angel of my life, and find a paradise transcending dreams."

. . . . . .

"For ever?"

"Yes! for ever and for ever!"

. . . . . .

Linked hand in hand, eloquent with the wordless eloquence of happy souls—it was thus that these lovers, of knightly purity and true guileless maidenhood, meetly plighted troth. Care stood aloof, and the hard world: all their world was here, here in the quiet glen where, suddenly, the stillness seemed to deepen

into a more golden silence, and the sunbeams seemed to flow through the voiceless quivering of the leaves, in streams of tenderer light: here, where from love's presence-chamber, Nature hushed back the world's untoward cares, with all rude sound and movement; so that the very breath of their own last utterance seemed to hang fondly in the air about them, as its music lingered in their hearts—"For ever?" "Yes! for ever!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Alas that such rare moments should fly so fleetly! Soon "the voices of without" invaded their sanctuary. Growing from faint and distant echoes, the clamour of the hunt rolled upward from the valley; and as it swelled upon their ears, the ethereal walls which fenced them from the grosser earth dissolved, and cares and doubts and tremors entered in.

Cosmo was the first to break a long silence.

"We shall now have but a short time together," he said; "and alas! dearest, we must face what really lies before us. Even from the midst of my great happiness, anxious doubts rise. To your love I do not seem unworthy; but your father—how will *he* receive me, as his daughter's suitor?"

After a short silence, Esmè replied, "There can be no reserve between us now; and I fear we must not expect him to be very favourable at first. But he will soon be reconciled, when he knows you better—and even for my sake, I know he will."

"I suspect he has a very strong dislike to me."

"Do not say that. He has his prejudices, but they would not influence him in such serious matters. He is too just for that; and when he knows you better, he will both like and admire you. Every one must; who could help it?"

Cosmo smiled at her sweet enthusiasm, and said—

"If it were only his personal dislike, he might, perhaps, get over that; but I fear that he will find a more serious objection in my birth."

Again Esmè paused for a little, and said—

"No, that would not be just; and I have never found papa unjust in large matters. That would not be held an objection in society in general, and why should there be an exception in my case?"

"Ah, my beloved! you are an exception to all the world. No one is worthy of you: and be sure that your father will not look lightly on the defects of any one who pretends to such a prize. It is natural and reasonable that he should not."

"But if I see no defects, and the world would see none, papa will not be so unjust as to insist upon them. I know he will not. You cannot know how good and tender he has been to me. Do not look so anxious. All that we shall require is a little patience. And you must remember, dear, that he is very old, and has infirmities, as we all have, and that his temper is quick, and that he often says things in an exaggerated way which he only half means. You will remember this, and be forbearing with him, if he is harsh and unpleasant; will you not, dearest, for my sake?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"I know that it may be very, very trying; but if you will only bear it quietly for a little, I think that all will be well. I am certain that it will."

"When shall I speak to Lord Germistoune? It will scarcely be possible to-day, I suppose?"

"Oh, pray let me speak to him first."

"My darling, that is impossible! Consider the position it would place me in. It would look so unmanly. It would increase all his prejudices, and I do think it would justify them."

"I know you must be right; but I have never had any concealments from my father, and I think he might expect to hear of this first of all from me."

"Believe me, that I *am* right here; and, besides, your concealment shall be of the shortest duration. I shall go to-morrow to the castle and see Lord Germistoune. It is Sunday, by the by, but I shall walk over after church. I suppose I may?"

"Oh, please, please do! And now, dear, look happier, and be confident, like me. Is it likely or reasonable that all should not go well?"

"Happier, my own!" he cried, "how could I be happier? And, with you to win, what are obstacles? Who would not be confident, even if all reason and probability were against him?"

Five minutes more of bliss, during which the din of the beaters rose to its loudest climax, and then died away, close beside the lovers, in isolated cries of the zealous who beat to the last bush. Then the keeper, whose duty it was to recall

the sportsmen from their posts, made his appearance, and informed them that all was over, and in another minute they found themselves approaching the main body of the party, who were waiting in the open.

The circumstances which caused Esmè's presence there, agitating though they had been, had passed from the minds of the lovers, and the peculiarity of their situation only occurred to them as they met the looks of surprise and inquiry which greeted their arrival. Fortunately their actual arrival was not observed by Lord Germistoune, who was talking to some one, and looking another way; but, turning presently, and finding that Esmè had joined the party, he gave an exclamation of astonishment and displeasure.

"How now! what escapade is this?" he cried. "How do you find yourself here, Esmè? How do you presume to disregard my rules?"

"By a pure accident, papa. I ventured to return by this glen, because I thought it had been beaten in the first drive, and that I could do no harm; and I suddenly found myself among the guns, and was obliged to remain in shelter until now. That is the explanation of the mystery."

"Mystery! You ought never to be in the woods at all when there is any kind of shooting going on. I have told you so a hundred times; it is most dangerous: and how, pray, could you tell that your shelter was a safe one?"

Here Cosmo stepped forward and replied for her.

"Fortunately," he said, "Miss Douglas came past my post, and, as she was evidently in a dangerous position, I persuaded her to go no further."

"And she remained with you, on your post, during the drive?"

"I had no alternative but to beg that she would do so. Knowing the danger as I did, I took the responsibility of even insisting that she should remain."

"You exercised a wise discretion, sir, and I thank you. As for you, Esmè, you see what your reckless disregard of my wishes has brought about. You have incurred risk; you have probably interfered with the success of the drive; you have undoubtedly destroyed Mr Glencairn's sport, and put him to grave inconvenience. You owe him an apology. Your conduct has been distinctly and altogether unpardonable."

The blood flushed in Cosmo's face, and he seemed about to speak, but a little imploring glance from her gentle eyes silenced him; and as she was far too well used to such

ebullitions to make any reply, the storm soon growled itself out.

When all were mustered, the party started for the luncheon rendezvous. The Marquis, however, retaining Tom Wyedale (now appeased) as his interpreter, lingered behind to covenant with Innes for the clandestine recovery of the stag's head from the "perdition" to which the old lord's peevish temper had consigned it—an arrangement which was concluded, for the modest consideration of five pounds, to the great glee of the noble sportsman.

"De l'argent! de l'argent! de l'argent!" he cried. "Voilà la vraie chanson nationale de l'Angleterre. N'importe! J'ai racheté ma renommée à bon marché."

"Comment, mon cher Marquis! votre *renomée?*"

"Mais oui! décidément. La bête fauve est à moi. Je l'ai tuée."

"Sa tête est à vous, sa mort pourtant est à mon fusil."

"Oh! là! là! qu'il s'obstine ce cher Torm! J'ai abbatu cette diablesse de bête fauve—je l'ai abimée. Tout le monde en était témoin."

"Enfin nous sommes d'accord; il n'en reste que quelques lambeaux."

"Bien?"

"Bien nous sommes d'accord."

The Marquis's susceptibilities being thus tranquillised, he strode proudly forward, decorated with various trophies of the chase—among which, in striking evidence of the versatility of his rifle, the dead body of an owl and the head of a hare hung from his girdle.

They found all the ladies awaiting their return, and the luncheon duly spread. Esmè's non-appearance had caused considerable speculation; and when the history of her adventure came to be known, some bitterness against Fortune rankled in the hearts of Lady Bugles and other ladies. Why had *they* not also gone on errands of mercy, and lost their way, and been carried off captive to the *caches* of the eligible? It was very hard upon them! Mrs Ravenhall, on the other hand, when she heard the story, set herself to watch the demeanour of the lovers, and soon drew her conclusions therefrom; nor is it too much to say of this acute lady that, before luncheon was over, she was as fully possessed of their secret as though it had been formally confided to her. No one who does justice to the character of Mrs Ravenhall as a finished worldling, will suspect her of active spite, where no personal object was to be gained by it

At the same time, she could scarcely be expected to contemplate this evolution of Love's young dream with the amiable rapture of an idyllic poet. And, indeed, it was with a certain cynical pleasure that she looked forward to the *éclaircissement*, feeling assured that Lord Germistoune's grand unsuspiciousness of Cosmo's intentions would, when they came to be confessed, heat the furnace of his wrath sevenfold.

"Another time," she thought, "he will perhaps attend to the hints of people who have eyes, and use them."

The luncheon-party was a very merry one—merrier even than that similar festival on the opening day of grouse—for the only element of gloom which *it* had contained was now eliminated. *Then*, Cosmo had been bewildered and wretched; but now, in the reaction from long suspense, in the ecstasy of new-born happiness, his habitual reserve deserted him, and he was lively and even gay. Honest Phil observed this and was of good cheer, divining what it must portend; and Esmè, who sat opposite her lover, stealing many a glance at his radiant face, said in her grateful heart, "What joy! what joy! it is I who have made him happy!"

When Lord Ribston had fed himself in seclusion, he came and sprawled by Esmè, and paid his court to her in the courtly fashion of these times. Cosmo beheld him with serenity, even with mirth. Over the empty head of this "oiled and curled Assyrian bull," messages of heavenly import flashed to him through the air, which brightened as they passed. What was Ribston to him? Ribston, forsooth! Let him lie and sprawl there in the fool's paradise of his fruitless *prestige* and unavailing knickerbockers!

Tom and the Marquis were at the top of their bent, and many a change was rung on the *bête fauve* of unhappy memory. Tom proposed the Marquis's health in a speech which traced the history of explosive agents till it culminated in the Marquis himself, whom he characterised as "a mighty human torpedo;" and the Marquis "carried a toast" in honour of his friend "Torm," whose petty jealousy he handled with great severity, and was entering upon what he called "a categorical memorandum" of the stag incident, when Lord Germistoune, who had not yet got over the "abominable occurrence," interrupted him with great promptitude.

The gillies and beaters were regaled with an extra ration of whisky, in honour of the three stags which had fallen (not including the *bête fauve* condemned to a nameless grave); and the pipers played and the men danced, at a discreet and feudal

distance; and one or two of them were "brought up" and commanded to sing Gaelic songs, which they did with the look of condensed resignation attributed in art to St Sebastian; and, altogether, it was a good time. At last it was the hour to go home, and a procession of triumph was formed, the pipers playing in front of the ponies on which the deer were carried, the retainers following next, while "the quality" brought up the rear.

Fortunately for Cosmo and Esmè, feudal restrictions were in abeyance; fortunately, also, Lord Ribston had again fallen sulky, so that, when Lord Germistoune led off with Mrs Ravenhall, the lovers were able to join each other without hindrance, and very soon fell back, unobserved, to a comfortable distance behind the party.

"Darling! are you happy?" was the wholly superfluous question which Cosmo breathlessly uttered, as he gazed into a face bright as the summer sky.

"So happy that I think I never can have been happy before," was the satisfactory reply. But he who supposes that *that* was sufficient, knows nothing of these things; for, of course, the question broke out again and again with fond iterations, at short intervals, on the homeward route. On one of these recurrences, Esmè replied, with sudden gloom in her face—

"Ah, no! how, how can I be happy?"

"My own love! what do you mean?"

"Something weighs upon my mind—a solemn duty which I have wickedly neglected—oh! so wickedly!"

"Tell me, dearest, tell me!" cried Cosmo, earnestly.

"I have not yet apologised to you for my intrusion this forenoon, and papa said I must. Can you forgive me for ruining your sport, and putting you to so much inconvenience?" There was but one obvious answer to this; and with similar fond queries and responses, the happy pair moved slowly through the friendly woods.

The party had descended from the hill by a road which led past the old ruin, and when Esmè and Cosmo came within sight of the bridge above it, they saw Lord Germistoune and Phil standing there. Lord Germistoune was waiting for his daughter, and Phil for his comrade; for by the bridge lay the shortest road to Finmore.

It was as well that the lovers had some little time to compose themselves before they reached the bridge, and it was very much better that Lord Germistoune had not seen them just before

they rounded a turn in the road which brought them into sight. If he had, Cosmo's interview with his lordship on the morrow might have been dispensed with, for it would scarcely have been the channel of fresh information.

"At church, to-morrow," said Esmè, "I shall tell you the best hour to find papa, in the afternoon, if you will not relent, and let me tell him what has happened myself."

"Dearest! you may be sure that, were it possible, I would relent; but, believe me, it is not possible."

"Very well, I will be obedient; and remember, dear, your vow of patience."

"I shall remember *you*, and that will be enough."

Lord Germistoune was looking rather grim when they joined him.

"I trust," he said, "there have been no more dangerous adventures?"

"No, papa, none."

"And I trust you have expressed to Captain Glencairn your regret for your unwarrantable escapade this forenoon?"

"Yes, papa," said Esmè, the fun so dancing in her eyes that she was obliged to lower them; "and he is good enough to say that I did not inconvenience him."

"Hum! Good afternoon, gentlemen! Come, Esmè."

"I should have thought," said his lordship to Esmè, as they walked home, "that you had had enough of that man's society in your *tête-à-tête* of the morning, without repeating the experience. Do you really find him at all reasonably pleasant? Has he anything to say for himself?"

Again it was well that Lord Germistoune, with his head high in air, did not observe the look of entire confusion which covered his daughter's face, as she answered at random—

"I do not find him at all silent. He is shy, perhaps; but shy people are not always disagreeable; at least, I suppose not. Are they, do you think?"

"I don't suppose they are; but I know they always bore me," said his lordship, who did not notice the slight incoherence of his daughter's words and manner.

And so the subject dropped, leaving, however, in Esmè's candid mind, the first pain which love had brought her. Her lover's first injunction had led to her first concealment from her father. Yet she did not blame Cosmo. Far from it; he was on a pinnacle which towered above the clouds of error, and his injunction could not but be right. For the moment, how-

ever, its results were distressing. But she whispered to herself that a few hours would set everything to rights, and then concealment and all evils would be at an end; and thus the gentle soul took comfort in roseate dreams.

CHAPTER XL.

Cosmo and Phil had scarcely cleared the bridge when they heard the sound of rapid steps pursuing them, and, turning, saw old Maggie, who had been lurking about in the woods above, not venturing to face Lord Germistoune, who had recently given her to understand, and pretty forcibly, that she was in disgrace, and that her letters of marque, as against the tourists, were in danger of being withdrawn.

"Guid e'en! guid e'en! braw gentles!" she cried, running up to them, and panting for breath. "I'm sweert to forgather wi' his lordship eenoo, sae I bude to hide a wee. Hoots! 'Jowk and let the jaw gae by,' ye ken. Eh, sir!" (earnestly addressing Cosmo), "but ye maun be the prood, prood gentleman this nicht! I wuss'd ye weel afore, and I wuss ye joy noo. Ye've gotten the wale o' the warld; for she's the wale o't, and wha but she?

'The pride o' a' the parochin
Is bonny Bessie Lee.'"

"What are you talking about, Maggie?" said Cosmo, with a crimson face.

"Eh! hard ye e'er the like o' that?

'Oh, but we're sly, sly!
Oh, but we're sly an' sleekit!'

Div *I* no ken? did *I* no see ye wi' my ain twa een comin' doon the shaw? Did *I* no see ye——?"

Here Maggie went through a highly suggestive pantomime, which assured Cosmo that some portion at least of their journey through the woods had been supervised.

"Hoots, my bonny gentleman," continued Maggie, "ne'er look sae blate.

'Gin a body meet a body
Comin' thro' the rye,
Gin a body——'

Aweel, aweel! fient haet sall the world be wiser for auld Maggie. But aiblins ye'll hae somethin' for her the nicht—for luck, like?"

"Here, Maggie," said Cosmo, putting into her hand a largesse, the like of which she had never seen before, "and now 'good night;' and please don't come with us any further."

The old woman stared at the piece of gold, in a state of awe which silenced her, and she let them go in peace, only recovering herself in time to shout after them thanks and blessings, adding, with great emphasis, "I'll no tell YON!"

"What's '*yon*,' Cosmo?" said Phil, laughing, but he was, of course, already the third participant in the lovers' tender secret.

Far into the night sat the two friends, discussing the attitude and general tactics which Cosmo should adopt at his impending interview with Lord Germistoune, as well as the probabilities, adverse or favourable, of his lordship's conduct under the circumstances. As the splendid glow of the day's excitement abated, the lover could not but acknowledge to himself that the ordeal which he had to go through on the morrow was not only formidable in itself, but that its results promised to be formidable.

"Nonsense!" cried Phil the sanguine, in answer to this oft-asserted conviction; "he's not half so formidable as you make him out to be. And why should he object to you, when she has made up her mind, and when her happiness is at stake? He is devoted to his daughter, you say?"

"There is no doubt of that."

"Then, of course, he can't object. He might prefer a swell, with a title and all that, of course; but we're not living in the middle ages. He can't sacrifice his daughter's happiness without a common-sense reason, and there's nothing of that sort at his disposal."

"I fear he will find reasons which will satisfy *him*, whether they satisfy common-sense or not."

"Oh, you're unjust to the old gentleman."

"I wish I could believe it."

"Depend upon it, you are. I know exactly what he will say," said Phil, with an air of superior sagacity, "exactly as if I heard him saying it. He will say that it is very sudden. So it is, you know. And he will say that his daughter does not know enough of you—which, of course, is not true. Also, that he had higher views for her—which, of course, *is* true. But if you manage him properly, he will agree to a deferred engagement. That is to say, no engagement for the present, and no communication to take place between you for, perhaps, a year;

after which time, if she is still in the same mind, he will agree to give his consent—for his daughter's sake. I think any fellow with an eye, and who knows things, could see that *that* will be his line, at the very worst."

"It certainly sounds reasonable."

"Well, it does; a little hard, perhaps, but not unreasonable under the circumstances."

In such dialogues, and in ebbs and flows of despondency and confidence, the evening passed.

At church next day the two friends took care to place themselves in a position more favourable than on the previous Sunday for observing the Dunerlacht pew; and when its occupants entered, Cosmo found that his point of view commanded Esmè in the most satisfactory manner. There were a good many absentees from the castle party—Mrs Ravenhall, of course, and her brother Tom among them; but when Cosmo saw the procession close without the august form of Lord Germistoune, he was struck with a sudden pang of apprehension. Was his lordship's absence in any way connected with what had occurred? Had he discovered it by some evil chance? and was his wrath so great as to prevent his waiting on the ministrations of the Rev. Donald M'Rorie, which his devotion to the principle of church establishment and a gift of facile slumber enabled him to endure every Sunday without fail? A flash of sunshine from Esmè's happy eyes soon reassured him on this head, and he sat in bliss through the long diet; and although Mr M'Rorie's discourse turned mainly on the personal habits of Nebuchadnezzar, Cosmo felt that he had seldom been more pleasantly edified.

"Papa is unwell this morning," said Esmè, lingering behind her party, when they left the church, "and I fear we must endure another day of suspense. He is really very cross and impracticable; and I am sure it will be better not to make our confession to-day. To-morrow he will be better, and—all will be well."

"Then we must have patience till to-morrow; but may I not go over and see you, this afternoon?"

"It will be more prudent not to come. Besides, all the others would be there, and it would be too tantalising to see you, and not have you, *all* to myself; and I am sure I could not act well enough. Some sharp eyes would read our secret. Mrs Ravenhall threw out some hints last night, which for a moment made me think that she knew it, though, of course, that was impossible."

"But could you not meet me alone out of doors?"

"Oh, Cosmo! would that be right?"

"Right, darling! have you not given yourself to me for ever?"

Esmè hesitated for a moment, and then said, "Yes, dearest; and you must know better than I what is right; so I will go, if it is possible. If you can be at the ruin a little after three o'clock, I will try to meet you there."

And here the impatient tossing of Lady Bugles's plumes warned Esmè to join the party in the carriage.

"It would appear," said her ladyship, meaningly, "that Mr Glencairn has found his tongue all of a sudden. I wonder how the miracle has been effected!"

"I wonder!" echoed Esmè, demurely.

Cosmo reached the place of tryst before the appointed hour. How transfigured all the scene appeared to be! And the sound of the waterfall—what a different meaning came forth from it to-day! It was no longer the voice of strife and struggle; it was a diapason of triumph and delight. And the passion of the waters down below was ecstasy; and in the aspect of the grey ruin and of the ancient trees there was no longer any dolour or tragedy.

Across the tumult of diamond spray, from crag to crag, a foam-bow hung its serene iridescence; and as Cosmo, musing, gazed upon it, a light touch fell upon his arm, and in his ear thrilled the low music of Esmè's voice—

"How beautiful! oh, how beautiful! Who could desire a fairer omen?"

Lord Germistoune's indisposition had chanced well for the lovers, for it gave them these golden hours of converse—destined to remain as joys for ever in their memories. In that unrestrained communion, the innermost inner life of each disclosed itself at last to the other; and at each new revelation, the bands of love were drawn ever closer and more close. Needless to recount how the history of their love was traced, from its dawn to this, its noontide splendour—traced over and over again, only to gain fresh interest at each repetition. And then their plans, their hopes, their aspirations!—the ideal life they would lead together, the greatness to be achieved by Cosmo, the inspiration to be lent by Esmè, the good to be done by both, living together in righteousness! And, oh, the delight of Esmè to hear that, for her sake, Cosmo had cast aside his fastidious hesitations, and declared for a career where his light would no longer flicker under a bushel, but blaze abroad for the illumination of the world!

"I thought," she said, "that the happiness of making you happy could not be added to; but, when I think of helping to make you great also—oh! dear Cosmo, what have I done to deserve such joy?"

Oh! beautiful dreams of pure and noble souls! the pity of it that, so often, they should be but dreams!

Too swiftly passed these blessed hours, and at last, filled for the moment with hope and faith in what the morrow would bring forth, the lovers parted.

It was very late, and Esmè, though she made all haste, entered the drawing-room last, except her father, of all the dinner-party.

"Ah! Miss Douglas," cried Lord Ribston, "you must have had fern-seed for luncheon to-day, for you have been invisible all the afternoon, though I sought you with bitter tears. I suppose it was the old story. Another old harridan taken ill, and in want of stimulants. Now, tell me, am I not right?"

"No, Lord Ribston, you are not right."

"An old man, then?"

"You are wrong again."

"What a catechism you are, Lord Ribston, and what a narrow range you allow to Miss Douglas's errands of love and mercy!" said Mrs Ravenhall, regarding Esmè with a look of malicious fun which brought the colour to her cheek, and convinced her that, somehow or other, Mrs Ravenhall *did* know "all about it."

CHAPTER XLI.

The next forenoon, as Cosmo was approaching the castle, he met Esmè, who was waiting to give him a last word of love and encouragement before he went to the tribunal. The crisis was an anxious one, and, face to face with it now, she perhaps saw all its hazards, with very clear perceptions, for the first time. Nevertheless, when she saw the gravity of Cosmo's face, she summoned all the brightness she could command into her own, and assumed a tone of hope and confidence for once not quite sincere.

"Papa is very well this morning," she said, "and in his best mood; and if you will remember patience, dear Cosmo, all *must* be well."

"I shall remember *you*, my beloved."

"You must tell him of your political prospects,—that will please him; but politics are delicate ground with him, as you know already."

"And what shall I say about you, darling? You know that I am, also, your ambassador."

"You will tell him the truth."

"And that is?"

"That I love you."

"My angel!"

"And that I never, never can change. But I don't think papa will expect me to change; so I am sure he will consent."

"Where shall I find you when I leave Lord Germistoune?"

"I shall wait for you on the path leading to the Fall. Now, dearest, we must part. Remember that all my heart goes with you."

Cosmo then left her and went on to the house, where he rang the bell, and asked for Lord Germistoune, with the best air of unconcern he could assume.

It was not a canonical hour of visitation, and it was the hour consecrated by Lord Germistoune to business; and so, though the servant admitted that his master was at home, he implied that there might be some difficulty about an audience.

"I have come," said Cosmo, who was resolved that there should be no further postponements, "on most important business, and I *must* see his lordship."

"I'll tell his lordship, sir."

"Quite unnecessary. Please show me to his room at once."

And, impressed by his tone of decision, the man obeyed. Lord Germistoune was in his business-room, and seated at his business-table, which was covered with all the paraphernalia of business, arranged with formal precision. The expression of his countenance bore the impress of his surroundings, and was one of grave absorption in weighty matters. And, indeed, no ordinary concern occupied the noble lord to-day. He rose, and with formal politeness, invited Cosmo to seat himself.

"I hope," said the latter, "that you are better to-day?"

"I really don't know whether I am better or not. I cannot think of my ailments. This accursed circumstance gives me no leisure, you may well believe, to think of anything else. This accursed circumstance!" he repeated, slapping the table for emphasis, and staring steadily at his visitor.

Cosmo's heart sank. Some bird of the air, then, had carried

the story of his love to the angry old man, and this was his verdict—it was "an accursed circumstance."

"What have *you* got to say about it?" continued Lord Germistoune.

Cosmo's programme had presupposed such a very different introduction to the subject, that he was fairly taken aback, and could only say, after a little delay, "I should like to hear your own calm and deliberate opinion, Lord Germistoune."

"You shall have it. The last sentence I had written contains it; and here it is: 'Lord Germistoune is at a loss which most to marvel at,—the astounding audacity of the step, or the monstrous imbecility which could hope for its success.' There! that is Lord Germistoune's calm and deliberate opinion."

"I deeply regret to hear it," said Cosmo; "but I trust it is not final."

"Regret! Final! Do you mean to say that you sympathise with their villany?"

"Villany, Lord Germistoune?—*their* villany? I must misunderstand you. I don't know to what you allude."

"Why, you know they've struck, don't you?"

"Who have struck?" cried Cosmo, in deep bewilderment. But now there was an explanation. The post had just brought the news that five hundred miners on his lordship's Welsh property had had the hardihood to go out on strike. The question was between the Glencairn Company, which leased the mineral field, and the men; but Lord Germistoune was not the man to let any groundlings on *his* estate assert themselves in such a monstrous fashion, without a fulmination on his part, and all the less so that his own pecuniary interests, as a shareholder in the Company, were directly affected. He was now, therefore, in the act of penning an instrument suitable to the occasion; and it was the last sentence of this which he had just read. With his mind full of the Glencairn Company, he at once connected Cosmo's visit with the business of the moment, and so had expressed neither the surprise nor the disapprobation which his unauthorised intrusion might otherwise have produced.

"And so you know nothing about all this?" cried Lord Germistoune, when the explanation had been made.

"No, nothing whatever; and I must tell you that I have no personal share or interest in the Company."

"I presumed, of course, that your visit bore on this scandalous affair. As I appear to have been mistaken, you will forgive me for asking to what I may attribute it. These are my business hours. In point of fact, it is a standing rule that I don't

receive before luncheon; and to-day, as you see, I am especially occupied."

"I am distressed to put you to inconvenience," said Cosmo; "but my reason for calling upon you is a most urgent one. When you know its nature, I think you will not be surprised that I have ventured to intrude, even at this hour."

"Hum!"

"*That*, at least, you will consider natural."

"Hum!"

"Whatever your other sentiments may be."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

There was a pause, during which Cosmo found that his prearranged plan of attack had entirely evaporated, as such plans usually do. Lord Germistoune was not in the mood to give him much time to reconstruct it, and he soon said—

"The nature of your business is——?"

"Is personal, and of extreme delicacy."

"Personal to yourself, or to whom?"

"To myself, and—and others; indeed it concerns *you* very nearly."

"Perhaps you will kindly explain it—categorically. Ahem!"

"If you will kindly give me your attention for a few moments, and forgive the egotism of my remarks, which will be unavoidable, I shall endeavour to do so. You do not know much of me, Lord Germistoune, but I think you know, in a general way, who I am. From your remarks just now, in talking of this trade dispute, I infer that you are aware that I am the son of Mr Archibald Glencairn, and that you are, more or less, acquainted with him?"

Lord Germistoune assented by a gesture, and Cosmo continued—

"I am not, as I have said, connected with his business, nor, indeed, with any business. I have inherited, from another source, a fortune which, even nowadays, is called considerable, and which enables me to be my own master. I have enjoyed many advantages of education, though I do not pretend to have profited by them as I ought to have done. Since leaving the army I have travelled a great deal, and devoted myself, with some energy, to various branches of study. I have now an early prospect of entering Parliament, and it is my intention to pursue a political career. That is a brief *résumé* of my past history and future prospects."

Lord Germistoune was, of course, not a little puzzled by all

this, and his irritation was kept in check by his bewilderment; but when Cosmo came to a pause, he said, hastily—

"You make this statement with some purpose, of course; may I ask what it is?"

Cosmo continued—

"There is one omission which I have made, and which, in perfect candour, I must supply, and it is this—that, though I descend, through my mother, from a good family, of even high position, my birth, on the father's side, is obscure. Our history does not go beyond three generations, and it then disappears in a strong suspicion of illegitimacy. I have now stated, as honestly as I can, my exact position in life."

"You will allow me to say, Mr Glencairn, that this confidence is unsought, and, let me add, quite unnecessary. If I have been content to admit you to my house without question, you, I think, may be satisfied to accept the privilege, without obtruding unasked-for explanations. I admit that discussions have taken place in the circle here, as to your antecedents. You have probably become aware of this fact, and this, no doubt, is the cause of your visit and your explanation. But, when I decide to admit a gentleman to my house, you may depend upon it that I know what I am about. I am perfectly able to regulate the exact amount of intimacy to which any one ought to be admitted. In short, I am able to take care of myself. If I had thought it necessary, I would have asked you for certain explanations; as it was unnecessary, I have refrained; and when I have added—which I think I am bound to add—that your desire to avoid even the suspicion of false pretences, is not discreditable to you, all has been said which requires to be said. Now I fear I must remind you that there are strong prior claims on my time this morning."

His lordship took up the thunderbolt which he had been concocting for the Welsh miners, and added—

"It is necessary that these miscreants should be dealt with, without the delay of a single post. I must therefore, I fear, wish you good morning."

He was moving towards the bell, when Cosmo interrupted him.

"I must beg you, my lord," he said, "to bear with me a little longer. You have misinterpreted the object of my visit. I have not even hinted at it, as yet."

Lord Germistoune turned impatiently, and cried—

"I am at a loss to conceive with what other object you should think it necessary to favour me with your biographical sketch.

I do not wish to be discourteous, but I must say that you can scarcely suppose that it has any special interest for me!"

"Indeed it has, Lord Germistoune."

"Now! now! now!——"

"In connection with what I am about to say."

Lord Germistoune threw himself impatiently into his chair, and tossed his papers about with an angry hand. "Pray go on, sir," he said—"pray go on, and be as brief, I beg, as is possible!"

"I have told you," said Cosmo, "about myself, as I was bound in honour, as a gentleman, to do—keeping back nothing that could tell against me, and having but little, I fear, to say in my own favour. I have done this, Lord Germistoune, that you may know who *exactly* is the man who ventures to come before you, honestly, and openly, at least, if not hopefully, as a suitor——"

"A suitor, sir? For what? or whom?" cried Lord Germistoune.

"For your daughter's hand."

The old lord fell back in his chair, his hair seemed literally to stand on end; his face grew white and then livid, and his eyes stared fixedly, as though Cosmo were some apparition from the unseen world. All power of speech seemed to forsake him.

Cosmo went on—

"This takes you by surprise, Lord Germistoune, and I can see that the surprise is not a pleasant one, and I can understand why this should be so. I am painfully aware of my unworthiness of Miss Douglas. I know to what a different match she is, in every way, entitled. I was so convinced of this, that, when I found her influence threatening to become irresistible, I withdrew myself from it. But I found that it was too late; my destiny was already fixed and irrevocable. I then resolved—you may think the resolution desperate, and even absurd—to attempt, with whatever ability I may possess, to arrive at such personal distinction as might help to bridge the gulf which separates us socially. I took measures to commence the career I have mentioned already, and I am going to pursue it with all my might. But I have no illusions as to my abilities. I know that I may well fail, and that even if I reach success, it must be worked for and waited for patiently. Believe me that I am prepared to work hard, and to wait patiently. In the meantime, alas! love cannot wait; it will not be controlled by prudence, and it speaks."

"It *dares* to speak," hissed Lord Germistoune, without altering his look or attitude.

"Yes, it dares to speak, as a man will dare do anything for life; and it dares to ask you to give me a little hope—even in the far future. It dares to ask this, not for the sake of *my* happiness, which can be nothing to you, but for hers, which to you must be all-important."

Lord Germistoune sprang up suddenly from his lethargy, and cried, with recovered voice, "*Her* happiness? Your presumption does not carry you the length of pretending to answer for *that?*"

"It is no longer mere pretence, nor is it presumption."

"What do you mean, sir, in the name of ten thousand devils?"

"I mean that, unworthy though I be, I am entitled to answer for her, unreservedly."

"You do not dare to tell me that you have spoken to my daughter?"

"Yes, Lord Germistoune, I have spoken to her, and she will tell you herself, as she has told me, that she loves me, and will never change."

Lord Germistoune was dumb for a moment, and then gasped out, as though choking with passion, "And you believe this?"

"Yes, as firmly as if I had the word of an angel for it. Ah, Lord Germistoune! her words are not lightly spoken. She will never change. Think of this and her happiness, and believe that, if ever there was devotion in man's nature, it is in mine for her; and that what power is in me to make me worthier of her, I will use it with all my strength, and through all my life. I urge——"

"Silence, sir!" cried Lord Germistoune, starting to his feet. "I have never been easily astonished. I shall never be astounded again. There is the door, sir; take yourself out of it as quickly as may be, and never presume to address me or my daughter again!"

"You give me no reason, Lord Germistoune."

"Reason, sir? even your crazy self-assurance can scarcely require to be told that a lady with the blood of kings in her veins, and who will be a peeress in her own right, is, in my opinion, beyond the contamination which you imagine for her. Go, sir! go, I say!"

"Contamination!" cried Cosmo, starting forward, with the fire flashing from his eyes; "no man shall dare——" then he recollected himself, paused, and said, "I promised to be patient, and I will at least avoid the contamination of disloyalty to her."

CHAPTER XLII.

Hardly knowing what he did, Cosmo rushed from the house and strode with vehement steps up through the woods. The interview had been protracted by frequent long pauses, and Esmè, walking on in anxious meditation, had reached the spot where, yesterday, the lovers parted in the glow of happiness and hope. When Cosmo saw her in the distance, she was standing, as he had been standing, and gazing at the Fall which had hung out for them its bow of promise, so soon, alas! to prove illusory. At sight of her, all her gentle loving ways, her sweet encouragements, her bright auguries, her happiness, her hopes, her love, and her pride in it; all these things rushed into his mind, confused and almost maddened as it was. The blow he had received had so stunned him, that he had not yet realised his own anguish, and the sight of her first brought it home to him in a burst of bitterest emotion. But it was of her, and for her, that he thought. To tell her the fatal truth, to tell her that their dream was dissolved, to see her radiant face grow dark, to hear the happy music die from her sweet voice—oh the misery, the misery of this! how could he endure it? He stopped irresolute, striving to control his feelings and nerve himself, for her sake. Suddenly, she turned and saw him, and forthwith ran to meet him, with the simple eagerness of her guileless nature. As she drew near and saw the sadness of his face, she read in it their fate; and she, too, feeling first for her lover's grief, stretched out her arms to him and cried, in accents of infinite tenderness, "Oh my beloved! oh my poor darling! it is I who have brought you to this!"

He took her by the hand and led her back, without a word, to the spot which, for them, had been the scene of so many emotions; nor did he speak until they had been, for a long time, seated side by side, gazing, in sad silence, on the waters which looked so black and wild to-day. At last he roused himself and told her what had passed, softening, as best he might, the harsher details of the interview.

"Did papa hold out no hope? none at all?" said Esmè, with a pathetic tremble in her voice, and looking at him through a mist of tears which began to escape over her pale cheeks.

"Alas! no, dearest—I must not deceive you—not a hope."

"Oh my darling! I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it! My heart will break;" and she burst into an agony of weeping.

Cosmo held her in his strong arms, and soothed her with low-murmured words of fondness; and as a child in grief clings to its comforter, so did she cling to him, sobbing out the passion of her sorrow on her lover's breast. And in that pure embrace and in that moment of bitterness, the love of the man—ever tenderest when it protects,—and of the woman—ever fondest when it leans upon the strong,—were drawn together in bonds that must surely prove indissoluble. Gradually the relief of tears worked its charm; slowly her sobs died away, and she lay quiet in the resting-place she was so soon to lose. Cosmo bent down and gently kissed her, and she raised herself at last, calm, and with the wraith of a piteous smile on her poor, trembling lips. "We said 'for ever,' dearest," she murmured; "and it is 'for ever' still, is it not?"

"For ever and for ever," said Cosmo, fervently.

"I cannot disobey papa, you know," she went on; "and if he will keep us separate, we must be separate, but our hearts can never be separate; can they, dear?"

"Never!"

"And he can never make me love any one else—*that* is impossible;—and you will never love any one else. I feel so sure, oh, so sure of that!—and I will come here every day, and remember all your words and think of you, so that I shall seem to hear your dear voice speaking them; and everything will remind me of you, so that I shall almost seem to see you. Oh, poor darling! you will not have this comfort. But promise me that you will come here, every day, in your thoughts—thinking of all the things here that we have looked at together—thinking of them with all your might, and saying to yourself, 'Esmè is looking at them now, and thinking of me, and loving me, with all her heart.' Then we shall really almost meet, shall we not? Promise me this, darling Cosmo."

"Promise, my own! wherever you are, my thoughts and my heart shall be with you, night and day—while I live."

"And oh, dear Cosmo! something seems to tell me now—even now, when all is so dark—that we need not despair. Papa will surely relent when he is convinced that I can never change; and you are so good and so noble, and you will be so great, if you will only persevere and not despond, that he will be forced to relent. Then, dear, promise me that you will not despair, but that you will go on in your work, and work with all your might. Say to yourself that I am standing beside you, trying to help you with my prayers and my love; for I shall hear of you if I cannot see you, and in all your troubles and in

all your triumphs, my heart shall be with you. I know that you will do this, will you not?"

"I will," said Cosmo, but his voice failed him for further utterance.

"And I know," continued Esmè, "that whatever you do, you will do it not for yourself only, nor even for my sake only, but far more, for the sake of doing what is good and noble like yourself. And so I think that God will help us, if we are only patient, and trust in Him. Yes, He will help us. So I am not going to be unhappy any more, but quite cheerful; and I am sure that this 'good-bye' is only for a very little, and that we shall meet again, not to be separated any more."

Cosmo was far more overcome by these touching words—striving as they did, so bravely and so unselfishly, to bring him comfort—than by all that had passed before, and it was only after several vain attempts to speak that he was able to say, "I promise all. I shall try to deserve God's help."

Hours had passed. They felt that the moment of parting had inexorably come; and, as they stood together in that last solemn silence which precedes a solemn separation, the sound of rapid steps was heard, and, a moment after, Mrs Ravenhall stood before them. Her air was one of haste and excitement, and she addressed Esmè at once, without in any way noticing Cosmo.

"They have been searching for you everywhere, dear Esmè, and your father is very seriously disturbed about your absence. He would have gone out and come here to look for you himself, but I persuaded him, with great difficulty, to let me come instead. I feared that in his present agitation something painful might occur, and so I came myself. Now we must not delay a moment; do come away."

"I will come, Mrs Ravenhall." Then she turned to Cosmo, and murmured in a low voice, "Good-bye," and Cosmo murmured "Good-bye," and she was turning to depart. In all that had passed, their real farewells had been already taken; they comprehended each other absolutely, and their hearts were one. But to Esmè's tender nature this cold formality was intolerable, and, regardless of Mrs Ravenhall's presence, she once more threw herself passionately on her lover's breast. "Good-bye!" she cried, "my own! my most beloved! I do not care who knows it and who sees it. I am proud of my love, and it will never die or change—never! never!"

Mrs Ravenhall looked up into the sky and down into the deeps—either from discretion, or because this was "a scene"

and in contravention of her code, which placed under a ban all display of genuine human feeling. Presently Esmè stood beside her; "I am ready now, Mrs Ravenhall," she said, and in another moment the lovers were parted—Mrs Ravenhall thought, for ever.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Esmè walked by her friend's side, quietly weeping. It might have melted a very hard heart to see the tears and the sorrow of one so young and lovable. It did not touch Mrs Ravenhall's heart, however; not because it was hard, but because it was an empty shell, containing no emotional machinery. It did something else, however, which answers quite as well in society as the efflux of true sympathy, it awoke a sense of personal discomfort, which the grief of others always produced in Mrs Ravenhall, who liked to see bright faces and to hear happy voices, just as she preferred sunshine to storm and warmth to cold. This sense of personal discomfort struggling for alleviation moved her to apply to Esmè's woe such balm as is to be extracted from glozing words of spurious sympathy. In this way (having told Esmè that her father had apprised her of what had taken place) she conjured her to be of good cheer, pointing out that it is usually darkest just before dawn, that it is a long lane which has no turning, and adducing many similar floscules of proverbial consolation. Lord Germistoune, she said, was, of course, angry just now—rather seriously angry indeed; but, if he was swift to wrath, he was quickly appeased. His fondness for her would plead with his anger. She herself had already somewhat mollified him, she hoped, by explaining that old heads can by no means be put on young shoulders, and that Esmè's good sense and filial piety would soon bring her to cheerful submission. In fine, all would soon be forgiven and forgotten, and they would, in point of fact, live happy ever after.

"No," said Esmè, quietly, "I will submit and try to be patient, and papa may forgive" ("forgive!" she repeated, indignantly), "but I can never be happy—never be really happy any more, unless papa relents. There can be no forgetfulness for *me*."

Mrs Ravenhall laughed in her sleeve. "Poor little thing!" she thought, "in a month she will have forgotten all about him.

In the meantime it would be wretched work here; and his lordship's announcement, that we are all to get our dismissal to-morrow, was perfectly welcome."

"Well, darling Esmè," she said aloud, as they reached the house, "you know that you will always have a true and loving friend in me, and what I can do to help your happiness I will always do—depend upon that. Go straight to your father, dear; do not be afraid of him. He will not be very harsh or severe, I am sure."

"I am not afraid of papa; I never have been afraid of him; and as I have done nothing wrong, I have no fear now."

In this frame she went bravely to Lord Germistoune's room. We should be sorry to harrow our readers by describing minutely all that the poor girl suffered there. Her father felt that all his pride of ancestry, station, wealth, *prestige*, all his jealous love for his daughter—*his* only child, *his* future representative—had been outraged, insulted, sullied even, by being dragged, even in the imagination, down into a connection with this nameless nobody, whom he had always disliked, and whose presumption now simply maddened him. Shaken with the passion which all this stirred, he was, at first, violent and incoherent as a lunatic. But Esmè kept silence, strengthening herself in her patience by the recollection of what Cosmo had borne for her sake, and leaning, in her heart, on the stay and comfort of his great love. And, since wrath which is noisy soon exhausts itself in its declamations, and since wrath which meets no resistance soon loses its impetus, and since an old man's wrath fails for lack of the energy of life, it thus soon befell that Lord Germistoune, physically exhausted by hours of concentrated excitement, became, if not more reasonable, at least somewhat calmer; and the interview closed as follows:—

"Before you leave this room, Esmè, you shall give me a solemn undertaking, absolutely and entirely to give up this man, and to think no more of him."

"I will promise you, papa, not to marry him, while you withhold your consent."

"And you will hold no communication with him?"

"None, while you forbid it."

"And you will banish him from your thoughts?"

"No, papa, I will not do that."

"What! you dare to say this to my face?"

"I cannot promise what is impossible. I have never deceived you in anything, and I never will deceive you. And I wish you to know that I never will cease to love him. Nothing can

change me. I have vowed it in words, and if honour would not keep me true to my vow, my heart would."

"Don't talk this rubbish to me, about vows and hearts and lovers' eternities—I know the value of it. I'm not a girl."

"Oh, papa! papa! remember that *I* am but a girl, and do not be so hard and cruel. Remember that, if you separate me from him, and take away your own love also, I shall indeed be desolate."

With these plaintive words she laid her hand beseechingly on his arm; and the old man, in spite of himself, was touched by the forlorn aspect of the one being whom in all the world he loved. He repressed any symptom of softening, however, except that he said, in a gentler tone, "You may leave me now, Esmè; if you deserve my love you shall not lose it."

When he was left alone he muttered to himself, "Time,—time, and judicious coldness and firmness on my part—these will bring her to her senses; and then London and a groove will do the rest. If she had been more in London this madness would not have taken her; if she had been formed by conventional women she would have been incapable of it. But it is not too late yet. No, no, not too late. London and a groove!"

Esmè did not appear either that night or the next morning. Her father made her apologies. An overwhelming headache, he said, kept her to her room; and only Mrs Ravenhall saw her to take farewell. When she crept down-stairs in the afternoon, the house was silent and empty; every guest had departed; silence within and gloom without; black skies, and moaning winds, and dreary rain-drifts marching up the glen. In this sad fashion closed those three bright weeks, and Esmè, bereft of her lover, and estranged from her father, was truly all alone.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Cosmo did not remain long in the spot where their passionate farewell had been taken. He gave one last look at the Fall, and the old castle, and the woods—intently gazing at them, as though to fix indelibly in his mind every detail of the scene where his spirit was to come and keep its daily tryst with Esmè. Then he strode rapidly away through the woods, and across the bridge, in the direction of Finmore. Other eyes had beheld the lovers'

pathetic interview and their tearful parting. Perched in her eyrie, up in the ruined tower, the crazy old woman who had, more than once, intervened so inopportunely, observed it all from first to last. But she did not come down; she remained perfectly still and silent, watching the scene with a strangely solemn look in her vague face, and only muttering to herself, now and then, some scrap of doleful song suggested by what was passing down below—

" 'Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!
Ae fareweel, alas! for ever!'

Oh, but it's waefu'! it's waefu'! my ain heart's fit to brak."

And when the last parting took place, the poor old creature, who dearly loved Esmè, in her fitful way, fairly lifted up her voice and wept, sobbing to herself, "Oh, my bonny leddy! my bonny leddy! that's aye sae gude to me! whatfor wad they gang to break her kind heart? Oh, my bonny leddy!"

The last sound which Cosmo heard, as he passed the bridge, was her voice singing among the crags up above—

" Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

This was the sadly appropriate farewell which Dunerlacht gave him.

When he reached home, he walked into the room where Phil was sitting, and said, abruptly—"It is all over, Phil—finally, as far as Lord Germistoune can make it final. He rejected me with every sort of scorn. But, please, ask me no questions, and say nothing more about it. I can't bear it yet. I'm going to take a long walk now; I can't remain still."

"Let me come with you, my dear fellow. It's bad to be alone with a sad heart."

"No, no; but thank you all the same. I must be quite alone. Don't wait dinner for me, or sit up, or mind me in any way. It may be midnight before I return."

Then Cosmo went away and wandered far and wide, without destination or purpose, save to wear out the spirit of unrest, which held him in its grip. He was visible no more that night; and when he appeared next day, his friend was by no means surprised to hear that he was going to leave Finmore within an hour.

"I am going," he said, "for a month of rapid movement and continual change of scene,— for a month, or a shorter time, if I

recover my senses sooner. Then I shall return to fulfil my pledge to her—to work, to hope, to believe, and, I trust, at last to win her; for, while I live, I shall never despair. Stay here, Phil, as long as you please, and the longer the better. The establishment is all engaged for two months more, and it is a pity you should lose the chance of so good a moor. I shall not return, of course."

Phil wished rather to accompany his afflicted friend on his travels, but Cosmo would not hear of this; so he agreed to remain by himself at Finmore, but only for a week.

So Cosmo bade Phil farewell, and went on his way.

As he went to the station and by the road which led past the castle, he saw an open vehicle approaching him which seemed to contain three persons, and to be piled high with luggage in front. As it came up, Cosmo discovered that it conveyed Tom Wyedale and his servant, and he was for passing with a hurried salutation. But Tom would not suffer this, halting him with lusty shouts, and begging him to descend and come apart for a few minutes' conversation on urgent private affairs.

When they had got to a few paces' distance from the servants, Tom stopped, with a grave face, and said, "I've heard, my dear old boy, through my sister, of this confounded catastrophe."

"What do you mean?" cried Cosmo, angrily.

"Oh Cosmo! Cosmo! am I not your oldest friend? Don't do dignity with me, man! I know all about it, and there's no one can be half so sorry for it as I am, except she and you. But cheer up, old fellow. It will all come right at last. I've always thought that you and she were made for each other—ever since that time down at Cadenabbia. That's paying you a compliment, I can tell you. I have not known many women who were good for much, besides herself; and she's good enough to redeem the character of the whole sex. And I say it will all come right, *because* she is so good, and would never throw a fellow over when she once liked him; I am sure of that. Still, Cosmo, I'm awfully sorry for you, awfully."

"Thanks, Tom; you're a good fellow."

"And I was thinking, Cosmo, that it might be a comfort to you, when you're down in your luck (which won't last long, I think, for his lordship is not immortal, and, fortunately, stricken in years and really getting shaky)—that it might be a comfort to you, when down in your luck, to have your old pal with you, who would do his best to cheer you up. So here I have come, with bag and baggage, to take no refusal, but force my way

into Finmore. I'm leaving Dunerlacht, at any rate, so don't suppose I'm putting myself to inconvenience."

"It's really good of you, Tom," said Cosmo; "but, you see, I'm on a journey myself; indeed I'm not going back to Finmore."

"What! and you're going to leave all that grand shooting which Davidson says you've hardly touched?"

"Phil Denwick is to stay there for a week."

"A week! and one gun!"

"Oh Tom! if you like to go on there, and stay in my absence, you are most welcome. Stay till the end of the season, if you please. You will find servants and everything there, and no one knows I'm not going to return."

"My dear Cosmo, that is a very good offer and a very kind one. It is not likely that I shall be able to stay long, and it will be sad to be there in your absence, knowing the unhappy cause of it. Still, I will go there for a little. I think it will be a relief to your mind to know that the grouse are being properly shot, won't it?"

"It's well they should not be wasted. Good-bye, Tom."

"Good-bye, and good luck to you before long."

And so this fortunate scamp, amidst the disasters of his friends, rose, as usual, to the surface; and went on, and, to the joy of old Davidson, abode at Finmore for many weeks, and made himself thoroughly comfortable, and "toozled" the "Three Kimmers" to his heart's content, and "slated" the game everywhere, as it had seldom been "slated" before.

CHAPTER XLV.

The eight months succeeding the events narrated in our last chapter, effected a good many changes in the external circumstances of Esmè and Cosmo. Lord Germistoune, accustomed to have his own way in all things, was, at first, impatient to extract from his daughter an acknowledgment of her error, and a confession that she had ceased to think of Cosmo; and, at short intervals, recurred to the subject with the formal expression of a hope that she had "come to her senses." But Esmè, always candid and fearless, never wavered from her original declaration. For her, "change was impossible;" and although

she expressed this with all gentleness, and with dutiful regret that there should be variance between her father and herself, it was with a constant firmness which gradually led the old lord to suspect that the high-handed system would not answer. At last, under the inspiration of Mrs Ravenhall, whom he consulted by letter, he was persuaded to adopt a more politic method, which aimed at the reduction of obstinacy by the influence of time and silence. Exercising an amount of self-restraint, which was very irksome to him, he ceased to make any allusion to "the affair," and Cosmo's name never crossed his lips, though that "audacious miscreant" was constantly, and bitterly, in his thoughts. But this change did not greatly avail Esmè; for her father had resolved to combine with the silent, something like the solitary, system; that is to say, he would neither pay nor receive visits: and in this he persevered for some weeks, with the results on his irritable temper which were naturally to be expected. From it poor Esmè had much to endure; and what with that, what with the blankness of life, when it is only illumined by vague and distant hopes, her lot promised to be a sad one. Indeed, when she looked out on the glorious summer of love and sympathy which was, in one sense, so near, and, in another sense, so far, the winter of her discontent was, at times, all but intolerably cold and dark and dreary. But here, again, Mrs Ravenhall intervened, strongly deprecating such a modification of the system which she had induced Lord Germistoune to adopt; and here, again, his lordship was persuaded to change his tactics. He did so, as he did everything, in a violent and exaggerated way. He filled the castle with guests; he offered visits, right and left, in the district; when he had exhausted it, he shifted his quarters to Ferniehall, and kept open house there; and at all the festive gatherings which, at this time of the year, keep Scotland in a state of high carnival, he and his daughter were present, without fail. Hitherto he had affected a certain regal exclusiveness and social reserve; he had avoided, to use his own phrase, "making himself cheap;" and his change of habits naturally excited remark. Those who knew him little, solved the problem by deciding that he wished to get his daughter married; those who knew him best, thought that he was not the man to take any initiative in such a matter, expecting—as he certainly would expect—to be beset by swarms of suitors—all of the highest distinction—from among whom it would simply be his duty to select the most eligible. Those who knew him least were, however, nearer to the mark.

Hitherto he had put away from his mind, as distasteful, the

idea of Esmè's marriage; he felt that, when the swarms began to close round him, it would be time enough seriously to consider it. But this horrible affair had altered all his views, and alarmed him seriously, in more ways than one. It was true that, during his lifetime, he could prevent Esmè from marrying Cosmo; and her dutifulness was so strong that he might almost reckon on his veto holding good, when he was no longer alive to enforce it. But what if this prohibition should result in her remaining permanently single? It was this consideration which affected him, almost, if not quite, as much as Cosmo's outrageous audacity; for, with Esmè, the entail ended, the titles would be extinct, the family, in fact, at an end. Lord Germistoune had therefore revolutionised his habits for the present, with a double object. In the bustle and excitement of a gay life, Cosmo was to be forgotten by Esmè; and in the haunts of the eligible she was to meet an appropriate magnate, who, by espousing her, should save the family from extinction. Propelled, therefore, by these two motives, the old lord dragged Esmè about the country, eager to be everywhere, like a match-making mother who hungers and thirsts for the espousal of her daughters. Eager to be everywhere, yet choked with the sense of humiliation which all this involved; and, in the extra *hauteur* of his manner and acerbity of his tone, visiting the resentment which it caused, upon all the world. If there had been any chance that his daughter would coincide in his matrimonial schemes for her, his own conduct would have neutralised them. For, now looking upon all young men as possible, and even probable, aspirants, he carried himself scowlingly towards every youth, until cause had been shown why he should do otherwise; and, even in the case of any one who, being eligible, showed a disposition to pay attention to his daughter, his lordship thought it due to himself to adopt a tone of suspicious austerity and condescension, which was meant to convey to the young man that it was only by the stretching of a point that he could be considered eligible, and that there was no sort of margin to spare. And, indeed, in deciding on the question of eligibility, he was honestly in this dilemma, that no one who was not very great was good enough; and any one who was great enough to be good enough would be apt, by superiority of title, to swamp the Germistoune honours: and that *his* family should be extinguished by merging even in a ducal house, outraged an egotism which took cognisance of the unborn generations of his descendants, to the end of time.

It came to pass from all this, that suitors were discouraged,

and that young men in general were frightened away from Esmè, not caring to run the blockade of her father's fierce and sleepless observation. Before long, Lord Germistoune could not but see that she was not sought after, the blame of which he, of course, laid at her door alone. "She is hankering after that villain Glencairn, and so snubs every one else." This was how he explained it to himself; and the fire of his wrath burned yet the more hotly against "the villain," and reflected itself in the harsh tone which he adopted towards his daughter.

From Scotland, Lord Germistoune carried her to his seat in Wales, and there for a time mystified his neighbours by his novel ways of life; and thence, in the feverish pursuit of his objects, he took her abroad for the winter. Whatever virtue change of scene may have in obliterating misplaced attachments, he certainly gave it a fair trial,—rushing from place to place in that region of the Continent with which the pursuit of health had, before now, made him very familiar. With the exception of Monte Carlo, there was scarcely a station on the Riviera of which he did not make trial. He liked Cannes—he had always liked it; for the people there were generally, more or less, *comme il faut*, and the climate was, as a rule, pleasant. But, after a fortnight, he found that, on this occasion, it did not suit his purpose. There was little distraction, and no excitement, and the male visitors were—as they always are—octogenarian, sick, married, or beardless. In short, it was unavailable. Nice had never been to his taste, but he tried even it, and found it, as of yore, full of *rococo* English and Americans, and with a foreign element which made his aristocratic and respectable blood boil and freeze, in turns. Carried past the sunny, but sinful, heights of Monaco, Esmè had to dree the weird of a ghastly week in that stuffy *morgue*—Mentone; and another in San Remo, that fair paradise of deadly dulness; and thereafter expiated her sins in a penitential pilgrimage which brought her, by fits and starts, through Genoa, Pisa, and Florence, to Rome. In all these places her father conducted himself with the same feverish haste and insolence—looking in, as it were, at the door of society in each—scanning its *personnel*, and then retiring with the sort of air adopted by some supercilious exquisites, of seeing no one "good enough" to justify his continuance in such a sphere.

At Rome they fell in with Tom Wyedale, who, having "broken the bank" at Monte Carlo, had resolved not to give the bank a chance of recouping itself at his expense, and so had fallen back on the Eternal City, which, that winter, offered

exceptional facilities for relieving pecuniary plethora, by means of *baccarat*.

Lord Germistoune was by no means cordial to Tom, and discouraged intimacy. In his eyes Tom was no longer the light-hearted *farceur;* he was now a probable aspirant, and therefore, probably, a crafty, designing dog; in addition to which he was the intimate ally of the man who had caused all this woe. Esmè was overjoyed to see her old friend, who, besides being the friend of Cosmo, was hearty and cheery, and a very bright relief to the gloom which surrounded her. Tom, himself, had little difficulty in comprehending the ordeal to which she was being subjected, and his kindly nature longed to give her comfort. And he did give her comfort, in the best possible way, by talking about Cosmo with the unconsciousness which he knew how to assume, and by, accidentally as it were, giving her minute intelligence about him, which cheered her with the knowledge that her lover was true to his vow not to despond, but to hope and work. As to his love, she required no assurance on that head. It was delightful thus to talk about him again, and with one who, though apparently unconscious, was so sympathetic in his views of Cosmo; it was delightful, but her satisfaction was too obvious, and so brought its own extinction. For, when her father observed the pleasure she had in meeting Tom, his suspicions became acute, and he let his quondam *protégé* know very frankly that his society was not desired. So Tom was completely disestablished, and deeply resented the loss of many dining and other advantages, which he had counted on extracting from the "old Buffalo."

In this strange way the winter passed for Esmè—passed like an evil dream, in which her father's spasms of wild vagary and personal unkindness constituted the episodes, and the forlorn sense of separation, and the anguish of love's hopes deferred, formed the grand central trouble upon which the episodes of evil dreams are built. From all the many sources of pleasure once familiar to her, in these places of sojourn, she was now in a manner cut off. Her father dogged her like a detective, and contrived, by methods more galling than open words, to let her feel that she was suspected and under surveillance. The glories of nature, the beauties of art, and the delights of social intercourse, lose their charm under such conditions, and Esmè had no alleviations. It was, therefore, to her unmingled satisfaction, that an alarm of fever at Rome decided her father to return to London much earlier than he had purposed. Her lot could not

be worse there than here; and she would, at all events, be near Cosmo, perhaps see him sometimes; and that, even though they must hold no communication, was much—indeed, a world of consolation. So that Lord Germistoune's varied efforts to efface, stamp out, or supplant her affection, had been all so much labour in vain. They had helped to take the colour from her cheek, and the brightness from her manner, but that was all. The old lord had a great deal more than a suspicion that this was the case; but of course there was no relenting on his part; and so, they were no sooner settled in the family mansion in town, than he set about taking measures which, under proper safeguards, should insure for Esmè every opportunity and distraction which the season, now commencing, could supply. Foremost among these measures was, that he secured the alliance, offensive and defensive, of an eminent dowager—a kinswoman of his own. This was the Lady Octopa Hawker, a great power in society, and who, on the matrimonial war-path, first for her daughters and then for her nieces, was believed to have taken more scalps than any extant pursuer of men. Her ladyship had married off all her own near belongings; but the instincts of the conqueror were still keen within her, and she longed for new achievements. With hearty cordiality, then, she undertook the chaperonage and social supervision of Esmè, whose personal attractions and dazzling prospects promised *éclat* to Lady Octopa herself, and a sphere of operations wide enough for the ambition of a great strategist. She quite understood what Lord Germistoune wanted. There had been a foolish entanglement in the country, which still haunted the girl's fancy. Esmè's settlement was therefore more than a matter of general expediency—it was urgent. Lady Octopa quite grasped the situation. Similar "cases" had been successfully manipulated by her before now; and she assured Lord Germistoune confidently, that he might make his mind easy.

So Esmè was launched into the vortex; and, under the system of Lady Octopa, with which his lordship consented not to interfere, she had every distraction and opportunity which London affords. It could not be said that she became the fashion; she was not mobbed and gazed at from chairs, hastily climbed as posts of observation, which are among the attentions now enjoyed, in this well-bred metropolis, by ladies who chance to be the rage of the hour. Neither by the style of her beauty, nor by her manner, was she at all likely to be, in this sense, the fashion; but she soon became the object of much interest, of some real devotion, and of considerable pursuit. To this she was indiffer-

ent, since all men but one "were to her like shadows." But London was more endurable than Scotland and Italy had been, for the sway of Lady Octopa was less harassing than her father's sway—and Cosmo was in town.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Cosmo was in town; but we must go back a little, and trace the events which led to the circumstances under which he was there. When he left Scotland, seeking, in movement and rapid changes of scene, some distraction from grievous mental pain, he crossed the Channel, and, without purpose or programme, found himself presently at Marseilles; and thence, in the same haphazard way, went over to the island of Corsica. This he explored unrestingly, scaling the rugged heights of the Monte d'Oro and the Monte Rotondo, traversing the noble forests of Aitone and Vizzavona, crossing the island by the grand and unique route from Bastia to Ajaccio, and moving half round it, partly on foot, partly in the rough vehicles of that primitive land. His fare was simple, his lodging rough, his physical exertions severe; he lived alone with Nature, and amidst aspects of Nature constantly changing but always noble; and soon, in a measure, recovering the equilibrium of thought which he was in quest of, he felt in a position to turn his face homewards, before the prescribed month had elapsed. At Marseilles he found letters awaiting him, and one from his father which induced him to continue his journey to England, with all speed. The news it contained was entirely welcome and opportune, being to the effect, that the sitting member for Puffboro had, on visiting his constituents, found it expedient to reconsider his intention of "sticking to his post,"—that he had now, in fact, taken steps to retire, and that the writ for a new election was to be issued immediately. Mr Glencairn stated that, acting upon what his son had said to him, some months before, he had gone down to the place himself, and set matters in train for Cosmo's candidature, and already done a little quiet canvassing on his behalf; but that his own personal appearance on the scene, and the issue of his address, at the earliest moment possible, were necessary.

Cosmo telegraphed that he was on his way home, and lost so little time that, before thirty-six hours had elapsed, he was in

the borough. Here awaiting him he found Mr Hopper, whom, in consideration of a good many electioneering qualities, his father had sent down to "manage" matters.

"Come at last!—and most welcome, Captain Cosmo!" cried Hopper. "And now, since there is no time to lose, perhaps you would kindly throw an eye over this, and then we can send it to the printer at once. There were one or two points we were in doubt about, so couldn't issue it before your arrival." He produced a roll of paper.

"What is that?" asked Cosmo.

"The address, Captain; your address."

"*My* address!—and you *thought* of issuing a statement of my principles, without my sanction?"

"The committee thought of it, Captain, and urged it on us, as we were, roughly speaking, in possession of your views; but we decided that it was not the right thing to do, and we didn't do it."

"It would have been a most reckless and un——"

"Exactly. It would. We felt that it would be so. We couldn't pledge ourselves on the 'Burials' question, you see. Mr Buster, a strong Nonconformist, but a leading man here, goes for being buried in the parish churchyard, without what he calls 'any priestly abominations.'"

"Well?"

"Well, Captain, we didn't know whether you mightn't insist, so to speak, on the 'abominations;' and, though we got a strong hint that if we could assure him that you would help him to be interred without them, it would, in fact, mean a good many votes, we daren't do it, Captain—daren't do it; and didn't. Besides, it was clear that games were going on between the parties here, which I was only allowed half to see, and I felt that it was quite possible that Buster's votes were safe, without any pledge from you."

"It is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether Mr Buster is buried in the churchyard or in his cabbage-yard; but——"

"Clearly so, and naturally," said Hopper, taking out a pencil, and scrawling an addition to the address, which he read aloud as he wrote—"'Will advocate fullest concessions on this point—will be glad to see all Nonconformists buried—in the manner that may be most satisfactory to them.' There!—that ought to net Buster and his followers!"

"You are too hurried, Mr Hopper; and if you think I am [illegible] votes, you are mistaken."

"Never dreamt of such a thing, sir! With a man of your mould, that would be out of the question. Quite."

"Then—well, let me look at this paper which is supposed to expound my principles."

"Roughly, Captain; only *roughly*. There it is."

Cosmo ran his eye over it, murmuring aloud the principal heads—"'General support of the Conservative party—time-honoured institutions—economy,' &c. &c.—'a jealous watchfulness over the efficiency of our postal system, especially as regards foreign and colonial mail service—importance of maritime *nexus* between the hemispheres—friction of thought in an international sense—action and reaction—bonds of sympathy tightened—international pulse'—why, what on earth is all this?"

"Go on, Captain—go on!"

"'Urgent necessity for reform in oceanic mail-service—gross abuses in this department—for example, as to port selected in connection with mail-service between Great Britain and the grand republic of New Gotham—consider present state of things a scandal and a reproach, which no Government ought to tolerate, which no Conservative administration would dream of maintaining—if returned, would use every effort to promote governmental action in the matter——'" Cosmo threw the paper down. "The whole thing," he said, "is absolutely meaningless to me."

"For the moment, sir, no doubt it is; but it is full of meaning for the constituency, and that's the main point."

"Is it?"

"Well, in a sense. You see, Captain, what the people in general here want, is to get their port made the port for the Gotham mail-service instead of Dartboro, and what *we* want—that is to say, Mr Glencairn and some of the leading inhabitants of the place—is to get the mail contract transferred from the 'Eureka Steam Navigation Company' to the 'Great Antipodal Steam Navigation Company,' of which they are principal shareholders, and whose ships already have their station here. Very well. You, Captain, as your father's mouthpiece——"

"I will be no man's mouthpiece."

"I was wrong. You will be no man's mouthpiece—naturally not; but, having a son's sympathy in a father's interests, and knowing the utter inefficiency of the 'Eureka'——"

"I know nothing about it!"

"Oh, my dear Captain, but it *is* notorious!"

"Well, well."

"Knowing the inefficiency of the 'Eureka,' and the complete organisation of the 'Antipodal'——"

"Again you beg the question."

"Feeling sure, I should perhaps say, that any organisation which, like the 'Antipodal,' enjoys the direction of such men as your father, is certain to be complete, and therefore best adapted for the public service. Knowing and feeling this, and being aware that Puffboro is nearer to New Gotham by twelve nautical miles, and to London, by five statute miles, than Dartboro is—you can scarcely hesitate to promise your support to the demand of Puffboro, when it asks to have the privilege of Dartboro, in this matter of the mails, transferred to it. The 'Eureka' contract expires in two years. The 'Eureka' and Dartboro have had *their* innings, and misused them. Turn about's fair-play; why shouldn't Puffboro and the 'Antipodal' have their innings next—particularly when that would advance the public interests?"

"But what has all this got to do with politics?"

Hopper held up his hands. "Politics, Captain?—everything: it will settle the politics of this borough for a generation. You see they're a *leetle* bit hazy here *about* politics. The fact is, with a few exceptions, they don't, I suspect, care very much in reality about parties, except in so far as their own interests are concerned. They pretend to, of course, but *I* twig them. *I* twig them. Now Puffboro, with a Liberal member, has been trying to get justice from a Liberal Government. It has always failed. The Liberals have sacrificed it to Dartboro, which returns *two* Liberal members, and is a stronghold of the party. Very well. Now is the moment when Puffboro sees its way to success, by a change of front; for Conservatism is getting rapidly to the top, and is safe to be in power immediately. So what Puffboro is saying to itself is this: 'If we support the Conservative ticket now, a Conservative Government might reasonably be expected to support us, at the expense of Dartboro and Liberalism, when the contract expires;' so, between ourselves"—here Mr Hopper adapted his forefinger to his nose—"between ourselves, I think Puffboro is inclined to support a Conservative candidate who will pledge himself to bring all pressure to bear in the direction of its wishes."

"What a disclosure of political immorality!"

"Well—in a sense; but there's another way to look at it, and that is, that the worthy folk here enjoy the advantage of having the public interest bound up with their own. The efficiency of international mail-service is no trifle; and if that is

promoted with special advantage to the Puffboro people, why, so much the better for them: but they, and their member, are entitled to feel that, in urging their private interests, they are working for the public good, and a Conservative Government which might recognise their services, would be able to feel that they were granting a boon to the nation."

"Provided your statistics are correct."

"They are undeniably and demonstrably correct, Captain Cosmo."

"The real motives would continue equally small and sordid."

"My dear Captain, how far would you go? Would you sacrifice the public interests to avoid the appearance of selfish motives? As for a member of Parliament, he is bound to promote the interests of his constituency, where they don't clash with imperial interests; otherwise he is not their representative at all."

Cosmo bit his lip, and beat the ground impatiently with his foot. "I detest," he said, "the appearance of a bargain in such a matter. I feel inclined to give up my candidature."

"But, Captain, you will have to make no *bargain* at all. You will simply have to say, as every other member says, 'I will promote the interests of this borough in every way in which I conscientiously can.' That's not much to say, surely; and I think *that* will satisfy them. You see the Liberals can't promise to meet their views, because that would be promising to sacrifice more profitable supporters at Dartboro."

"I shall make it quite clear to them that there is to be no *bargain* on my part. If they choose to say that my pressing the interests of this port is to be a *sine quâ non*, or even a condition of their political support, I shall tell them that I won't take their political support on such terms."

"Quite! They won't say *that*."

"If, after hearing my views, they are satisfied with them, I can have no objection to say—of course, as a volunteered remark—that my best endeavours to promote their general interests will be at their disposal."

"To be sure. That's it, Captain. That will nick it. Ha! ha!"

"But is there no feeling at all in the borough on *any* political question?"

"Well, there are the Nonconformists, who are always inclined to give trouble. *They* are the politicians; and they *talk*, I believe, of a contest. I don't think they're in earnest. At all events, a few fair words from you would quiet them. I shall

know more about *them* in a few hours. As informed, up to date, my impression is, that their main political belief is that Puffboro is, by twelve nautical miles, nearer to New Gotham than Dartboro is, and therefore, &c. &c. Now, Captain, about the address."

"I won't allow a line of that preposterous production to go out in my name. I have the main points of an address in my head, and, if you will come back in an hour, I can promise to have it ready for you."

"Very well, sir. I'll go and see the committee, in the meantime, and tell them you've come."

Accordingly Mr Hopper betook himself to the leaders of the party, and, with a great many winks and frowns, explained, jocosely, the state of Cosmo's mind.

"The Captain," he said, "is a philosopher, and has a conscience, and some other things that ain't very convenient at election times; and he kicks at the idea of making 'a bargain,' as he calls it, for his seat, about this port and contract business. But he'll be as right as a trivet, if you only manage him rightly. Now take this advice from me—that is, if you want him for your candidate,—and you can't get anything like so good a man for *your* purposes as he would be, with his father at his back; take this advice from me—receive his programme, which is sure to be harmless, and accept him unconditionally as your candidate. Not a word about the steamboats. I'll guarantee that he'll do the right thing for the borough, in that matter; I *can* guarantee it. I speak for his father, you know," added Hopper, with a wink which spoke volumes; "but if you press him for a pledge, in his own direct words, he'll very likely throw you over altogether. Be contented with *my* pledge—that is to say, his father's—for him."

Then the committee, satisfied that an autocrat and a millionaire like old Glencairn would certainly be able to control his own son, agreed to this; and when Hopper had brought the address, they *did* formally accept Cosmo as their candidate, though some things in the address puzzled them, and might have strained their Conservatism, if there had been any abstract politicians among them. The decision was conveyed to him by a deputation who, warned by Hopper, behaved with great discretion during the interview, keeping the steamboats out of view, and being politic enough (under the same inspiration) to suggest certain modifications of his political programme. Cosmo combated their objections with great earnestness, and, after a show of argument and reluctance, they abandoned their posi-

tions, and admitted that he was right. A public meeting was agreed upon, for the following night, and the interview thus terminated to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned,—these worthy politicians desiring to send up to Parliament, not so much an exponent of political philosophy, as an article with a brand which made it marketable; and Cosmo was delighted to find that the constituency was, after all, inspired by disinterested political principle.

The meeting, which took place as arranged, although it embraced the whole constituency, was not a very large affair, when all were told. There were no "lambs," no tumult, no sort of excitement. The fact was, Hopper had made good use of his time in the interval; he had "got at" no end of people; and the leaders of the various political sections, who were all either deep in the "Antipodal," or at least closely identified in some way with the maritime interests of the borough, had, that afternoon, come to a pretty fair understanding. In this, Cosmo's pledge—that is to say, the pledge vicariously offered for him by the ingenious Mr Hopper—was an important factor; and Cosmo's brusque utterance about Mr Buster's burial, manipulated into comfortable and comprehensive English by the same artist, was tendered and accepted as a negotiable security.

An air of placidity, then, characterised the assembly; for things had oozed out: it was pretty well understood that the wire-pullers had decided that there was to be no contest, and the wire-pullers being the great employers of labour and the fountains of local patronage, their decision was everything, or nearly so.

Thus, even when Mr Buster, chief of the Nonconformist Radicals, fussed into the room, looking very fierce and uncompromising; and when Mr Batt, captain of the higher Liberal section, stalked gloomily up the hall, as if he, too, "meant blood," no sensation was produced; even among the most simple-minded of their followers, the general sentiment was "Walker!" Nor could the frantic exertions of Mr Hopper, who stood concealed behind the platform, clapping his hands and shouting "Bravo!" in a boisterous and infectious manner, warm the meeting into any enthusiasm, as Cosmo and his committee entered. Mr Whorkles (Conservative, and chairman of the "Antipodal") took the chair, and introduced the candidate as a gentleman of prodigious talent, and of a political creed so generous, enlightened, soundly constitutional, and, what he might call, philosophically expansive, that he could not conceive any one of any shade of politics—not revolutionary—failing to

recognise in Captain Glencairn a right, fit, and proper, &c. &c. "Captain Glencairn," he went on, "is well known as a brave soldier—brave as a lion—as the British lion—who has served his country and bled for it, on many battlefields——" (Here Cosmo made a sharp gesture of dissent.) "Well, perhaps not exactly bled for it—that is an accident beyond the Captain's control,—but served it with every other distinction. He is also known as an eminent scholar, as a capitalist himself, and the son of one of England's merchant princes. When I add that he has strong local interests——" (another strong gesture of dissent from Cosmo)—"seeing that his father has condescended to recognise that there is, in our town and port, a sphere for his cosmopolitan operations as a capitalist—when I add that he is already heart and soul a Puffboro man" (frantic applause by Hopper and committee), "and that the rights and privileges dear to Puffboro will be jealously safeguarded by him—I think I have said enough to recommend him to your cordial reception; and Captain Glencairn will now himself address you." When the vociferations of Hopper and his *claque* had been stilled, Cosmo proceeded to do so in a very effective manner. His handsome person and bearing produced a favourable impression, and, when he spoke, the charm of his voice and the grace of his language and intonation conciliated the audience, as such advantages always do, even when much that is thus musically conveyed is unintelligible to them.

He began by defining his position as a Conservative.* He was devoted to the constitution, believing that its fundamental idea was in harmony with the genius of the British people. At the same time, he recognised that institutions require periodical modifications, so as to keep them abreast of changes and growths in the sentiments, conditions, and wants of the nation. He would, therefore, conserve the grand principle of political equilibrium which the constitution aimed at, by welcoming any changes in the methods of its application which might, from time to time, become necessary, so as to guard the essential virtue of the principle from being obscured and hampered by accessories which had ceased to be consistent with the developed conditions of the national life.

* When this novel appeared in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' the above and a subsequent speech of Cosmo's were given in a more extended form; but in this edition, deferring to the opinion of certain friendly critics who questioned the propriety of their introduction in a work of fiction, the author has shortened them as much as was compatible with the purpose which he had in view, which was rather to illustrate character than to ventilate political theories.

He looked upon class jealousies as grand impediments to national prosperity. He was against all legislation that would sacrifice the interests of one class to those of another. Interests must, more or less, come into collision from time to time; and it was the duty of statesmen, holding the balance evenly between classes, to direct and formulate compromises, and, in the interests of the constitution, to provide compensations by legislation, earnestly considered and wisely timed.

We had recently passed through a period of much legislation. Many great questions had been settled, or put in the way of settlement. He would not pretend that, in all cases, he approved of the methods employed to settle them; but retrogression was foreign to our political usage, and he thought it was the duty of patriotic politicians to accept loyally what the nation had adopted, and to promote subsidiary legislation, so as to give it the healthiest developments.

As a case in point, he would observe that great power had passed into the hands of the lower sections of society, by the extension of the franchise. For his own part, he had always felt that, in any such readjustment, the claims of intelligence ought to have been directly considered. As it was, there was no direct mechanical check on the preponderating influence of uneducated opinion. But the remedy he would seek for this, lay, not in reaction, but in energetically perfecting the system of national education, which we had been far too tardy in inaugurating.

Cosmo then went on to indicate how his general principles would direct his action in reference to certain special topics, such as taxation, pauperism, local government, our military and naval systems, and the Church.

He concluded by discussing, at some length, the relations between capital and labour, for the regulation of which he suggested the outline of a scheme which had occurred to him. Strikes and lock-outs were, he said, wasting the industrial life of the nation, paralysing capital, alienating trade, and loading the country to ruin. There was an inexorable limit to the concessions of capital, placed at the point where its employment ceased to yield profit. But as to the moment when this point had been reached or approximated to, employers and employés might be expected to differ; and thus, in mutual distrust, and in an antagonism of interests which was artificial, lay the source of perpetual dead-locks. Who was to decide between the disputants? Private arbitration had failed. The crisis was grave; it could only be met by a grave remedy, and that remedy he

could only discern in the interference of the State. But in what form should the State interpose? It would be clumsy and inconvenient to call in the State to arbitrate in every separate case which arose. He would rather apply its intervention so as to make disputes impossible, and in some such form as this—

As the Bank of England indicated the rate of interest, from time to time, at the discretion of the directors; so the market-price of labour, in all the great industries, might be periodically struck by a Government Board, sitting in permanence, and armed with a final authority which the Bank of England did not possess. Subordinate district boards might supply to the central board the local knowledge which would enable them to adapt their enactments to the varying conditions of the districts.

It might be said that this was an unjustifiable interference with liberty of contract. To this he would reply that, in the gravest disturbances of order, society selected the less of two evils, and turned to despotism to save it from anarchy. He applied the analogy, and justified the arbitrariness of his proposal on exactly the same principle—by pointing to the anarchical state of things which it was intended to correct. With this Cosmo concluded his address, which had the faintest possible interest or meaning for the great majority of his audience, who, however, applauded vigorously when he sat down.

The political lore of the majority was confined to certain cries and catch-words, and to those parrot-phrases with which that afflictive institution, "Parliament-out-of-session," fatigues the public ear. But in Cosmo's speech there was no cue, of this sort, to start the divine utterances of the *vox populi*, for praise or blame. The eyes of the people, therefore, rested for inspiration on their leaders, who all occupied conspicuous seats. The Conservatives eyed Mr Whorkles; the Liberals watched Mr Batt—dock-proprietor first, and Liberal afterwards; while the ultra-Radicals took their time from Mr Buster, between whose ravages and the Established Church, his interests, as a ship-chandler, acted, for the present, as a sort of breakwater.

As Cosmo's speech proceeded, the approval of Mr Whorkles and his following became more and more marked.

Mr Batt, on the other hand, gradually exchanged an air of armed neutrality for one of allayed apprehension, which was duly reflected in the quietness of his rank and file; while the Nonconformists, under the inspiration of Mr Buster—who had distinctly nodded his head once or twice in approval of Cosmo's sentiments—confined their active demonstrations to a little

gentle howling, when Cosmo declared himself for the Established Church. The speech was a great success, in this sense, at least, that it enabled Whorkles, Batt, and Buster to carry out their secret triple alliance, which had for its aim the deliberate transfer of the constituency to the Conservative side, for considerations above explained. If Cosmo had turned out to be too pronounced in his opinions—a Tory, in fact—Batt and Buster could scarcely have ventured even to remain neutral; but, as it was, they felt that his views might conciliate a variety of creeds, and were advanced in such a way as to rouse no partisan animosities: and this impression was exchanged between them in furtive glances of congratulation. A show of opposition was, however, necessary, and it was duly forthcoming when a resolution affirming Cosmo's fitness had been moved. Then, after Mr Batt had received an affirmative signal from Mr Whorkles, in answer to a secret note which asked, "May I risk a question on the assimilation of the franchise?" and after Mr Whorkles had sent a secret note to Mr Buster, which said, "Go it on the Burial question: he'll fit you, and none of us mind" —Mr Batt rose and said that there was, of course, a good deal in what Captain Glencairn had said which he could not pretend to hold with; still there was a good deal, which, coming from a Conservative, it surprised him, in an agreeable sense, to hear. Considerable breadth of view was indicated in the Captain's professions, and he trusted they were not mere professions. As a very simple test of his sincerity in advocating equilibrium and justice, he would put to the candidate one question—Was he prepared to assimilate the franchise in boroughs and counties, and so relieve the agricultural population from a scandalous injustice?

Cosmo at once replied that he cordially assented to the principle of assimilation, though there were certain questions connected with carrying it out, upon which his mind was not made up.

Whereupon Mr Batt promptly sat down, after stating that the admission of the principle was satisfactory to him and creditable to Cosmo, and that he was not prepared to move a counter-resolution.

Then Mr Buster, with a well-feigned air of expecting no satisfaction, stated that, without criticising the speech in detail, he would take exception to one passage in it, which implied that there were no burning questions exercising the public mind at present. He denied that *in toto*. The grievances of Nonconformists were a burning question—ay! a question that was

burning its way into the public conscience. Foremost among these, the great question of the day was that known as the "Burials" question. Now, would the candidate's even-handed justice extend relief to Dissenters in that respect?

Cosmo replied that, as he had before said, he was a faithful Churchman; but he, for one, could see no disloyalty to the Church in desiring to admit Dissenters to the privilege which they desired. He knew that it was largely held by Churchmen that to give way on this point was to surrender an outwork protecting the Church itself; but he was soldier enough to know that it was bad tactics to waste strength upon untenable outworks—and an outwork, which rested upon what he ventured to think was foolish prejudice and injustice, was both weak and indefensible. He would resist with all his might any unjust encroachments upon the Church; but, both as a matter of right and of expediency, he was heartily for making the concession in question. Whereupon Mr Buster, glancing triumphantly at his disciples, remarked that half a loaf was better than no bread; and that, as no other candidate was before the meeting, he, like Mr Batt, would refrain, for the present, from moving a counter-resolution, and so sat down. The motion was then put to the meeting; and a respectable forest of hands being held up in its favour, though Batt, Buster, & Co. of course remained neutral, Cosmo was declared to be unanimously found "a fit and proper person."

At the nomination, a few days after, no opposition was offered; and Cosmo was elected, believing, in the guilelessness of his heart, that he owed his return to the electors' sympathy with the unselfishness and even-handed justice which illustrated his political creed. The steamboats had been carefully kept in the background. "No pledges! no bargains! I am free as air! and it is a very worthy constituency!" Thus he congratulated himself, innocent of the fact that Hopper had pledged him to Whorkles, and that Whorkles had purchased Batt and the Liberals with the same pledge, and managed Buster and the Radicals with it and other contrivances, and that the whole of the responsible part of the constituency, more or less, looked upon him simply as the *coupon* of a Conservative bond, in which they had invested, and which they hoped a Conservative Government would honour, when it was presented for payment.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Cosmo's electioneering proceedings began, as we have seen, a few weeks after his flight from Scotland, and before November commenced, he wrote himself M.P. Some time must, therefore, elapse before his new duties would give him that daily employment and occasional excitement which are salutary, in cases like his. His Continental raid, however, followed by the bustle and success at Puffboro, had done much for him, keeping him free from those mists of despondency which are apt to settle on the mind, when sorrow assails a merely contemplative life; and, while the impetus was still on him, he returned with vigour to political study. He had no intention of becoming a Parliamentary specialist—taking up a question and hammering away at it, so as to keep his name before the public, as the manner of some is. But recognising that want of concentration had hitherto rendered his powers unproductive, he devoted his earnest attention to one or two political problems which appeared to him to be already grave, and likely to be recognised as such in the near future. And thus he passed the remainder of the recess.

His love was deep and true as ever, but he kept it under strong control; and far more successfully now than heretofore, he combated those accesses of reverie which paralyse intellectual vigour. It was no longer a time for dreams. His love had passed from the region of dreams, and, uniting itself, in the noblest way, with the realities of his life, had introduced him at last to the sphere of Duty. Esmè was his guiding star and guardian angel: she had led him to that sphere, and in it he must not dream, but work, for Duty's sake and hers. At times, indeed, the sense of their separation would obtrude itself almost overwhelmingly—so cruelly complete it seemed—grieving him for her, even more than for himself, though he could not dream of the utter desolation of her present lot. But, constantly, her guardian-angel words came back to him—"Say to yourself that I am standing beside you trying to help you with my love and my prayers;" and, from the words, he took heart and comfort for them both. He went little into society, but he was often cheered by visits from Phil Denwick (now sitting at the feet of Mr Hopper), which were ever welcome; for Phil was the most sanguine and sympathetic of confidants, and, besides, the only one with whom he could speak of Esmè. The only tidings he

had had of her were by a letter from Tom Wyedale, written after he had seen her at Rome; and in which, with kindly intent, he made much of the marvellous interest she had evinced in hearing of his doings. "I am now, however, under the ban myself," he said, "and I suspect it is for sake's sake. Never mind! we shall both live to outflank the old gentleman. By the by, he was pretty strong about your Puffboro speech, which he had read, and described it as 'distinctly sinister.' For this, however, you will easily console yourself, when I tell you that Miss Douglas spoke of it with an enthusiasm which made her eyes sparkle and her cheek flush. Oh, you luckly dog!" And, indeed, Cosmo for the moment felt himself to be the happiest and most fortunate of men. That she should admire the speech itself, was much; but his lover's instinct told him that her eyes had sparkled because she had accepted it as a witness of his loyalty to her, and all his pledges; and *that* was happiness indeed, for it meant *her* happiness—and caused by him.

Poor souls! there was but little comfort for them at this cheerless time! No wonder they made much of such small mercies as came their way.

Thus Cosmo passed the months, gravely, and even sadly, but guarded from morbid melancholy by purpose, labour, and hope. As for Esmè, we have seen what her sad history was, during the section of time which, for the purposes of our narrative, may be considered to have terminated with the opening of Parliament. At that time there was for each, in a certain sense, a new point of departure. For, about that time, the Germistounes returned to London, and, while Cosmo took his seat in the House and inaugurated a career which he hoped might lead him to Esmè, she, under the pilotage of Lady Octopa, was embarked on a new course which was intended, effectually and finally, to separate her from Cosmo. Henceforth, indeed, life had more alleviations for both; but Cosmo had still the best of it. The man usually has, in such cases. Working is better than weeping; and while the woman, as a rule, has to drift, at the mercy of the chapter of accidents, or of the caprice or authority of others, powerless to shape her own course, the man can swim, it may be, against a current so strong as, for the moment, to make progress imperceptible, but still with the great consolation of a conscious exercise of will and effort to reach the point aspired at. Cosmo, then, with his definite work tending in some degree at least in that direction, had the best of it.

But life in the vortex of society—that kaleidoscopic life, with

—forces distraction on the saddest heart, and Esmè, not sadder than she had been in Italy, had here the distraction which was lacking there.

The weeks rolled on; the antepaschal season was in such full swing as Lent permits. Cosmo's voice had not yet been heard in the House. Searching constantly in the Parliamentary reports, Esmè only found his name in the division lists, or, now and then, in connection with a petition embodying some parochial aspiration on the part of Puffboro. On the other hand, Lady Octopa had scored no success; for though Lord Ribston was by this time off in his yacht, to avenge, on the bodies of bears and arctic sea-fowl, the prompt refusal with which Esmè had met an early proposal from him, her ladyship could not credit herself with the finish of an affair in which she had not started.

Esmè and Cosmo had never met. Each had had a fleeting glimpse of the other, when the other was unaware; but they had not met eye to eye. Esmè longed, yet feared, to meet him —longed to hear his voice again, even though his words should not be for her; yet feared a *rencontre* in society, not knowing how she might control herself, or be able to support the stranger's part which she must play. If they met in the streets even, she did not know what she should do. Might she bow? She was pledged not to communicate with him, and it was a nice question whether to bow were "to communicate." It is pretty obvious how love's casuistry would have settled this question, had the opportunity occurred; but the opportunity did not occur. Nor was it strange, for, in all the world, there is no place where two people are less likely to meet than in London, when it is the object of one to avoid a meeting. And this was Cosmo's object. He foresaw many evil results for them both, and even for their eventual hopes, should there be a risk of their meeting, even if only occasionally, in society; and so, though his longing was great, to the full, as hers, he exercised stern self-control, and excused himself from all such engagements as seemed likely to lead to it.

Esmè's longing to see him grew and grew: even to hear him spoken about would be something; and to hear him spoken about in connection with some hopeful achievement would be the best of all. But this was denied her; she began to feel that they might as well be the inhabitants of separate planets: and, even in the whirl which her chaperon concocted for her, there were times when she could not struggle with utter despondency. It was during one of these sad crises that Lady Octopa, having a

nephew with a military grievance which was to be incidentally ventilated, by some one, during the discussion on the Army Estimates, proposed to take Esmè to the House of Commons, one evening; and Esmè, thinking that she might thus have a chance of seeing Cosmo, unseen herself, and with no violation of her compact, eagerly assented; and they went.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

They were well placed in the gallery; and as the House had not yet gone into committee, the benches were still pretty empty. Esmè, who had never been there before, watched the gradual entrance of the members with interest. She was surveying the *ensemble* of the House, with that sense of disappointment which usually accompanies a first visit to the greatest legislative assembly in the world—thinking, indeed, that it was the most "extraordinary-ordinary" looking assemblage she had ever seen—when her view changed in an instant, and a glory came over the whole place, as Cosmo entered. He looked pale and fatigued, but his handsome face did not lose in interest by that; and his air was as full of spirit and dignity as of old. He entered alone, and Lady Octopa remarked him.

"Do you know who he is?" she inquired, turning to Esmè, whose heart was beating very quick.

"Yes," she said, with an effort. "Mr Glencairn."

"Oh, yes! one of the new members. I forget what he sits for. Ah! he goes to the right side, at all events. I thought he would. He is very good-looking. Do you know him?"

"Yes—no. We met him abroad, and—and in the Highlands."

"There is really something most distinguished and interesting in his appearance—very much so, indeed!" said Lady Octopa (who had an eye for a handsome man), as she inspected the young member through her glass. "Is he rich? is he a *parti? Who* is he?" she continued.

"I believe he is rich," faltered Esmè, "but I cannot give you any particulars about him;" and then she went on hurriedly to inquire who was "that very fat man—just come in—with his hands in his pockets?"

"Oh! *I* should be sorry to know; probably one of the trades-

union members. He looks quite the rattener. An odious wretch! But," turning her eyes again to Cosmo, "what a delightful creature, Mr — what is his name! Ah, yes! Mr Glencairn—looks! I declare I am *quite* smitten. We must find out all about *him*."

It was sweet to Esmè to hear her lover appreciated, for once; but it was not unmingled sweetness; for her ladyship's appreciation was embarrassing for the moment, and her researches might lead to awkward results. Lord Germistoune, in informing her that there had been "a foolish entanglement" in the country, had not, of course, divulged the name of the entangler.

Business went sleepily on, for a time; a good many questions were asked and answered or evaded, displaying the usual amount of droll antithesis in their subjects, and at last the House went into supply on the Army Estimates.

The Secretary for War made his statement, in the tone of mingled jubilation, apology, and recrimination, which has been sometimes known to characterise such deliverances.

He must admit, he said, that the estimates were large, but they showed no material advance on the estimates of right honourable gentlemen opposite; indeed, any trifling advance there might be, was entirely due to the action of these right honourable gentlemen, when in office.

The army estimates must always be large in this country; but he ventured to assert that this country would never grudge them, provided they secured an efficiency in the service which he was prepared to show that it at present displayed.

He would admit that, for the moment, there was a certain difficulty in obtaining recruits; but, if trade entered on the period of depression which was confidently anticipated, that difficulty, they might hope, would disappear—and the difficulty was in no respect greater than it had been during the administration of right honourable gentlemen opposite, and the army was notoriously held in an esteem by the nation which it had not enjoyed under them. The quality of our soldiers was much canvassed; but he could not admit that the harsh view occasionally taken of them was just. They were young—that was true; perhaps too young—that was a matter of opinion; but that was a fault which tended to correct itself from the nature of things; and, in any case, the average of the army, in this respect, was as high as it had been when right honourable gentlemen opposite held power.

As for the *physique* of the troops, an American general, whom he had met, last week, at a Guildhall banquet, told him that he

had recently lunched with the general commanding at Aldershot, and afterwards inspected the division there, when the impression he carried away was, that the Aldershot soldier was *twice* the size of the American soldier. Now, making every allowance for the national propensity of Americans to underrate what belonged to themselves, he thought the committee would find, in the opinion of this eminent authority, a satisfactory answer to strictures which had been passed upon the *physique* of our troops. Of course, it might be better—he was not going to deny that—but the improved conditions of agricultural life impeded recruiting in rural districts, and to some extent forced us rather to depend upon the urban population, which was, perhaps, more remarkable for mental activity than great bodily vigour. After all, a robust body was not everything; but, be that as it might, he was glad to believe that, under the control of right honourable gentlemen opposite, the *physique* of the army had been very much beneath its present standard.

With regard to desertion, they had certainly to deplore a rather high figure. Still, it might be worse; and he expected much from the abolition of the infamous practice of branding, by which the deserter had formerly been identified. That abolition was a distinct challenge to the chivalrous nature of British soldiers, which, when they had had time to understand it, they would not be slow to answer, by remaining true to the colours, in enhanced numbers. An honourable gentleman said "Oh!" but he, for one, was proud to express his entire confidence in the chivalrous nature of the British soldier. Well, now, too much was made of this desertion, which evidenced youthful levity and impatience of restraint, rather than a disloyalty which would display itself before the enemy. What he said was, "Bring them before the enemy, and then there would be no desertion." It was all very well for honourable members opposite to cry "Find them first!" but, twenty years ago, the proportion of deserters was nearly as high as at present, and it would be in the recollection of the committee that, at that time, right honourable gentlemen opposite were the advisers of her Majesty.

Our reserve was steadily increasing, and our prospects were altogether hopeful, in that respect. It had swelled this year by the respectable increment of 370 men, and he called that hopeful. At the close of the century it would amount to no less than 50,000 men, which he ventured to think was considerable. An honourable and gallant gentleman laughed, but he would tell him that if he thought that result tardy and unsatisfactory,

he for one did not agree with him. If it were so, however, who, he should like to know, was to blame? Why, who but honourable and gallant gentlemen—members of this House—who systematically impeded military reform, and who, he felt bound to say, as a rule, supported the policy of right honourable gentlemen opposite.

And so the right honourable gentleman went on, in a strain which some members, still sitting in the House, may remember to have been not unusual, making the best of a bad business, asserting that it was not bad, or if bad, better, or at least not worse, than it had been under the sway of political opponents, and painting the future in glowing colours. The impression sought, and with some success, to be left upon a House—which had no sort of wish to face disagreeable truths, and deal frankly with a difficult but vital question—being, that things were jogging on very well,—a little expensively, but still very well; and that, if there were any defects in the working of the system, these were due to the immense load of difficulties bequeathed, by right honourable gentlemen opposite, to the existing admin istration, who could not have coped with them at all, but for the extraordinary energy and acumen which they possessed. Codling, in fact, was the friend—not Short.

There was, we may be sure, plenty of loud cheering when the right honourable gentleman sat down, smiling, and awaited the criticism of honourable, and gallant, and other, porcupines opposite. These were to the front, as in duty bound, and the committee were favoured with a considerable diversity of military speculation, theory, argument, anecdote, and sarcasm; notable among which were an elaborate attack upon the existing tactical unit, delivered by a stockbroker, and the remark by an Irish major, that he thoroughly endorsed the right honourable gentleman's statement as to the great esteem in which the army was now held by the nation; as a striking proof of which, he begged to adduce the case of a man whose martial zeal had recently induced him to enlist in ten regiments on one day. The only pity, he added, was that the fine fellow's admiration for them all had been too impartial to let him join any one of them, so that this sort of zeal was not as profitable as could be wished; and it seemed that, though you might manufacture one man out of nine tailors, you could not be sure of getting one soldier out of ten recruits.

Cosmo sat, with his head resting on his hand, so that his face was concealed, and Esmè, beginning to feel somewhat wearied by all this prosing, sat back to rest, a little absently, so that

some portion of the House was out of her view. Presently there was a short lull in the speechifying, and then silence was broken by sounds which recalled her, with a beating heart, from her temporary reverie. Lady Octopa looked quickly round.

"Esmè," she said, "you must not sleep, my hero is going to speak."

The caution was quite unnecessary. Esmè was already sitting up, breathless, motionless, with all her eyes fixed upon *her* hero —her beloved—whose hour, she said to herself, had at last come. What music his voice had for her, as with a slight tremble in it, but with an air of modest self-possession, he entered on the terrible ordeal of a maiden speech! Apparently the House, to some extent, shared her feeling, for there was rather an unusual silence after he had completed his first sentences, in which he made a graceful apology for so early an intrusion on their attention, which he could only justify by appealing to some little practical knowledge of a profession which had been his own, and some little study and observation of the working of Continental military systems. The House, besides being affected, like other assemblies, by grace of manner and diction, and above all things, by the charm of voice, always gives a generous hearing to all beginners who do not attempt to take it by storm, and Cosmo's manly but respectful bearing, combined with these other personal advantages, procured ready applause for his apology, and bespoke favourable attention for what he had to say.

He wished, he said, to make a few comments upon the right honourable gentleman's statements with regard to recruiting and desertion. The two questions were bound together by the direct relation of cause and effect, and he impeached our present system of recruiting as essentially responsible for the enormous amount of desertion from the ranks which took place. The right honourable gentleman suggested remedial measures, but he ventured to submit that to have a healthy tree you must have a sound root. There was only one remedial measure, and that was to change the principle upon which our method of obtaining soldiers at present rested. It was no argument to say that, under the same system, our safety and renown had been upheld in former times. Times had changed, the conditions of national life had altered—notably in the greater concentration of the population in towns; and these changes, which had visibly affected the whole national character, had, unquestionably, and gravely, deteriorated both the *morale* and the *physique* of the class with whom the recruiter had mainly

to do. There was scarcely a point of resemblance between the soldier of to-day and the soldiers who fought in the Peninsular war. The desertion, alone, showed that we were dealing largely with a class morally worthless; and, physically, the men displayed, in a large degree, the imperfections of a stunted race—that was to say, of a race intended by nature to be stalwart, but whose proportions had been shrivelled by the results of artificial and unhealthy life, hereditarily transmitted. There was no stamina in such men. Our present system, then, tended to give us men morally and physically worthless—a rotten plank on which to rest the national honour and safety. But did it give us enough even of such men as we possessed? It did not. The matter stood thus:—In times of average prosperity, it was notoriously almost impossible to keep the army up to its strength. When trade was very dull a rush was made to the service. The most inferior men were, of course, the first to be thrown out of employment, and these were the men who made the rush. It seemed to follow from this, that it was only when trade languished that we could get even a numerically sufficient force to protect the interests of trade.

During the Crimean war enormous bounties had to be offered to enable us to fill gaps in our ranks with the most wretched material; and even that expedient could only be made to work by resorting to volunteering from the embodied militia, which involved the expense of a double machinery, and forced us, to some extent, to pay twice over for our soldiers. What, then, in the event of a protracted war, would be the result? Why, a radical change of system while warlike operations were in progress, when it would be effected at the greatest risk and disadvantage.

This was what the voluntary system did for us; and he could not anticipate any improvement from the introduction of a shorter term of service. When the "ten years'" act came into force, a deterioration in the class of men who enlisted was very soon visible; and we had never been able to get the same stamp of soldiers since that time. As for the reserve which might be created under a short-service system, even if the most sanguine anticipations were fulfilled, the results would still be insufficient, and afford no satisfactory compensation for the other disadvantages of the system, among which was the grave one that it would give us nothing but raw and inexperienced non-commissioned officers. At the present moment, we had practically almost nothing to fall back upon.

The voluntary system used to be held up as a subject for

national glorification. "Our soldiers are not *compelled* to be soldiers," it was said, boastfully. But the voluntary system was the reverse of glorious; it degraded the profession of arms by placing it in competition—as a matter of money—with other trades, and farther degraded it by forcing it to compete on such terms that it could only secure the *residuum* of the labour market. In his humble opinion, the voluntary system was no longer suited to the altered conditions of the country; it was only made to work at all by the splendid qualities of the officers, who were equal in all, and superior in many, respects, to the officers of any other army. Besides, the country, since it formed part of the European system, could not afford, notwithstanding its insular advantage, altogether to vary its usages from those of neighbouring nations, and certainly not where a violent variation involved national risk.

In these words, he indicated the direction in which he would seek a remedy; but he felt that he had already too long occupied the attention of the House, and he would not presume to enter upon the details of any scheme which might have occurred to him. The House, however, taken with Cosmo's manner, good voice, and fluent delivery, and perhaps a little by the unusually frank manner in which, as a "military member," he dealt with so sacred a subject, encouraged him to go on and propound his views; which he did, with much modesty, merely submitting his scheme as a sort of outline of what might contain some elements of a practicable system.

The House, he said, must be prepared to listen to a word at which the country had been carefully taught to shudder, and that was "conscription." That was the vital principle of his scheme. Briefly, the system which he would introduce would combine, with some elements of our own, some elements borrowed from the German and Swiss systems.

He would make the whole male population, theoretically, liable to military service, between the ages of nineteen and forty. This wide area of liability would afford full scope for exemptions, and the interests of the higher classes might be further studied, by recognising, in our organisation, the German "volunteer" or "one-year-man" system. With regard to the ages to be affected by the first incidence of the conscription, that question involved many complex considerations, as to population and so forth, and he would not be expected to settle it offhand; but, as a mere suggestion, he would put the ages at, between nineteen and twenty-three.

The army would be for home service, exclusively, in time

of peace; for general service in time of war, or grave national exigency.

Every conscript drawn would be sent to one of a number of training centres, and would remain there under permanent staffs of highly-skilled instructors, until a high degree of efficiency had been attained.

From each batch of trained conscripts a second selection would be made by lot. Those thus selected would be liable to three years' continuous service with the colours, in camp or garrison at home. The remainder would be dismissed to civil life, being only required to attend an annual training of ten days, and occasionally (in certain categories) certain more extended manœuvres during their period of service.

There would, no doubt, be many difficulties during the process of transition from the old to the new system, and provisional regulations would have to be made as to the incidence of the earlier conscriptions, so that it should not bear too unevenly upon the youngest men. But when the system was developed it would work automatically in distributing its pressure with perfect equitableness. The number of continuous-service-men need not, under the altered conditions, be nearly so great as that of the force now garrisoning the kingdom; and it might progressively diminish as the development of the system gave a constantly increasing *potential* army—that was to say, of soldiers not with the colours, of men engaged in all the avocations of civil life, but trained and fit for service in times of exigency; and, with regard to these men, there might be another class of categories of exemption. He then went rapidly into some of the more important details of the scheme, of which this was a rough outline, admitting, finally, that it necessarily involved a dual system, for that, in regard to India, the voluntary system must be retained,—corrected, however, by reverting to the old period of service, for which soldiers, specially engaged for that country, were enlisted; the expense of this force to fall, of course, exclusively upon the Indian Government, its depots to be associated with the territorial army at home, and its officers to be interchangeable with those of that force.

He would encourage the Colonies, in every way, to adopt an organisation similar to that of the proposed army for home service; and the only difficulty remaining would be with regard to the garrisons of Malta and Gibraltar, which might, however, be met by associating them with the Indian organisation, from which it might also be advisable to borrow for each of the con-

siderable colonies a model corps, to serve as a standard of efficiency, and a living symbol of the imperial connection. The expenses, under the latter heads, would be a matter for equitable arrangement with the Indian and Colonial Governments.

As to the comparative expense of the proposed and the present systems, they must remember that, under the former, the militia would be abolished, and the volunteers would be unnecessary, and perhaps incompatible with it; and he believed that the *direct* saving, at least, which it would effect, would be very great.

In a few sentences Cosmo thus placed his scheme before the House, and concluded as follows:—

"There may be fallacies and flaws in the principle and in the details of such a scheme; but I venture to think that it has these merits: that, with the smallest possible hardship to the individual—with the smallest possible injury to productive industry, and at a reduction of *direct* expense—it would give us a force large enough, and extensible enough, and strong enough, to place this country in a position of power and impregnability which it has never before enjoyed—not even during the period when the rest of Europe was less menacing and less aggressive, from being less armed. For it would not merely give us the advantage of adequate numbers; it would yield quality as well as quantity; it would fill the ranks of the army with the flower instead of the weeds of the population, giving us a rank and file worthy of the officers, who, as a class, possess every quality which is most nobly typical of the English race. I fear I shall be met with the cry, 'Conscription! the people will never stand that!' Change the name, then, and call it 'consecration.' Don't tell the people that they will never stand it. If you think it is right, tell them that they *must* stand it. Tell them that the men they have elected to govern them, know that it is for the country's good, and they *will* stand it, if they see you are in earnest. If you are afraid to do this—afraid of what?—afraid of compromising party interests?—afraid of responsibility? It can scarcely be anything else. Well, then, if you prefer party to patriotism, you are unfit to rule; and, as to responsibility, it is possible to reign without governing, but it is impossible to govern, if you shrink from all initiative and all control of public opinion."

The concluding apostrophe was addressed neither to one party nor to another, but generally to the Legislature. Those who sat on the same side with Cosmo, however, gave it, of course, a party signification, and cheered vociferously, though

probably the main propositions of the speech were unpalatable to the majority of the cheerers. The results, however, as far as Cosmo was concerned, were highly satisfactory, the cheers of the party being added to the cheers of those who generously recognised the merits of a new speaker, and of those who, in various parts of the House, sympathised with military reform in general, and with any assault on the existing state of things military. So that when Cosmo sat down, though he had somewhat strained the usages of the House, it was amidst strong manifestations of general applause. We have seen that, in the old period of his hesitations, he asked himself this question—

> "Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
> Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?'

And, no doubt, to the vast majority of his audience, on this occasion, the quotation would have sounded apposite; but he was fluent, musical, gentleman-like, and spoke with an air of thinking earnestly about his subject, and not about himself at all. Hence these cheers. A combination of circumstances had made his maiden speech a signal success.

"Capital! I like him!" said Lady Octopa. "He is very handsome, and seems to be so deliciously in earnest. I like him. My dear child, what is the matter?"

The cheers had been too much for poor Esmè. Her face was pale, and her eyes were full of tears. She murmured that the heat was overpowering, and that she would like to go; and Lady Octopa kindly consented to leave, with the tale of her martial kinsman's grievances unheard.

There was a considerable fuss in the papers next morning about the speech. It was approved of very warily, by a very few; it was assailed by most, from opposite points of the compass: this organ described it as despotic and arbitrary—that organ stigmatised it as democratic and revolutionary; but they nearly all agreed in the fine old imperviously-crusted objection, —it involved a principle which the country "would never stand." At the same time there was a general recognition of Cosmo's patriotic motive, and of his promise as a parliamentary speaker. It was talked about, of course, in society, too. Lady Octopa had a dinner-party the next night, and was full of it. Lady Octopa was clever, but she devoted the *fine fleur* of her brains to social intrigue. In politics she was cynically without principle, and disbelieved in any political motive, apart from party or personal considerations; but Cosmo's "escapade" delighted her by its novelty and audacity, and she was full of it.

"Instead of humdrumming in the Lords, you should have been with Esmè and me in the Commons last night, Lord Germistoune," she said to the old lord, who, with his daughter, was of the party.

"Ah, indeed!" said Lord Germistoune, who had been too gouty to read the parliamentary reports, and had not heard of the incident,—"ah, indeed! was there anything stirring there?"

Esmè, who was within earshot, turned pale.

"Oh, yes!" said her ladyship; "a young member made his maiden speech, and dashed into the middle of the Estimates, with all sorts of startling ideas to show that the money would be wasted, as long as we are what we are."

"Ha! ha! one of the new-light Radicals."

"Not at all; a Tory, a very handsome man, with the most delightful voice in the world, and a capital speaker. I quite fell in love with him. He wishes to introduce the Swiss system, or something of that sort,—only fancy! But he managed to make it sound very plausible."

"The contemptible scoundrel!"

"No, no; I tell you I am in love with him, and I cannot hear him spoken of so. I am resolved to know him, and to make him quite my *protégé;* and he is an immense *parti*, I hear. The odd thing is, I can't remember his name. Colonel —Colonel—I know he *is* a soldier——"

"Lord Alexander Overslaugh, perhaps? He is a clever youth, but has some sinister ideas."

"No, no; not Lord anything: Colonel or Major or Captain something. Oh! what *is* his name? Esmè, you can tell me; what is his name?"

"Whose name, Lady Octopa?" gasped Esmè.

"Why, the handsome member, with the fine eyes and the divine voice—last night, you know—in the House."

Esmè made no reply.

"Why, how stupid you are! The man who abused the army; said they were all stunted and immoral? Why, you *do* know him. Now I remember, you told me so."

"Mr Glencairn," muttered Esmè, with her eyes cast down.

"Of course! Mr Glencairn. Do you know him, Lord Germistoune?"

"I do *not*," said his lordship, with keen emphasis.

"Ah, well! you must come and meet him here. He belongs to the party,—a most ornamental addition to it!"

"It is always a privilege to meet any of your ladyship's

friends; but this man, who is not yet among their number, I must decline to meet."

"Lord Germistoune! Why?"

"Why? because he is a——" The old gentleman paused, recollected himself, and only said—"Any one who could venture, and from the Conservative benches, to suggest the adaptation of any republican monstrosity to our system, is a renegade, and a traitorous charlatan. As such, I should decline to meet him, even at your ladyship's table."

"Nonsense! If you heard him—if you saw him, you would be at once converted."

"I am sorry to controvert your ladyship's view; but I distinctly say 'No!'"

"How harsh! Esmè, don't you think Colonel Glencairn would make a conquest of your father, as he did of you and me?" Esmè, half fainting, turned to her next neighbour and tore him away from another conversation, and thus evaded a reply to Lady Octopa, who then let the subject drop.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A few days after Cosmo had made his *dêbut* in the House of Commons, Tom Wyedale asked him to dine with him at the "Kakodaemon." Tom had managed to bring, through the fire of *baccarat* at Rome, a fair amount of the spoil which he had taken from M. Blanc at Monte Carlo; and what with this—what with his matrimonial feint, which, besides enabling him to appease the rustier of his creditors, had yielded a reasonable little profit to himself—he was able again to enjoy what he called a "Christian-like" season in town. The dinner was a very pleasant one. The Marquis, who had run over for a Newmarket meeting, had been captured by Tom; and when Tom and the Marquis got together, there was certain to be good fun. When the dinner was over, these two quaint allies strolled up the street with Cosmo, for they were all going to "finish" at Tom's chambers. On the way, Tom suddenly recollected that he must look in at Mrs Combleton's ball—just for an instant. Mrs Combleton was a familiar cousin and ally of his own, so he could introduce the Marquis—especially as he was a foreigner; but had Cosmo an invitation? Yes, Cosmo had, but he never

went to balls now. "Nonsense!" cried Tom. "Come, just for three minutes. Three minutes of—call it boredom if you please—will give a zest to subsequent tobacco. I *must* go, because I have to arrange with the Rimmons, who are to be there, about going to the country with them to-morrow morning, for a day or two: but I promise not to keep you. Come along!" Eventually Cosmo was persuaded, and they went.

Mrs Combleton lived in one of the big houses in Grosvenor Place, which afforded ample scope for a large ball; but, on this occasion, its capabilities were strained by the number of the guests who, even more than is usual, overflowed from the dancing-room, vainly seeking space and coolness, in divers havens. In "the open," at the top of the staircase, several dowagers had secured comfortable positions for general observation, and favourable bases for operating on the supper-room at the fitting opportunity. As the three friends made their way up-stairs, one of these dames hurriedly called a neighbour's attention to them, and, as they were passing, she stopped Tom Wyedale.

"That is Mr Glencairn who is with you?" she whispered, rather eagerly.

"Yes. I understand. He has made a speech. He is being spoken about. You wish me to present him?"

"Thanks, if you will. I am in love with him."

Tom went to Cosmo. "Come," he said, "and be introduced to a lady who is in love with you." And Cosmo went, and was presented to Lady Octopa Hawker.

Her ladyship was extremely frank and gracious. "I liked your speech the other night," she said.

Cosmo was very proud to hear it; and she went on—"I don't know much about the merits of the case; but I like your style; and you really seemed to believe what you said. *Did* you *really* believe it?"

Cosmo laughed. "Naturally," he said, "or I would not have said it."

"Not naturally, at all. The more people appear to be in earnest, the less they are so, as a rule. We are all shams and humbugs!"

"Let us except ourselves."

"Well, I will except you, if you please. And you really *were* in earnest?" gazing at Cosmo as a naturalist regards a rare specimen.

"I *really* believed I was, but you begin to shake my faith."

"I was there, you know. I heard you myself."

Again Cosmo was very proud to hear it, and Lady Octopa

continued—"I was talking about your speech at dinner, this evening, to Sir Gasper Puffin. He didn't like it at all. He is a general, you know, of the old school; and he says you are a Radical, and ought not to sit with the Conservatives. You mustn't be a Radical. It won't pay, in the long-run."

"I begin to think I don't know the meaning of the word Radical, or any party designation. At present these names appear to stand in the way of any rational classification of opinion. *Apropos* of this miserable speech, I have been described as of every opposing shade of politics. What *is* a Radical, Lady Octopa?"

"Oh! a destructive—an anarchist, of course."

"Ah, well! my poor speech had very different designs. It was a humble attempt to suggest a method of self-preservation to the country; and the substitution of an orderly system for a system of happy-go-lucky."

"Perhaps, perhaps; but you mustn't be a Radical. It doesn't pay. Ah, my dear! here you are! Pray sit down, and occupy this place. I can see that that old frump Lady Anathema Towsler is steering for it."

Lady Octopa faced the ball-room door, and Cosmo's back was turned to it; so he had not observed the approach of the young lady addressed, and who had been brought up at that moment by her partner.

He turned to make way for her, and beheld Esmè. She stood with her eyes cast down. Her emotions can be understood more readily than described; and in addition to them all, was the supreme difficulty of deciding how to look, or speak, or act. The *rencontre* which she had foreseen as possible, some time or other, in London society, had occurred in the most awkward way, and found her without any prearranged line of conduct. She stood, therefore, like one transfixed, without raising her eyes. Cosmo also stood perfectly silent and motionless. The real facts of the situation escaped Lady Octopa. She fancied this was one of those cases which so often occur, when people, who have had a casual acquaintanceship at one time, meet after a long interval, and don't quite know whether the acquaintanceship is, or is not, supposed to continue.

"I think, Esmè," she said, "you and Mr Glencairn have met before?"

Esmè, without looking up, murmured some sort of assent, and bowed in the direction of Cosmo. At that moment her chaperon exclaimed, "I see Mrs Honiton going, and I must just say one word to her. Pray sit down, Esmè, and keep my

place. I shall be back in an instant," and so left them. Something else had happened to empty the rest of the sofa, and they were alone together, for the first time since, in the wild and beautiful Highland scene, they had repledged their eternal troth—

"Sealed it with kisses, watered it with tears."

Esmè sank into Lady Octopa's place, and gazed on the ground.

"Esmè, darling!"

"Oh, Cosmo, please don't speak to me! Don't make me break my promise."

"Only tell me that your love is the same!"

"I must tell papa everything I say to you."

"Are you afraid to own to him your love?"

"No, Cosmo; but you do not know what I shall have to suffer. But ah! my darling, my darling!" she murmured, looking up, "I cannot bear to see your poor pale face so sad. No, my love is not the same, but far, far stronger; it grows every day—that is the only change it can ever know. Is that enough, dearest?—is that enough?"

"It is the sweetest music I ever listened to, and——"

"So much for Mrs Honiton; she has gone on to Lady Crushley's; and I think, if you are ready, dear, we had better go on there too. I am perishing with thirst, and the champagne here is not drinkable—never is. That wretch, Mr Wyedale, said just now that 'Fortnumately' it's only gooseberry; but I want real wine. Let us go."

Thus Lady Octopa; and Cosmo took them down to their carriage; and it was well with him, and well, too, with Esmè,—for the moment, that is to say. But not so well with her next morning, when, feeling thereto in honour bound, she went resolutely to her father and related what had chanced between Cosmo and herself. Then all the storms of the autumn and of winter were reawakened. There was a terrible scene. Cosmo was denounced to Lady Octopa. Police supervision set in again, and it was very far, indeed, from being well with the poor girl.

CHAPTER L.

Some weeks later, Cosmo, on returning to his rooms, found a gentleman there, awaiting his arrival. He was old, tall, very

yellow, and very wizened; and his clear hazel eyes, made prominent by the emaciation of his face, had a look of intensity and scrutiny which seemed habitual. He was a total stranger to Cosmo; yet, when the latter entered and bowed to him, courteously, but with an air of inquiry, he did not rise from his seat.

"You are Cosmo Glencairn?" he asked.

"That is my name," said Cosmo.

"I am glad to see you. Shake hands. Excuse me for keeping my seat. I am old and ill—infernally old and infernally ill—a ruin tumbling to pieces; and there ought to be no ceremony between you and me." Cosmo shook hands with him, but not quite seeing why his visitor's dilapidation should place them on such free and easy terms, remained standing.

"Sit down!" said the old gentleman; "it fidgets me to see you standing." The man was evidently "a character," and Cosmo, feeling strongly inclined to laugh, complied.

"I am pleased with you," continued his visitor.

Cosmo bit his lip and bowed, but said nothing.

"You are good-looking; you look like breeding (which is a piece of interual evidence), and you are going to do well in the House, I hear. This is as it ought to be. I am pleased with you."

"You are very flattering, but may I ask——"

"Are you like your father?"

"Really, sir!—Well, I don't know that I am considered so; but——"

"I am glad of that; I hate your father."

"Sir, I cannot submit——"

"Yes, you can; for I will correct myself and say that I *hated* him. I mean to let bygones be bygones. If any one were to run against me, and strike me in the region of the liver, he would pulverise it."

"May I ask how that bears upon your reconciliation with my father?"

"Yes, you may. It bears upon it in this way—that when a man's organs are in this brittle state, death must be near him, and he ought, as the Bible says, to agree with his adversary quickly; particularly when that adversary ought to close his eyes. You see that?"

"Indeed I don't. I know nothing of your variance with my father—whom you don't even seem to know by sight; and how it should be his duty to close your eyes, puzzles me, I confess."

"Know nothing of our quarrel? Has he never spoken to you about me?"

"I must remind you that you have not yet done me the honour to introduce yourself."

"What do you mean?"

"Frankly, that I don't know who you are."

Considering his fragility, the old gentleman jerked himself out of his chair with great energy—

"Not know who I am? Why, you got my note warning you of this visit, didn't you?"

"No, I have not received any note."

"I sent one last night. These scoundrels at the hotel have neglected it, confound them! There's no sort of discipline in this country, confound it! Then, of course, you don't know that I am your uncle, Robert Glencairn?—*Sir* Robert Glencairn, by the by, from to-day, when they have gazetted me K.C.S.I. on retirement—a *little* late in the day, I think."

Cosmo's manner, of course, changed at once, and he offered his uncle all manner of hearty welcomes and apologies; and then the conversation was renewed on a different footing, and carried on for a long time. In the course of it Sir Robert, after stating that he had only arrived from the East the day before yesterday, described his career in India, with which he was dissatisfied. Of his brother and also of his own liver he spoke rather acrimoniously, attributing the waste of his life to their influence. If his brother would have advanced the necessary funds to enable him to take advantage of an opening in the indigo trade which had offered itself, he would have been a rich man and at home, twenty-five years ago; if his liver had only conducted itself with any sort of propriety, his period of exile would have been more useful and more endurable. "But," he added, "as I said before, I am going to let bygones be bygones with your father. As for my liver, it is honeycombed to the extent of being the merest phantom and pretence."

By-and-by he opened a subject of deeper, and, indeed, of vital interest to Cosmo; and, in speaking of it, almost all the eccentricities of his speech and manner left him.

"Has your father," he asked, "ever spoken to you about our family?"

"Only once, at my urgent request. I was, and am, eager, even desperately eager, to discover the facts of our history."

"That is right! that is excellent!—instinct of family pride—another internal proof! The subject has been, I may say, on my mind all my life. My father incessantly spoke of it, and I was taught from my infancy to believe that we were not what we appeared—nameless illegitimate nobodies—but very much

the reverse indeed. It is maddening that we should not be able to get at the truth! Did your father tell you the whole story?"

"Yes, all that he knew. I will repeat his version, and perhaps you will make any corrections or additions which it is in your power to make?"

Cosmo then went over his father's summary, and when he had done so, his uncle said that it was, in the main, correct.

"I must add, however," he said, "an important fact. Though my father was a young child when he was left an orphan, he had a distinct recollection that, on one occasion, this extraordinary parent of his—this man who has mystified us all—was in a violent passion, on account of some social slight which he had received, and, in abusing those who had slighted him, swore that, if he only chose to declare who he really was, instead of being treated with contempt, he would be at the head of the society of the place—that 'these wretches would be all crawling to him!' The phrase remained in the boy's memory, and, of course, influenced my father's belief as well as my own. There is, besides, plenty of internal evidence that we are people of lineage. You don't get features like ours, and carriage, and so forth, without blue blood; you don't get tempers like ours without it. My grandfather, my father, your father, and I myself, have all had violent autocratic tempers. How are *you*, in that respect?"

Cosmo could not repress a smile, despite the old man's earnestness, as he replied that he believed he had, at least, a pretty firm will.

"Exactly!" said his uncle. "Well, all that proves descent from a race accustomed to command, to rule, to be obeyed. I think we may be satisfied, on many grounds, that in that respect we are all right. Then, as to the legitimacy question, what evidence have we on this head? Mr Denwick, who was senior partner of my grandfather, was the only evidence; and his testimony amounts practically to nothing, *pro* or *con*. My grandmother died within a year of her arrival in India; and, as a matter of fact, Mr Denwick saw nothing of the young couple during her life, and very little of my grandfather at all. They were associated in business; but my grandfather's branch of it lay at a great distance from Calcutta, where the headquarters of the firm were. All that Mr Denwick could say about the matter really was this,—that my grandfather (who must have had his small patrimony paid him) was introduced to the firm by a gentleman of high standing in Calcutta, and who, in

answer to inquiries which were naturally made as to character, stated that the youth had quarrelled with his family on account of a love-scrape; that he had brought the girl with him to India; that he had changed his original name, and desired that it should remain unknown. No doubt, my grandfather had satisfied this gentleman as to his real name and history; for the gentleman could not otherwise have guaranteed him. But here there is neither affirmation nor contradiction of a marriage; and if old Mr Denwick took up the impression that there had been no marriage, the evidence which guided him is not apparent, and does not seem to have been stated by him. 'He never heard there had been a marriage'—that is all. The probability is that he had thought nothing of the matter till inquiries were made, after my grandfather's death. The latter died very early; and as he lived in a remote district, we may assume that there never was any close intimacy between himself and the principal of his firm. If Mr Denwick took the child (my father) under his protection, and looked after its interests, it was only what any reasonably benevolent man would have done in the case of the child of a partner, left an orphan and absolutely alone in a strange land, and who, moreover, inherited some pecuniary interest in the business. The fact is, Mr Denwick's intimate connection with our history was really subsequent to my grandfather's death; so, unless some dispute about the child's inheritance had arisen, there was no reason why the question of a marriage should have come before him at all. As a matter of fact, no dispute did, or could, arise about the trifling inheritance, which passed to the child by a very brief will, scrawled by my grandfather on a scrap of paper, when on his death-bed.

"My father's own inquiries, then, when he was nearly grown up, might first cause Mr Denwick's mind to be turned to the marriage question seriously, and then any information he had once possessed might be hazily remembered or forgotten altogether.

"My grandfather, after his last seizure, was very soon unconscious, and had little time to do or say anything. A subordinate of the firm was the only European near him. This person he directed to hand his papers and effects over to Mr Denwick, to whom he sent a message begging him to take charge of the child. He left Mr Denwick his Bible as a souvenir; and his last wanderings appear to have run, not in any way upon his wife and the marriage, but, in a pious direction, upon the necessity of studying the Holy Book and considering his child's precious interests, apart from the worldly

consideration of his small inheritance. The papers he left were stated by Mr Denwick to relate solely to the business of the firm, with the exception of the will and the certificate of my father's birth and baptism at a station of the East India Company, both of which were handed over, and are now in my possession.

"My father frequently importuned Mr Denwick, and, after him, his son, for all the papers; but they both declined to give, or even to show, them, as they related to private transactions in business. This refusal eventually led to a coolness between my father and the second Mr Denwick, who steadily repeated the same assurances to me after my father's death; and there was apparently nothing more to be made of the matter through that channel.

"At one time I advertised largely in Scotland, begging for information, from any gentleman's family, in whose records it might appear, that one of their members had disappeared about the year 1780, gone abroad, and lived, presumably, under a feigned name. Nothing, however, was forthcoming, and I have let the matter drop for a good many years, not meaning to let it drop finally, but waiting till, with the advantages of being at home and at leisure, I could prosecute the inquiry on a larger scale. I am now at home and at leisure, but unfortunately I am dying."

"You must not say that, uncle."

"I must recognise the truth; and I wish now to get your promise to prosecute the search when I am gone. You are rich, you have the instinct of family pride, you can afford to do it,—and you *will* do it?"

"Certainly; but I hope you will live to do it yourself."

"While I have any sort of vitality left I will certainly do so; and the first thing to be done is to discover the representative of the Denwicks. Do you know anything about him?"

"Intimately. Philip Denwick, the son of your guardian, is my closest friend; and, by chance, he dines with me this very night."

"You think he will not be averse to showing any of those papers, if he has them?"

"I am sure he would not; but I doubt if he has any in his possession. His father was all but ruined before his death, and Phil himself entirely so, by an unfortunate speculation. He had no house or property of any sort, when a friend was able to save him. He is now doing well; but I doubt if he has anything—even a paper—which belonged to his father."

"You will ask him, at all events. The next thing is to put the whole case into the hands of some clever investigator. I understand that such inquiries are now conducted by experts, as a profession."

"Yes, that is true."

"Well, we must start them on the business at once, and guarantee them ample funds and ample rewards."

Here the interview ended, the state of Sir Robert's liver compelling him to decline Cosmo's invitation to meet Phil at dinner.

When the matter was opened to Phil, he stated, contrary to Cosmo's expectation, that two large tin boxes, containing, he believed, a number of papers connected with Indian and other business, were in the possession of an old maiden aunt of his, to whom he had confided them (meaning to look through them some day), with a few family relics, at the time when he sold off all his father's effects, and began to lead a wandering life. The old lady lived in a remote part of the country; but the boxes were soon sent up to town, and placed in the hands of the experts to whom Sir Robert had intrusted the conduct of the inquiry.

In a week the following result was reached. The boxes contained no papers, in any way, connected with the Glencairns. The only thing concerning them, at all, was the Bible bequeathed by Cosmo's great-grandfather to Phil's grandfather. It was a plain old pocket-Bible. On the fly-leaf was written—

"To Jean G. from Norman G.,
1st June 1781,"

and, underneath, the motto—

"Search the Scriptures."

On the reverse side was a memorandum by old Mr Denwick—

"Left to me by Norman Glencairn, who died in India 1787. R. Denwick."

The investigators, of course, assumed that Jean G. was Norman Glencairn's wife; and there is, or was, much virtue, according to Scotch law, in any matrimonial declaration or implication written on a Bible, in the familiar use of the parties.

But there were two fatal defects here. If the full names had been written, it might, perhaps, have been argued, according to Scotch law, that Norman Glencairn and Jean Glencairn acknowledged each other to be man and wife, and became man and wife, by the fact of that writing in the Bible; but the mere

initials were insufficient. The second defect was, that there was nothing to show that the writing had been made in Scotland, without which it had no virtue at all.

Phil presented the Bible to Sir Robert Glencairn, and that seemed all that he was likely to make by the investigation, as far as the Denwick connection could help him. When another week had elapsed, however, the investigators reported with triumph what was, so far, a solid comfort and consolation to their clients, and this was — that having advertised a considerable reward for proofs of a marriage contracted between parties of the name of Norman Glencairn and Jean ——, in Scotland, in or about the year 1781, they had received from the session-clerk of the parish of Greyfriars, Edinburgh, an extract from the parochial register, certifying to the marriage, in that parish, of Norman Glencairn to Jean Lothian, on the 1st of June 1781, after the banns had been "cried" three times on the previous Sunday.

The legitimacy was thus established, and the Bible had been given by Norman to his wife on their wedding-day. Sir Robert was greatly elated, a load was taken off Cosmo's mind, and their hopes of further discoveries were high for a time. But alas! there the matter ended. The investigators could get no manner of clue to connect Norman Glencairn with any gentleman's or any other family; or, indeed, to trace his history, for a single day, beyond the day of his marriage. It appeared, therefore, that his descendants must console themselves for the shortness of their pedigree by its cleanness, in so far as was known of it.

The matter continued formally in the hands of the investigators, but rather because Sir Robert was unwilling finally to surrender a hope which had become with him an *idée fixe*, than because they held out any anticipations of success.

The disappointment affected the old man's already shattered health very injuriously; his vitality ebbed away; his interest grew languid even in a possible discovery, as in all the concerns of this world; and his days were evidently numbered.

CHAPTER LI.

One afternoon towards the close of the session, Cosmo was just leaving his rooms to go down to the House, when he encountered Phil Denwick at the door.

"Ah, Phil!" he cried, "well met. You'll walk with me, won't you?" then added, with a start, as he looked into his friend's face, which was strangely pale and disturbed, "Good heavens! what's the matter?"

"Come back—come into your rooms, Cosmo, and I'll tell you." So they went back.

"Now Phil," cried Cosmo, "out with it!"

"Poor Cosmo! poor Cosmo!" groaned Phil.

"Something has happened to me, then?"

"My best friend! my kindest friend! Poor Cosmo!"

"Hang it, Phil! give me the facts first, and the sentiments afterwards."

"Ruined! smashed! swindled!"

"Who is? I?"

"Everybody."

"That's pretty comprehensive; but please explain."

"Hopper has absconded."

"Absconded? Hopper? Impossible!"

"Yes; ruined the Company first, and then bolted: left nothing behind him but mountains of iron."

"I'm glad to hear he has left behind anything so substantial; but has he taken much money?"

"Not a farthing."

"Why on earth has he absconded, then?"

"There was no money to take."

"That sounds a strange reason."

"Not at all; there are liabilities to meet which amount to more than three-quarters of a million, and there's little or nothing to meet them with. That's why he bolted."

"But where *is* the money?"

"All buried in this iron."

"Well, but if the iron is there, why he should have absconded is still a mystery."

"Not at all; iron isn't money, and now it isn't even money's worth. It's a drug in the market—unsaleable. We're all ruined and done for. Hopper has been a maniac. He has bought up iron enough to build a metropolis with. To do this he has used all our money and borrowed enormously; and now we have to repay his borrowings—that is to say, to pay for the iron at a price which is thirty, forty, or fifty per cent above its present value—and only its nominal value, for there is no market for it and practically no price. Do you understand now?"

"To a certain extent. What object could he have if it was not plunder?"

"Oh, to make a grand *coup* for the Company. He is ambitious and speculative, and thought he saw his way. I'll show you what he says, in a moment. We had the quarterly meeting to-day. We met, thinking no evil. Hopper hadn't put in an appearance at the office in the forenoon; but a letter addressed in his writing had come for the chairman, and we supposed it would explain his absence. It did explain it, very completely. I took a copy of the letter, and here it is. Read it."

Cosmo took it and read as follows:—

"LONDON, *July* 18—.

"SIR,—With a hand which trembles so that I can hardly guide the pen, I write this—a confession not of guilt, but of misfortune. Operations of mine, dictated by the purest zeal, but thwarted by circumstances beyond my control, have, I fear, fatally compromised the interests of the Company; and my feelings will not permit me, at present, to face its representatives. I am retiring, therefore, into a, so to speak, temporary seclusion; but a full explanation of the Company's unfortunate position and the causes which have produced it, will be found in my desk (key enclosed).

"From it you will perceive that the Company will have, within a few days, to face a demand for over £700,000. All the debentures issued by the Company are under notice, and fall due immediately, and many acceptances, which cannot be renewed, will come to maturity at the same time; there being, to my regret, no appreciable provision to meet them.

"The honesty of my intentions will, however, be obvious to the Company, when they find that the moneys covered by the debentures and bills are fully represented by iron in their possession; and, even in the moment of their affliction, they will probably find a gloomy satisfaction in the feeling that they are the largest holders of this metal in the world!

"In securing this splendid holding, I believed that I was making the fortune of the Company. I confess that I made the operations on my own responsibility; but, if I blinded the Board, and, so to speak, managed individual directors, I justified this by the consideration that, from lack of courage, they might lose a golden opportunity. All mortals are liable to error, and error induced by noble motives is worthy of generous sympathy rather than of austere blame. It is from this point of view that the Company will, I feel confident, regard my proceedings.

"As to the measures which ought to be adopted in view of the impending demands the Board will excuse me from offering

any suggestions. On this point I have already racked my brain to no purpose; and I now prefer to pass the painful subject by in a respectful silence. I would venture to make one appeal on behalf of my honoured friend the guarantor. I trust that that blameless gentleman may not be compelled to bear the loss too exclusively. I would say to the Company, 'Remember, gentlemen, that you are Christians, and, being strong, be merciful.'—Your afflicted humble servant,

"PETER HOPPER.

"The Chairman,
A. Glencairn & Co., Ld."

"I scarcely know," said Cosmo, whose face was now sufficiently grave, "what the full bearing of this is."

"We very soon discovered *that*," said Phil, who then gave him a rapid *résumé* of Hopper's statement, which, with a few necessary explanations, we will, as briefly as possible, retail.

For a considerable time prior to these events, the commercial atmosphere had been darkening everywhere. Wars, and warlike rumours, national repudiations and insolvencies—these, with many other influences, had taken all vitality from the trade of the world. Great Britain had suffered above other countries, and in no department was the depression so severe as in her iron trade. The Glencairn Company had commenced its career when the antecedent wave of prosperity was at its height; but the wave turned over shortly after its inauguration; the Company's profits had continuously diminished; and Mr Glencairn, its guarantor, had been obliged largely to supplement the last dividend, so as to bring it up to the minimum which he had guaranteed. Mr Hopper—the managing director—had great ascendancy over the ordinary directors, most of whom, including the chairman, were simply country gentlemen, and none of whom were, in any true sense, men of business. Mr Glencairn's confidence in the manager contributed to the ascendancy of the latter, and relieved him of the interference of Mr Glencairn himself, who was, in little more than name, a member of the Board. Mr Hopper, who was thus in a position of power, was, unfortunately, speculative, sanguine, and adroit. The decline in trade he regarded as a temporary check, which suggested to him not retrenchment but expansion: he saw in it an opportunity of securing a grand, if deferred, increase of profitable business, by assuming the relinquished operations of other firms; and for this purpose he induced the Company to provide ways and means, by issuing debentures for £300,000.

At the same time, it unhappily occurred to him that an immense holding of the manufactured article, secured at the present depreciated rates, would give the Company a very powerful position when the demand revived. He therefore invested the whole of the debenture money in iron, and further increased his operations by means of the Company's acceptances, till his holding touched the value of three-quarters of a million. The money was at his disposal in this way—that, though his cheques required the countersign of two directors, he could always *choose* his directors, and mystify them as to the destination of the funds; and, acting similarly with regard to the acceptances, he thus, and by other stratagems, contrived that the Company should know nothing of the great transactions in which they were involved.

But Mr Hopper had bought too soon. Prices continued to fall alarmingly, and did not touch their lowest point till long after his last purchases had been made. Just at this time most of the debentures (under notice), and all the acceptances, were about to fall due; and, in a word, Mr Hopper found the Company confronted with an imminent demand for £750,000, there being nothing to meet it with but the unsaleable stock of iron, of which, in the regular way of business, they had, besides, a considerable accumulation. He exhausted every expedient, but in vain; and on the eve of a general meeting, when the explosion of his schemes was due within ten days, he disappeared. Such was the history which Phil communicated to Cosmo.

"I still," said the latter, "do not fully comprehend what effect all this will have upon the shareholders, and what it will mean for my father."

"It means, first of all—which affects me most of all—that your goodness to me has probably cost you £25,000. O Cosmo! why did you not leave me to drift and starve? I am one of those wretches who bring ill-luck to every one. I should never have let you do what you did."

"That was my affair, Phil; and in the same circumstances I would do it over again. Don't distress yourself about that. I have more than enough of money without it—both for you and myself."

"But twenty-five thousand pounds!"

"Never mind the figure; I tell you it won't break me. But how can it all be lost?"

"Well, the Company must stop payment unless your father can meet a demand for perhaps half a million in something more than a week."

"My father?"

"Yes; he is the guarantor, you know."

"I should think it is impossible that he can produce such a sum at such notice."

"Of course it is. Well, then, the Company will stop payment. Its other liabilities will bring up other creditors, and there is nothing to satisfy them with but the stock of iron which cost this fabulous sum, but which is now almost valueless——"

"Well, go on, Phil."

"Well, the Company will be put into liquidation, and its assets will be realised. Its assets will consist of the stock, and (since the shareholders have exhausted their liability) your father's whole fortune. That, Cosmo, is the sad way in which matters stand."

Cosmo sat down in sadness and bewilderment, and was silent for a time.

"I fear," he said at last, "this will utterly ruin my father. I have no idea what his fortune is; but I have reason to know that he has suffered great losses on the Continent lately, and, with £350,000 already locked up in the shares of this Company, if he can meet this immense demand at all, it will probably take his last available farthing to do so. My poor father! After his long life of work and anxiety to be beggared in this way! It is too cruel! Of course he will move heaven and earth to prevent the stoppage of payment, and if that madman Hopper had confessed to him a few weeks ago, he might probably have been able to do so; as it is, it appears to me hardly possible. What happened at the meeting? How did they take it?"

"Take it! You never saw men in such a state. The chairman is only a sort of lay-figure, and had no control. Every one talked at the same time, and in the most violent language, but no one made any calm suggestions. There was an unreasonable disposition to attack your father. I am sorry to say Lord Germistoune used such expressions about him, that I was obliged to protest, and we had a regular passage of arms. Eventually the meeting was adjourned till to-morrow, so that your father might be present; and the only sort of conclusion which seemed to be arrived at was, to press him to the uttermost."

The two friends sat in long and melancholy discourse, which only ended in the conviction, that for each there was a certain

grave calamity, which to-morrow's revelations could scarcely show to be lighter, and might probably prove to be still more disastrous.

CHAPTER LII.

The meeting took place at two o'clock on the following afternoon, and, before that time, some forty or fifty persons had assembled in the Company's Board-room. In addition to his indirect holding in the Company, Cosmo had taken shares, in his own name, to a moderate amount, and he was present with the other shareholders. He had gone early, hoping to see his father before the proceedings commenced; but at ten minutes past two, when the chairman had taken the chair, Mr Glencairn had not arrived.

The chairman was nervous and fussy. "I think," he said, "that until the arrival of Mr Glencairn, upon whom our action mainly depends, it will be useless to open the business of the meeting. I do not anticipate that he will keep us long waiting."

Hereupon Lord Germistoune rose and said, "I desire to place upon record the distinct expression of my surprise, and, I may add, indignation, at the treatment to which Mr Glencairn is subjecting this Company. That gentleman, who is, at least, indirectly responsible for our painful position, has the discourtesy to keep a meeting waiting which, in my opinion, is entitled to expect a very different attitude on his part,—one of becoming humility, of an eagerness to explain, to——"

At that moment Mr Glencairn entered, erect and determined as usual, but with traces of anxiety and fatigue in his strong face. He bowed to the chairman, and took a seat opposite to Lord Germistoune, who continued on his feet, and went on:—

"Since the gentleman has arrived, it is unnecessary for me to do more than repeat, in his presence, that his conduct, in keeping this meeting waiting, is, in my opinion, a scandalous act of discourtesy. His position ought to dictate an attitude of humility and deference to the Company."

He sat down, and Mr Glencairn at once rose, displaying the same autocratic bearing as his assailant, made more effective, however, by the contemptuous curtness of his reply.

"I am sorry," he said, "that the meeting has been put to

inconvenience. The explanation is simple. My train was delayed. I will only add that, in his remarks, the noble lord, either wilfully or from stupidity, misrepresents what he calls my 'position.'"

Lord Germistoune sprang to his feet. "Mr Chairman," he said, "if wilful misrepresentation is to be imputed——"

"I will retract that expression," said Mr Glencairn, surveying the angry peer with a look of sovereign contempt. "I cheerfully admit that I should have said misrepresentation from stupidity, without an alternative. I now move that we at once proceed to business."

The chairman then recapitulated the transactions of Mr Hopper, read over his statement, announced that vouchers proved the existence of the full amount of iron, but that the impending demands on them amounted to £750,000. The question, he said, was, how these liabilities were to be met. To him it appeared that the Company was almost without available resources. With an immense stock, it was practically insolvent. He sat down, looking at Mr Glencairn, upon whom all other eyes were hungrily fixed. Before that gentleman had time to speak, however, Lord Germistoune was again upon his feet.

"There is," he said, "but one obvious resource. Mr Glencairn has had the impertinence to apply the word 'stupid' to *me*. I would tell him, however, that I am sufficiently acute to know that for all these liabilities *he* is liable; and that he is also now bound to refund to us the price of our shares—in a word, to take back his precious concern into his own hands, and restore to us the money which we were deluded enough to give him for it. I can assure him that we will submit to nothing less. Neither browbeating nor evasion will avail with this meeting. We will have no bogglings. Any attempt to boggle will be summarily repressed. Let him now declare how he proposes to relieve us; and let me again counsel him to employ a tone in keeping with his position."

Mr Glencairn then rose and said, "The noble lord's wordiness will, I think, be seen to justify my use of the epithet which he resents. Our business is, however, too grave to be impeded by such contemptible chattering. The matter stands briefly thus, and my position is this: I am the guarantor of the Company—guaranteeing an annual dividend of nine per cent. On my failure to fulfil this guarantee, the shareholders are entitled to repudiate their contract with me, and to throw the business back upon my hands. That condition has not, as yet, arisen. I have fulfilled the guarantee, to my loss. Up to this time,

then, the shareholders are not entitled to repudiate. To proceed. I admit my liability for the demands against the Company. If I meet them, our contract holds good. If I fail to do so, the shareholders will then, for the first time, be entitled to claim restitution of their purchase-money.

"By that time, however, the Company will be bankrupt (the liability of the shareholders being exhausted), and so shall I. My estate will be in liquidation, and the claims of individual shareholders upon it will be secondary to those which it will have to meet, on behalf of the Company, as a corporation. My assets, and those of the Company, could only now be realised at a ruinous sacrifice; and the chances are, that the shareholders would recover but a very small portion of their money. From this it appears, then, that you cannot at present legally repudiate, and that your true policy is to prevent repudiation from becoming legal, under circumstances which would be detrimental to yourselves.

"Let us say that we have to meet, in ten days hence, a claim for £750,000. By any sort of operations, with our stock of iron, and from all the other resources of the Company, it would be sanguine to expect that more than from three to four hundred thousand pounds can be thus rapidly produced; the other moiety, or say £400,000, will therefore have to be contributed by me.

"The demand is large and sudden. Three hundred and fifty thousand pounds of my capital are locked up in this Company; my other resources are distributed in home and foreign undertakings—all suffering from grievous depression. Frankly, I doubt my ability to meet this demand, though no effort of mine shall be spared. I now move our adjournment for five days; at the end of that time I shall be prepared to state what I can do, and the Company will be prepared to say what, failing me, *it* is prepared to do. I would say no more, but Lord Germistoune's strange misconception of my position compels me to point out that it is I who am the great sufferer, and by no fault of my own; that it is I who have a right to say to you—'By the neglect of your nominees—the directors—my whole fortune has been compromised and probably lost.'

"The noble lord says I was one of them. True; but how? Why, at your importunate request. You thought my name would inspire confidence, and you importuned me to remain on the Board, on the understanding that personal supervision was not to be expected from me, and that I was only to be referred to as an adviser in important matters. It is true I had confi-

dence in the manager, who had served me for thirty years faithfully, but under supervision. I did not warrant him to you as a man who required no supervision. I would warrant no man in his position as such. If the directors, who signed away all this money, had had any proper prudence or sense of responsibility, they would not have sanctioned transactions which they did not thoroughly understand. If they had referred to me as an adviser, we should not be in our present situation. Lord Germistoune will perhaps now comprehend that humility is not the attitude which can be expected from me by the Company, but a very different attitude indeed!" With these words Mr Glencairn left the meeting, over which silence prevailed for a moment, and then there burst forth a babel of wild talk, from which Cosmo escaped, and followed his father.

"My dear father," he said, warmly, "what can I say to you? what can I do to help you?"

"You need say nothing, Cosmo, and you can do nothing; for you know nothing of such matters. All that can be done must be done by myself personally—whether it will be availing or not, is another question."

"I trust you are more sanguine than your tone implies."

"Until I have seen certain bankers and brokers here, it is difficult to form an opinion."

"Shall you be long with them, do you think? When may I expect you at my rooms,—for, of course, you will stay with me?"

"Thanks; no. I must leave for Paris to-night. I shall put certain proposals before certain people here, and leave them for consideration. I shall then go to Paris with similar proposals."

"You won't be able to see my uncle, then, this time?"

"No, Cosmo. Tell him I am sorry not to do so, and sorry he is so poorly. It is impossible for me to stay, however. After all, it would be a melancholy time for our first meeting. Two old men—one threatened with death, the other with ruin! A week or two may make things better,—his health and my finance. Let us hope so. Good-bye."

CHAPTER LIII.

The succeeding week was one of deep anxiety, unhappiness, and suspense for Cosmo. In answer to several letters of inquiry,

his father maintained an obstinate silence. He was terribly hard; he did not appear to value, or even to understand, sympathy: a sworn enemy to words which could not advance the business of the moment, he neither employed nor welcomed any graceful superfluities of language. Not that he was naturally an unkindly man; but concentration was the first instinct of his nature, and circumstances had directed its operation upon the dry facts of life, and warped it away from the domain of sentiment and the emotions. Cosmo very imperfectly understood his father, and was deeply pained by his reticence. The misfortunes of the latter and the manly imperturbability of his attitude before the meeting, had called forth all his son's natural sympathy and captivated his admiration, and the "chill response of silence" with which his affectionate overtures had been met, disappointed his sensitive nature. From a practical point of view, also, his father's silence was distressing, for it prevented him from shaping his own course, in view of certain eventualities. To add to the misery of the situation, there was Lord Germistoune's unfortunate connection with the Company, and his embroilment with Mr Glencairn; so that, altogether, Cosmo was surrounded with clouds, and there was scarcely a speck of light on his horizon. Nor was it better with Esmè. By a sort of poetical equation of the burthens which true love has to bear, she had her fair share of the new distress. On the afternoon of the meeting, her father returned home in a state of positive frenzy. He loved money, and he saw much of his money in peril; he hated his adversary, and his adversary had brushed aside his assaults with contempt, and silenced him by his sturdy common-sense. Lord Germistoune did not like his wrath to boil over vaguely; he liked it to boil over so that it might scald and hurt some other person—no matter whom, no matter how innocent; and on this occasion Esmè was the victim. When he entered the drawing-room where she was sitting, the expression of his face positively alarmed her.

"Papa!" she cried, "what is the matter? you look dreadfully ill."

"It is natural that a man should look ill, when he has first been robbed, and then outrageously insulted, by a swindling thief!"

"Robbed! insulted! By whom?"

"Oh, by some scoundrels *you* are deeply interested in—these infernal Glencairns!"

Esmè's colour and voice forsook her. She could only mutter, "I don't understand."

Then the old lord, incoherent with passion, went stammering on, "That Company of theirs—blown up—a million of money—all vanished—he puts his hand into my pocket, picks it of £20,000, and then tells me I am a contemptible chatterer! And *this* is the family you wished to marry into! By heavens, it's enough to make me disown you! Mercifully, they will be ruined, though. Curse them both! The blackguards! What? Why don't you speak?"

"I have nothing to say," said Esmè, in a faint voice.

"You might, at least, have the grace to say that you are sorry."

"I am sorry if you have lost money."

"And, I hope, sorry and ashamed that you ever had any sort of connection with such a crew. The very thought of the thing is maddening."

"Your accusation," said Esmè, with a powerful effort to control her voice, "is incomprehensible; but at least I know that Mr Cosmo Glencairn has nothing to do with the Company you speak of."

"Oh! you know that, do you? Good! ha! ha!"

"Yes, I know it. He told me."

"Better and better! You never heard of a secret accomplice, I suppose? He is as great a scoundrel as his father, I make little doubt."

"I cannot listen to this. I must leave you."

And she fled from the room to tears and desolation. For her there was another volume of grief and pain—another chapter of mystery, involving the dishonour of her lover's family; not *his* dishonour—that was impossible—but apparently his ruin and his ignominious connection with tarnished men. It was all vague and dark; but it was all wretched and horrible. Was there never to be an end of trouble? Could there be yet more dregs of bitterness in the cup which Love was forcing her to drink? When Lord Germistoune had spoken as he had just done, he was really not responsible for his words. From his point of view, we must remember that there was really some ground for his *acharnement* against the Glencairns, who seemed destined to thwart him at every turn. We must also remember that he was unused to any sort of thwarting. So that his frenzy was accountable, and was the only palliation for his brutal words and cruel distortion of facts.

When he had cooled down a little, he remembered his injustice, with a certain shame and repentance, under the influence of which he went to Esmè's room. "My opinion," he said, "of the Glencairns is as low as can be; but I admit that,

in my just anger, I have used expressions which went beyond the mark. Mr Glencairn's Company has been brought to the brink of ruin by the acts of his creature, for whose acts no one can acquit him of responsibility,—and—and though no fraud is proved against him personally, his conduct has been—is—outrageous and—and culpable, in the last degree. As for his son——" he paused.

"What of his son, papa?" asked Esmè, looking her father steadily in the face.

"I believe the son to be capable of anything; but I will admit that his name was introduced by me, unnecessarily, upon this occasion."

"I do not require to be told that, papa."

"What! you are still dreaming of this fellow?"

"You wished to tell me, papa, that you had done him and his father injustice. I am very glad that you have told me so. But pray, pray, do not bring up more painful subjects. I cannot bear it; it is cruel; it is persecution!"

She threw herself down on the sofa, and hid her face: and her father, after wasting a few tempestuous words on ears that did not listen, went away in wrath and bitterness.

When the day to which the meeting had been adjourned came round, Mr Glencairn found that, in the existing stage of negotiations which were progressing in Paris, it was impossible for him to be present—which was at once announced by the chairman, who quelled a tumult which instantly arose, by stating that Mr Glencairn had addressed a letter to the shareholders which embodied all his views and proposals; and this letter, with the permission of the meeting, he now begged to read. It was dated from Paris, and ran as follows:—

"GENTLEMEN,—I regret that a maximum sum of £650,000 is all that I can hope to have at disposal for the satisfaction of claims, to the amount of £750,000, shortly coming due against the Company. The sum thus at disposal will be supplied by operations of one sort and another, with our stock of iron, which will yield no more than £250,000; and my own estate, partly by sales, partly by mortgages, will contribute (at a ruinous sacrifice) the complement of £400,000. From neither source can another farthing be extracted, in the present state of the markets. We are therefore short of our requirements by £100,000; and the shareholders must either be prepared to find that sum, or the bankruptcy of the Company, and of myself also, will be inevitable.

"In that double event, there would be a double liquidation, when many other claims would have preference to those of the shareholders; so that their loss would probably much exceed the amount which I suggest they should sacrifice, to keep the Company afloat.

"I have another alternative to propose, and it is this: that the shareholders should now dissolve their contract with me, and surrender their shares—the value of which (when the value of my large holding is deducted from the capital of the Company) is £550,000.

"With this sum, as well as with the amount of the impending claims, I should then be debited, representing a total of £1,300,000.

"To meet this debit, I should have the sum, now at my disposal, of £650,000, and a further sum of £400,000, which, I have ascertained, can be procured by mortgage of the shares,—Total, £1,050,000, leaving a deficit of £250,000. The shareholders would certainly have to endure the temporary loss of that amount; but I think it would be their safer policy to do so. It will be observed that they would, in this way, recover a large portion of their capital, at once; and I do not think that I am sanguine in believing that such an improvement in the general conditions of finance and commerce must eventually take place, as would enable me to satisfy their remaining claims, by restoring the value of securities now mortgaged on the basis of grave depreciation.

"In weighing between these alternatives, the shareholders must bear in mind three of the results involved by bankruptcy:—

"1st, The shares would cease to be negotiable securities.

"2d, All assets of the Company's and of mine would have to be summarily realised.

"3d, There could not be a moment more unfavourable than the present for that operation.

"I leave you, gentlemen, to weigh these alternatives, and beg that your decision may be telegraphed to me here.—I have the honour to be your most obedient servant,

"A. GLENCAIRN."

As soon as the chairman had concluded his reading, an hysterical tumult arose, and the angry gabble of disappointed, money-loving men.

There had been great faith in Mr Glencairn's resources; and his failure was all the more enraging that it was unexpected.

Little self-control was displayed. The few cool-headed men who essayed to speak were overpowered by cries of "Scandalous!" "An iniquity!" "A fraud!" "A plant!" "A robbery!" and so forth. The many hot-headed men, who had proposals to make, broke off in the midst of their words to join the chorus of wrath and execration.

Thus matters went on for a time, while Cosmo, white with disgust and anger, sat, hardly restrained by his own sound judgment, and by the vehement remonstrances of Phil Denwick, from avenging, in a summary way, the grosser insults heaped upon his father.

By degrees the storm somewhat abated, and there was some show of discussion carried on, still noisily, by isolated groups.

At last one calm gentleman rose, and said that he would accept Mr Glencairn's statement as made *bonâ fide;* and move that his first suggestion should be adopted,—that they should put their hands in their pockets, produce £100,000, and float the Company. But he got no farther than this, being summarily hooted down. He was followed by another calm gentleman, who said that, when you were in a bad business, the best thing to be done was to get out of it, at once and altogether, even at a loss: he proposed, therefore, that they should adopt the second alternative, which would at once give them a large portion of their money, and might probably restore it all in time. There was a good deal of confusion upon this; some of the meeting supporting the speaker's view; the great majority, however, who were obviously "irreconcilables," hooted it as they had hooted the previous motion.

Last of all rose Lord Germistoune, who evidently represented the popular sentiment, and was received with applause.

"He was not there," he said, "to discuss the *bona fides* of Mr Glencairn; that gentleman's character was a matter of indifference to him and them. He simply looked at the matter thus—by what line of action were they likely to incur the smallest loss? With regard to the first proposal, it was too preposterous to be considered by sane men, and he would pass it by. With regard to the second, he thought there was a certain effrontery in it. They were simply asked to give Mr Glencairn credit for £250,000 without any security. That was what it amounted to; and would the meeting stand that?"

The meeting shouted (here and there, with expletives) that it wouldn't; and his lordship went on.

"If they were to view it as a business proposal, it was at once audacious and puerile; if they were to regard it as an

appeal *ad misericordiam*, he would suggest that Mr Glencairn had no claim to their consideration. He was their guarantor; and, holding that capacity, he had no right to compromise the soundness of his guarantee by engaging in a hotch-potch of speculations all over the world. He thought the meeting would admit the justice of that homely expression?"

The meeting shouted that it did—that there was no sort of doubt about the hotch-potch.

"Very well, then," continued Lord Germistoune, "there could be no doubt about their attitude towards Mr Glencairn. Now that gentleman was obviously anxious to avoid the bankruptcies. That was natural. It was pleasanter to get indefinite credit for £250,000, than to have it summarily squeezed out of the pockets by the stern pressure of the law. As he had already said, he was not there to judge Mr Glencairn's *bona fides*, and he made no imputations against it; but he might venture to assert, in the abstract, that the scrutiny of a liquidator would detect capabilities in an estate, imperceptible to the—he would say, more languid—eye of an owner uncoerced. There was no doubt of it. Skilful liquidation operating firmly on Mr Glencairn's resources would produce a very different figure from this beggarly £400,000. He moved that matters be allowed to take their course, and that the bankruptcy of the Company and Mr Glencairn offered the solution most in accordance with the interests of the shareholders."

Twenty seconders sprang to their feet; a few dissentient voices were silenced; it was put to the meeting, received with boisterous acclamations, and the chairman had just said, "Lord Germistoune's motion being carried *nem. con.*——" when Cosmo rose and interrupted him.

"Before," he said, "the decision of the meeting is recorded, I desire to be heard; and when I say that I am Mr Glencairn's son, my claim to a hearing will be admitted. I am not going to follow the example set me by persons in this meeting, in the use of intemperate language, nor am I going to hold this meeting collectively responsible for the expressions of individuals in it—expressions used with reference to my father which can only be regarded as the ravings of a sordid panic.

"But now that something like sanity has been restored to the meeting, I challenge these individuals to rise and repeat these words to me, if they dare.

"In answer to Mr Glencairn's disinterested proposals, there have been shouts of 'Robbery!' and 'Fraud!' Has any one of his traducers the courage to stand up now and repeat these

words to me, his son? I will give them time to collect their courage or their common-sense."

He paused: there was a dead silence, but no one rose. Cosmo continued—

"Their common-sense saves me the trouble of refuting them. By their own silence they admit themselves to be slanderers; and I will only say that those who treat the honour of a gentleman with so much levity, can have but an indistinct idea of what the honour of a gentleman really is.

"So much for the blatant members of this meeting; but I think that with a few exceptions, Mr Glencairn has good reason to complain of the treatment which he has received from this meeting as a whole. Let me contrast his attitude with that of you, the shareholders.

"He and you are parties to a contract made for your mutual benefit; but it proves damaging to both parties. Legally, he is bound to make good the damage; and he makes the most loyal efforts to do so, without an attempt (which would be clearly justifiable) to escape or diminish his liability by pointing to your own culpable neglect which has been at the root of the whole evil. He produces a 'beggarly £400,000,' which it probably cost him a million to raise, and which it probably beggars him to produce. He makes no allusion to another £350,000 of his, sunk in the business which you have ruined. His sacrifice is not less than a million; perhaps it is half as much again; but he makes no reclamations.

"He asks you, fifty men, to *risk* among you, what *is*, by comparison, a beggarly sum—and entirely for your own benefit. His arguments all turn upon your interests. He makes no appeal for himself. He effaces himself altogether. On the other side, what is your attitude? Why, it is that of Shylock clamouring for his pound of flesh! I have heard cries of 'Robbery!' and 'Fraud!' I have heard the pressure of the liquidator suggested as a force superior to the dictates of honour. I will not characterise such conduct. He has asked for nothing, except that you should help yourselves. Neither am I here to ask for anything for him. I will not even ask you to help yourselves; nor will I propose to you a compromise of any sort. Shylock shall have full satisfaction."

Here Lord Germistoune sprang to his legs, and said—"The meeting is, no doubt, willing to make some allowance for the violence of a young man upset by his father's distressing position; but he may rest assured that rhetoric will not affect the decision of this meeting. We are resolved that matters should

take their course. What we desire is our money, and not offensive parables. There is no more to be said."

"Lord Germistoune," said Cosmo, "will pardon me for contradicting him. There is still something to be said. Had I been aware of my father's inability to meet the full demand, I would have privately offered him such assistance as I could; but I have had no private communication from him. I regret that his reticence to me compels me to make a public exhibition of what ought to have been private and confidential between father and son. I have, however, no alternative. I place all that I have got at his disposal. I find that that amounts to £225,000, all fortunately in securities which can be at once realised. That is short by £25,000 of the sum required to annihilate the unfortunate connection between him and the Company; but my own holding in the Company, direct and indirect, amounts to £30,000, so that my property is sufficient, and even leaves a little margin. In my father's name, therefore, I now renounce the contract, and tender you your money in full. And now I agree with Lord Germistoune, that there is no more to be said."

Cosmo sat down; and, at first, there was a dead silence—the silence of astonishment. Then, from a variety of motives;—certainly joy for loss escaped, possibly recognition of Cosmo's generosity—applause burst from the meeting, which clapped its hands and rose and cheered him loudly. The shouts of "Robbery!" and "Fraud!" were replaced by "Generous!" "Splendid!" "Magnanimous!" His indignation and his bitter parable were at once forgotten.

When order was restored, one gentleman after another rose to express his high sense of Cosmo's self-sacrifice. It was an ovation which only threatened to be checked when a shareholder so far suffered enthusiasm to get the better of discretion as to suggest that the meeting should not allow all the sacrifice to be on one side, and proposed that, in acknowledgment of Mr Glencairn's loyal efforts, and his son's unexampled generosity, they should be invited to accept a return of £25,000; "otherwise," said the speaker, "I fear father and son will be entirely beggared. We know that the business can only be worked at a loss."

Before the meeting had time to discredit itself by a chill response to this, Cosmo again rose and gratefully, but firmly, declined to accept the boon. "An act of the sort," he said, "to have any meaning, must be complete." And this drew forth the heartiest cheer of all. The shareholders had got every farthing of their money, and the danger of sentimental reaction had been comfortably overpassed.

When various business formalities had been completed, and when the meeting was about to break up, Lord Germistoune begged to detain them for a moment. A bitter struggle had been going on in his breast between his hatred for Cosmo, and certain embers of generous gentlemanhood which smouldered in his inner consciousness. The latter prevailed, and he rose and said—"The meeting, I think, ought not to separate without offering a formal vote of thanks to the gentleman who has relieved us from our embarrassments. Mr Cosmo Glencairn well knows that, for private reasons, his actions are not likely to be looked upon by me with a partial eye. It will therefore, perhaps, make the vote all the more acceptable to him, if I propose it, which I now do. His conduct has been distinctly that of a"—(a gulp)—"gentleman of honour and high spirit. I move that the meeting recognises this and thanks him."

The motion was carried by acclamation. Cosmo rose, and simply said, "I thank you, gentlemen, for your recognition that I have done my duty; and I thank Lord Germistoune for having, in my honour, performed a task which, I know, must have been unpalatable to him." And so it was all over.

Poor Phil, with tears in his eyes, grasped both Cosmo's hands.

"Dear Cosmo," he said, "I am proud of you. It is glorious!"

"There is nothing glorious about it, Phil. If a man will not give his all to protect his father's reputation from even the possibility of misconstruction, he is not much of a man, in my opinion. Thank God, I had the money to give!"

"But you have sacrificed *everything*."

"Except honour and duty, Phil. I can, at least, look the world boldly in the face, like your old model 'The Blacksmith.' You and I are both young and strong; we must put our shoulders to the wheel, and hope for better days."

Cosmo telegraphed very fully to his father, and in the course of the evening received this reply—a marvel of length for Mr Glencairn: "With your prospects and hopes, I was unwilling to involve you in my loss. You have made too great a sacrifice; but it shows you to be the best of sons and the best of gentlemen. I thank you. Prospects of the iron business very black, I fear. We shall both have to work hard. Take no steps till my return."

The excitement of the day had, to a certain extent, kept Cosmo up; but now all was over, and reaction set in. His father's telegram closed the sad drama; the final episode was complete, and his ruin was accomplished. Such an accumulation of calamities might well have bowed down the strongest

man, and poor Cosmo touched the verge of desperation. It seemed that all was lost. His father's long life of work and enterprise had been lived in vain. His own dreams of love were fading away; his career of honour and usefulness was arrested at the very outset. He must resign everything and commence a life of obscure toil; and was there a hope to gild it?

He did not repent of what he had done; that he had so acted was his only consolation. The world might have called his sacrifice Quixotic; but to him it was a simple and inevitable duty. He did not repent of what he had done,—but his heart wellnigh died within him. From a long and sad process of self-communion he rose to write, and when he had finished his task, he murmured sadly to himself,—"My first letter to her; and too likely to be my last!"

CHAPTER LIV.

That evening Lord Germistoune was in high good-humour. His £20,000 were safe. The Glencairns were ruined, and he felt that he himself had behaved like a Christian hero in wrenching from his grudging lips the few words in which he had acknowledged that the man he hated had done well. A larger nature would have felt some generous pain in profiting by the ruin of any enemy, and especially of one whose action had been so chivalrous. Lord Germistoune was not thus afflicted; he only felt that his own conduct in the affair had been as creditable, as its issue had been satisfactory, to his pocket. And not to his pocket only; for Cosmo was ruined now; the stepping-stone of wealth was knocked from beneath him; a pauper, and without *prestige*, forced to earn his bread in some obscure calling, he must now sink from the social orbit where contact with Esmè was possible. At last she would see reason and recognise the stern logic of facts. Yes! at last the Glencairn "scandal" was at an end. His lordship was not vile enough to rejoice in the ruin of any one simply because he hated him; but, in this case, the ruin of the man he hated, crushed an influence which was opposed to his dearest wishes and hopes.

He was full of satisfaction, and, as he and Esmè were by themselves that evening, he thought he might as well now finally close the subject with her.

Under the circumstances he was able to speak of Cosmo in a tone of moderation which surprised his daughter at first, and even gave her a little flutter of unreasonable hope, soon to be dispelled.

"You will be glad to know, Esmè," he said, "that the matter I spoke of yesterday, with perhaps some little heat, has been adjusted."

"In what way, papa?" asked Esmè, nerving herself to meet another storm.

"In a very satisfactory way; I have secured my money."

"I am very glad to hear it; and—and Mr Glencairn, then, is quite exonerated?"

"Hum! well, I don't say that; but I am bound to say that his son has behaved in a manner that was distinctly creditable to him. It surprised me, I admit; but I am always the first to own merit in cases where the ordinary run of men would allow personal feeling to blind them to its existence—ahem!"

"Yes, papa?—and——" said poor Esmè, flushing with pleasure, and anxious to hear more from her father in this happy vein.

"Yes, I repeat that, to my surprise, the young man has behaved like a gentleman, and I must add, in a very high sense of the term—ahem!"

"Yes, papa? yes?"

"I say so with the less hesitation, that it is improbable I shall require to mention his name on any future occasion."

Clouds and darkness again!

"It happened in this way," continued his lordship: "the father was unable to meet our just claims; the bankruptcy of the Company was certain, and our heavy loss was inevitable. Upon this, the son stepped in voluntarily, and most properly, and enabled his father to do what was right. Young Glencairn paid us £225,000—a large sum."

"It must have ruined him!" gasped Esmè.

"Entirely so, I apprehend; indeed I almost think he implied as much."

"And you took his money, and ruined him?—ruined this noble life, that is so full of promise! and stopped his career, which has——oh, it is too horrible! How could you, papa?—how could you?"

"You forget, my dear," said Lord Germistoune, keeping his temper like a saint, "that, in business, such considerations are excluded. What were this young man's career and promise, and so forth, to the shareholders of the Company?"

"You might have declined your share."

"Ha! ha! my interest in his career is so affectionate! You astonish me, girl! However, you may make your mind easy; he would not have accepted it. At the first whisper of a proposal to recognise his upright conduct by a return of £25,000, he peremptorily declined it, with as much proper dignity, I am bound to say, as if he had been a gentleman."

"As if he had been a gentleman! as if the very facts did not *prove* him to be a gentleman of the very highest type!"

"I meant a gentleman by birth."

"Oh, that was all!"

"Yes; and now I think it will be well to come to a complete and final understanding about this preposterous affair, which has been making a fool of you and me for months. This Mr Cosmo Glencairn was a plebeian before, and he is now also a pauper. My consent you never could have obtained, under the most favourable circumstances; and your own sense will show you that, even if I were to go mad and offer it, he would not now be in a position to take advantage of it. He is penniless; his father is practically the same, and will be bankrupt in a month, or I am much mistaken. Now, child, give up delusions. Take a rational and straightforward course,—best for yourself, and fairest to this unhappy young man, who now has to struggle with the world, and cannot afford to waste his energy on dreams; —take this course: write to him—I will even authorise you to do that, with, of course, the dignity and reserve proper to ladies in such circumstances—write to him and tell him that you see the hopeless folly of this entanglement. He knows it now himself; but he is a dreamer, and may have some high fantastic notion that he is pledged to you. Tell him that he is free; tell him there is no pledge, and that, if there ever was one, I dissolve it by my paternal authority. This will be the greatest kindness you can do him; it is the only kindness I can sanction. I *will* sanction it, however, because he has behaved well in this money matter. Do it, then, and become once again my dear and dutiful daughter." Lord Germistoune quite astonished himself by the calm and noble elevation of his tone. Such mingled dignity and common-sense! such paternal sweetness and Christian philanthropy! He felt that he was becoming angelic and too good for this sinful world. "You will do it," he resumed, "*to-night.*"

"No, papa, I will not do it."

In an instant the seraph was transformed into a raving demon. Angels have fallen before. History repeated itself.

"You will *not* do it?" he shouted, and then atoned for his unnatural calm by a tornado of violent language. "You will *not* do it?" he repeated.

"I will *never* do it! I would far sooner die!" cried Esmè, the proud blood of the Douglas at last aflame beyond control.

"Leave my sight," cried her father, "and don't venture to approach me again to-night! Go, I say! Not a word, not a look, unless you wish me to turn you out of doors!"

Esmè walked proudly from the room; and if, at that moment, Cosmo had stood by her side and said, "Come to the shelter of my love!" it is doubtful if filial duty would have said him nay.

As she went slowly up-stairs, a servant followed and gave her a letter. It was addressed in Cosmo's handwriting, and with a step magically quickened, she reached her room. In the hour of her bitterest trial, then, her lover's words had come to console her. A forbidden consolation! Forbidden? There are limits to human endurance, and these had been overpassed. She, too, was wellnigh desperate—this tender, loving soul, cast adrift in her agony, friendless, without a whisper of the sympathy which we all need, the hardest and strongest of us, in the hour of supreme affliction—cast adrift and all alone! No wonder she held the letter to her breast, and kissed it passionately, feeling, by its very contact, less alone; clasping it as the drowning cling to any waif in the horror and darkness of overwhelming seas. Hoarding her comfort, she thus stood for a long time, with the letter unread. At last, when the harvest of anticipation had been fully reaped, she opened it and read as follows:—

"I must write to you, my dearest, in spite of all prohibitions. Alas that my first letter should only have to speak of new sorrows! I need not go into details. I will simply tell you that, after my father had given, as I understand, his whole fortune to fulfil his obligations, it has been necessary for me to come forward with mine, to save him from calumny and persecution. Happily it has been in my power to do so effectually. But, dearest Esmè, it has cost me almost all I possess to do this—virtually *all;* and not merely money, for the loss of it closes my new career, and I must begin life at some lower level, far from the sphere in which you live. You know that wealth and fame appeared to me to be chiefly desirable, inasmuch as they might bring me nearer to you; and I think I could have endured to lose possession of the one and hope of the other with

equanimity, but that their loss places an immensely wider gulf between us. Nevertheless, when the choice between duty and love presented itself, how could I hesitate? If I could have done so, surely my love would not have been worth your keeping; you would have justly despised it. I seem to hear your voice assuring me of this. I write to you, darling, because it is right that you should know what has occurred directly from me, lest the surrender of my career, without apparent motive, should pain and bewilder you. It would, I suppose, be conventionally proper were I now to say that you must not, any longer, regard our betrothal as binding upon you. I cannot say so, however. I feel that to do so would be to wound and dishonour your love. Our troth was plighted 'for ever and ever.' While Time affects us, it binds our spirits together, for joy or sorrow, in hope or in despondency, in bodily separation or in union; and, in hope at least, we contemplate its perpetuation, after Time, for ever and for ever. Dearest, we have already suffered much. The future is dark. It may be God's will that we suffer much more; but faith and hope will support us, as they have done in the past. In the gloom of our night these stars are still shining, and they will shine on till the dawn comes. With our eyes fixed on them, let us wait in patience for the morning.

"What more can I say? My love can tell you nothing that you do not know already. It can ask you for nothing that you have not already given. It can promise nothing that is not included in my undying devotion. Farewell, dearest Esmè!—I am your own for ever, COSMO GLENCAIRN."

It was true that the letter told her nothing which she did not already know; it only placed before her, in calm sad words, the new aspect of their love and grief; but its influence, if not cheering, was, at least, soothing and strengthening. The steadfastness of Cosmo's tone, and the far-reaching scope which he pictured for their love, seemed, for the moment, to dwarf the dimensions of their present trials, and carried her eyes forward to a glowing future of union certain to come,—soon or late, but *certain* to come,—and then to last always, here and in those other realms where "the voice of weeping" shall not be heard. Her lover's letter bore her bravely up in that climax of her misery; but alas! such high contemplations will not, in real life, endure the strain of many a weary day. Beautiful are the Elysian plains, but far, far away; and, close beside us, there are other plains, with bloom and fragrance to touch our human sense, and fill our human hearts with longing; and suffering

human love cannot remain long content to stand on the passionless heights, and gaze upon the far horizons. "Love is of the valley." With all their fortitude and pious faith, the sufferings of these poor lovers were neither few nor small.

CHAPTER LV.

Mr Glencairn lingered in Paris, completing the transaction which had conveyed back into his own hands the wreck of his splendid business, and desperately endeavouring to discover in the locked-up remains of his fortune some symptoms that these might, by-and-by, yield a little assistance towards restoring the capabilities of the undertaking. He wrote to Cosmo that he was thinking out a scheme for him, but that it was not yet in a practical shape; and earnestly counselled him to retain his seat in the House, at all events till the end of the session. "The surest way to make ruin irretrievable is," he said, "to acknowledge it. Your retirement now, would simply be to advertise it." Cosmo's future plans thus remained in abeyance, and he had to endure an irksome suspense, instead of plunging into the abyss and sounding its lowest depths, which instinct prompts us to do when inevitable calamity is impending.

Hopper wrote, from his "so-to-speak" seclusion, several letters of grotesque but probably sincere regret for the ruin his madness had induced. He offered to Mr Glencairn his services in the working of the firm for the term of his natural life, gratuitously, or, "if he might so say, for a crust." Failing this, he was, he said, prepared, on the same terms, to become Mr Glencairn's bondsman, enumerating a vast variety of services which he would "greedily render," and which included the hewing of wood, the drawing of water, the blacking of boots, the breaking of stones, and other menial duties proverbially associated with penitence and retribution. Mr Glencairn vouchsafed no answer to any of these tempting offers.

The story of Cosmo's ruin and generosity got abroad, and meandered through Clubland in various aspects of transformation. It was filtered to the profane public through the omniscient columns of the weekly "socials" thus, and in similar parables: "History has been repeating itself! Pious Æneas has been carrying poor old Anchises off upon his shoulders

again, but he has tumbled this time under the paternal fardel, and smashed his knees. I hear he is likely to become Prime Minister to the Pijwam of Namboo, who, *on dit*, owes Anchises a pretty handsome penny."

So that society knew as much about Cosmo's misfortune as he knew himself, and was altogether ahead of him in regard to his future career; but his calm exterior and continued attendance at the House puzzled the hungrier gossips who have appetite for more than a nine days' wonder, and his reserve repelled the questions and the sympathy of all save his nearest intimates, who were very few in number. Among these, of course, by the eternal law of contrast, was Tom Wyedale, whose disinterested regrets were pointed by many personal considerations.

The moment he heard the ill news, he went down to the "Kakodæmon," and summarily borrowed £150 from Bobus Packer, who had recently been elected a member, in consideration of his half a million of money, which had been held to cancel certain social disabilities under which Bobus laboured. Thence repairing to the "Gastronomic," he similarly levied upon another *nouveau riche*, who had lately been admitted as a Gastronomer under similar conditions of generous forbearance, and with the £300 thus amassed, he betook him to Cosmo's rooms. After expressing the heartiest grief and sympathy, he proceeded to say, "It has only just occurred to me, my dear Cosmo, that I have been in your debt for more than a year. I daresay you've forgotten all about it; but at Cadenabbia, last summer, I borrowed £280 of you, and it would be monstrous in me to keep you out of it a moment longer now; so here it is for you, with many thanks and apologies."

"This is very thoughtful of you, Tom," said Cosmo. "I have not yet realised what it is to be poor; but, of course, I know I ought to take it. Still you are always in straits, and if this is too heavy a draw upon you, you can keep the money for the present."

"No, no, Cosmo," cried Tom, "I insist. Make your mind easy; the difference it will make to me is quite trifling." Which was really very true, Tom's little temporary profit on the transaction being only twenty pounds—represented by the excess of Bobus and Co.'s contributions over the sum now tendered to his friend.

"Very well, then, I'll take it. Thank you, Tom; you are a good, kind fellow," said Cosmo. And Tom really fancied he was. "Deuced hard," he thought to himself, "if I were to let a little false delicacy stand between poor Cosmo and his money.

Cosmo is more to me than many thousand Bobuses, and I was clearly bound to make some sacrifice of pride on his behalf. And, after all, if these bloated snobs are not to pay *something* for the privilege of coming among us, why admit them? What becomes of reciprocity?"

CHAPTER LVI.

During all this time, Sir Robert Glencairn had been steadily declining in health and strength, and, all this time, Cosmo had been most dutiful in his attentions, visiting him daily, and when the financial catastrophe occurred, carefully keeping the knowledge of it from his uncle, lest, in his feeble state, the intelligence should injuriously affect his health.

Mr Glencairn, however, frustrated his son's thoughtfulness. Perhaps affliction had somewhat softened the former; at all events, about ten days after the explosion, he wrote to his brother expressing regret that he had been unable to see him before he left England; fully explaining the causes which had taken him abroad, and which were still likely to detain him for some time upon the Continent, and reporting, in warm terms, Cosmo's fine act of self-sacrifice. The results of this sudden disclosure were as serious as Cosmo had feared they might be. Fiery and autocratic, Sir Robert had, at the same time, a large substratum of simplicity and affection in his nature; and his only brother's calamity caused him infinite distress. Then, though his own high spirit sympathised with Cosmo's act of devotion, it appeared to him to threaten something like the final disappointment of what had been, almost to monomania, the aspiration of his life. On the occasion of Cosmo's first visit after the disclosure, he found his uncle in an alarming state of prostration. He spoke slowly and with difficulty; all his brusque eccentricity had left him; he was pathetically subdued and gentle. He handed to Cosmo his father's letter, saying, "You will see from this that I know all." Cosmo glanced his eye over the letter, and then said: "I am grieved, uncle, that you should have had this trouble intruded upon you when you are so unwell. I concealed it from you purposely."

"You are a very good fellow, Cosmo," was the reply; "but why should I not suffer with my own kith and kin? I have

been a lonely man all my life, and, I fear, a selfish one. The end of my life is very near; during what remains of it, it is well that I should share, in all things, with my family. I have saved a little money; *that* and my pension, your father and you will share with me while I live,—not for business purposes, but for your personal wants. I have made my will, and left you my small fortune. I have settled it so that you cannot again sacrifice yourself to your generosity; not that I blame you for what you have done—God forbid I should do that! If your father is in need of money, you will, I know, give him what he requires, out of the income, just as I will do myself while I live. Ah, Cosmo, I fear all our investigations are hopeless now! Nevertheless I wish you to continue in Parliament, if possible, where, I think, you will do credit to our pedigree, short or long. Besides, something *may* yet turn up, who knows? and, in any case, and on every account, I wish you to be in a position to which you are entitled. I cannot help seeing, in your recent conduct, another strong piece of internal evidence. The money I have to leave is only about £25,000. I don't make obedience to my wish a condition of inheriting it; but, if you find it practicable, I *do* wish you to follow out a political career. Will you?"

"If it is at all practicable, uncle, I shall certainly respect your wishes, which are quite in unison with my own."

"I have a fancy," continued the old man, "that I should like to be buried in Scotland. It is, at all events, our fatherland. You will respect that wish too?"

"You are low to-day, uncle, and depressed; don't let us talk of such lugubrious subjects. I hope it will be many a day before that wish has to be considered."

"But you will remember it?"

"How can you doubt it?"

"And, if the discovery ever should be made—if the home of our race is ever identified—I should like to think that my ashes will be removed, so that they may mingle with those of our ancestors. You may think this an idle whim—the caprice of a dying man; but depend upon it, it is the instinct of long descent which prompts the wish; and you will respect it also?"

"I will, uncle," said Cosmo, wondering at the tenacity with which this fixed idea clung to the old man's brain, under all circumstances of discouragement.

"I am tired now," continued Sir Robert, "and I think I could sleep; so I will not ask you to stay longer to-day. But be sure you come to-morrow. You are a very fine fellow, and

have been a great comfort to me. Good-bye, and God bless you."

The next morning, before Cosmo was dressed, his uncle's servant came to his rooms.

"Sir Robert has had a very restless night, sir," he said, "and he is very weak this morning. The doctor desired me to say he thinks you ought to come as soon as possible. He considers that Sir Robert is sinking very fast."

Cosmo made all haste, and was soon at his uncle's chambers. The doctor met him at the bedroom door, and detained him outside for a moment. "Your uncle," he said, "has had a slight paralytic stroke; but, in his reduced condition, I can hold out no hope that he will rally from it. In fact, I fear that he will not survive the day."

"Is he conscious? Will he know me?" asked Cosmo.

"It is hard to say; but I am afraid it is certain that he will never speak to you again."

They entered the room. The poor old man lay very still; his breathing was quick but faint; one arm lay powerless by his side; his other hand twitched the bedclothes with aimless persistent restlessness, and his open eyes had that look, half vague, half solemn, of appeal or inquiry which accompanies the approach of death. He slightly moved them in the direction of those who entered, showing that he was still or again conscious. His nephew bent over him, and taking his hand, said, "Do you know me, dear uncle?" His eyes were turned upon Cosmo's with the same vague look of appeal, but he neither spoke nor made any sign.

"Can nothing be done?" asked Cosmo.

"Nothing," said the doctor. "He is without suffering; that is all the comfort I can give you; but it is unnecessary that I should remain." He felt the dying man's pulse, and added—"A very few hours more!"

Cosmo sat down by the bedside to wait for the end. All through the day his vigil lasted. His uncle was little more than a stranger to him, and his own nature was not prone to rapid expansions, so that violent grief could not be expected of him. But there was much that was touching in this lonely close of a life which the dying man had himself described as lonely—in this desolate end to aspirations which he had cherished so feverishly, but a few short weeks before; and, with this moving spectacle before him, Cosmo's heart was stirred to genuine compassion. In the long hours of solemn thought,

while his uncle's vitality ebbed gradually away, his own special calamities faded, for the time, out of sight. By degrees his mind passed to larger contemplations of the pathos of human life and the vanity of human wishes, and then rose to that higher sphere of hope whence the eye of Faith descries, for the shortness and sadness of life, a recompense on the farther side of Time—

"Where, beyond these voices, there is peace."

Thus the day passed. Towards evening Cosmo felt his uncle's hand tighten its grasp on his own, and, looking at him, saw that the expression of his eyes had changed to one of anxious meaning and intelligence; and, at the same time, he was obviously making an effort to articulate. His nephew bent down close to him; but, for some time, he could collect no sense from his murmurs, reiterated over and over again, in a faint and hollow monotone. At last he caught the word "Bible," and, looking round, saw, on the table near the bed, the old pocket Bible which Phil Denwick had given to Sir Robert. Imagining that his uncle wished him to read from it, he took it up; but again his hand was pressed, and again the dying man resumed his painful attempts to speak, and at length succeeded in audibly pronouncing the word "heirloom."

"You wish that this Bible should be preserved as an heirloom in our family?" said Cosmo, speaking with slow distinctness. The old man pressed his hand by way of assent, and Cosmo assured him that his wish should be sacred. His grasp then relaxed, he made no further effort to speak, and his eyes resumed their former vague expression. Another hour passed, and then the light faded from them, suddenly and for ever.

It was late when Cosmo returned to his own rooms that night. The events of the day had been saddening, the tension had been protracted, and he was worn out and thoroughly depressed. In this condition, when his own affairs again recurred to his thoughts, the death of his uncle appeared to bear upon his destiny with a very different significance from that which it really possessed. As a matter of fact, it clearly benefited Cosmo, by opening to him the inheritance of, at least, a modest competency. But he had not, as yet, realised what the importance of this was. He had never known poverty, and his descent into it was, as yet, only felt by anticipation, and exclusively in its relation to the disappointment of certain dearest wishes. Under these circumstances, what are called "worldly considerations" were not included in the view which he took of his

uncle's death. That event simply appeared to him to be another element in the general desolation which was closing around him —the severance of another link, frail and shadowy as it was, which connected him with the idea of a hope, now rapidly vanishing. He felt terribly alone. His heart had learned, by the experience of love, to long with intensity for sympathy and tenderness; but, upon the mountainous obstacles which already intervened between him and Esmè, another mountain had lately piled its bulk. As for his father, he was cold and self-sufficing; and even when Cosmo's heart had gone forth to him, in the hour of mutual calamity, its advances had been chilled by silence or by words of formal reciprocity.

The death of this old man, then,—of this old man whom he might have learned to love, and whose nature was far more in sympathy with his own,—simply seemed, as we have said, to add another drop to the cup of his desolate loneliness, which was already full to the brim.

Love, family ties, wealth, fame, ambition, the eager wish to stand in the fore-front of the battle for everything which makes nations great and good—over all these the dark waters of destiny seemed to pour their obliterating tide. A weariness, a sickness of life, took possession of him; he declined from the high level of Christian stoicism on which he had passed his vigil in the death-chamber. The words of inspiration brought him no comfort; only such as were darkest came to the darkened chambers of his soul, which echoed with the dreary questions of the Man of Uz, with the despairing summations of the mournful Preacher: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery? and life unto the bitter in soul?" "All the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

He had brought away his uncle's Bible—the heirloom; it lay upon the table before him, and he took it up and opened it. On the fly-leaf he beheld the motto, "Search the Scriptures," and he turned over the pages, searching in them for the key-note of some happier strain of thought. At last he lighted on a striking passage, which suggested a long train of speculation, ending in a reverie; and, in the midst of this, the Bible slipped from his absent hand and fell to the ground. It fell open, with its leaves downward, and Cosmo hastily stooped and picked it up. The leaves were deranged by the accident, and he was readjusting them when his eye was attracted by some faintish writing upon one of the central pages. With only a languid interest, he approached the light to decipher the words,

which were written on the blank side of the title-page of the New Testament. They were as follows:—

"Whereas I, the Honourable Norman Douglas, third son of Archibald, 12th Baron of Dunerlacht, have married you, Jean Lothian, on this first day of June 1781, in the parish of Greyfriars, in Edinburgh, under the name of Norman Glencairn; and whereas you have doubts and scruples whether this wedlock be true and fast, being contracted under a name assumed by me, but not registered—I do now, therefore, before God and upon this His Holy Book, formally take and acknowledge you to be my wife, under the name of Norman Douglas. This name I have abjured and renounced, and I now retake, and use, and admit it to be my name, solely for this one occasion and purpose: *videlicet*—to satisfy your conscience and scruples, and to assure you of my leal faith in all ways. To this I place my signature—NORMAN DOUGLAS or GLENCAIRN."

Underneath, the anxious wife had made assurance doubly sure by writing:—

"For the second time, this 1st June 1781, I, Jean Glencairn or Lothian, take you, Norman Glencairn, to be my husband, and now under your lawful name of Norman Douglas; and I sign my name—JEAN DOUGLAS or GLENCAIRN or LOTHIAN."

A mist came before Cosmo's eyes, and the beating of his pulses sounded in his ears like the roar of many waters or the shouting of a vast multitude. For a few seconds he was virtually unconscious; and though, when he had somewhat recovered his self-possession, he read and re-read the startling revelation, it was only after much time that he had anything but a confused sense of what it imported. At first he appeared to be watching the evolution of a romantic mystery, which in no way concerned him. The very identity of Norman Douglas with his own progenitor Norman Glencairn he could only realise with difficulty; and when that was done, he could hardly retain fixed in his conviction that he himself was transformed into Cosmo Douglas.

Then—"Douglas," "Dunerlacht," "Douglas!"—he repeated the names over and over again, with a stupefied air, as if trying to recall some association with the words which was eluding the grasp of his memory. Such a sudden and utter revolution in regard to all the leading ideas and interests of his life, might well bewilder him, and make it a matter hard to his apprehension, that he himself shared the proud lineage which Lord Germistoune had so haughtily described as placing an impassable barrier between Esmè and a suitor of obscure origin. With the minute history of the Dunerlacht family he was not familiar;

though he did remember that Lord Germistoune was also 15th Baron Dunerlacht; but in what degree of relationship he himself, as descendant of the 12th Baron, thus stood to the present representative of the family, he was not aware.

It could not, however, be remote; but, near or remote, the lineage and blood were the same. At last, from all confusions and bewilderments, this supreme fact shone before his eyes. The dawn had begun to break at last. A world of delight opened before his eyes. The grand obstacle of birth had ceased to separate him from Esmè; the contemptuous disregard to which defects of origin had exposed his own personal qualities was no longer possible. For his love there was blissful hope; for his pride, which chafed against the obliteration of individuality by a social brand, there was a sovereign balm. Hard to realise all this; hard to believe in so comprehensive a transformation: but, once grasped, it may well be imagined that, for a time, all other sublunary considerations faded out of view. A time which was of long duration; for, all night through, Cosmo paced his room, turning, again and again, from one to another of the new aspects of his life, and finding, at each recurrence, some accession of delight. It was only when the cold natural dawn stole into his chamber that a check was given to the warmth of his enthusiasm; and then, from a hundred Alnascharlike dreams, he awoke.

It was much for him to find that he was of noble birth; the distinction was dear to him from many points of view: but the cold voice of the dawn asked him, whether the discovery did, after all, remove every obstacle to his hopes? And the answer, alas! could be but this—that the removal of one disability had been anticipated by the substitution of another. A month ago he possessed the advantage of wealth cancelled by obscurity of birth, and now his faultless lineage was neutralised by poverty.

However much Lord Germistoune might recognise the abstract virtue of a pedigree, which he, of all men, could not possibly undervalue, that, by no means, involved his admission that a comparatively penniless cadet of the family could be considered a suitable match for the daughter of the chief—for the heiress of the family honours and possessions. He felt all this now; and though there was still much to be thankful for, he bitterly appreciated the irony of Fate.

Next, with a pang of shame and remorse, he remembered his uncle—all thought of whose death had been swept from his mind by the very discovery which the poor old man had longed and hoped and worked for, all his life. He remembered that

for his uncle, too, the irony of Fate was cruel—more cruel than in his own case, from the apt moment of its development and the conclusiveness of its action. Bitterly reproaching himself, he was touched by that remorseful desire to atone to the neglected dead, which often moves men to pay an instant and more reverent obedience to the last wishes of those who have gone. He recalled his uncle's last injunctions; he had expressed but two. Of these there was little fear that that which referred to the Bible would be neglected; little fear that *it* would cease to be an heirloom in the family, the charter of whose resuscitation had been drawn from its sacred guardianship.

His uncle's other wish—that he should be laid to his final rest among the ashes of his forefathers, if the place of their sepulture ever became known—he now resolved to take immediate steps to carry into effect.

To do this, it was necessary that he should, at once, apprise Lord Germistoune of the kinship between their families, which had been so strangely brought to light. Before he lay down, therefore, he wrote the following letter to his lordship—writing, as may be imagined, with a haste and agitation which excluded the consideration of minute details:—

"*25th July* 18—.

"My Lord,—I have to announce to you the death of my uncle, Sir Robert Glencairn (properly Douglas), which took place last night, at his chambers in Pall Mall, after a few weeks' illness. His death has been immediately followed by a discovery, of vital interest to me, and which cannot be altogether indifferent to you. It has transpired, beyond doubt, that our family name is Douglas, and that we are entitled to it in right of our descent from Norman Douglas, otherwise Glencairn, who was third son of Archibald, twelfth Baron Dunerlacht. The discovery is not many hours old, and I have had no time to ascertain in what exact degree of relationship it proves my late uncle to have stood to your lordship. That it must be pretty close, however, is obvious; but, even had it been very remote, I would still have ventured to trouble you with this letter. The day before his death, my uncle, who had, all his life, entertained the strongest desire to penetrate a mystery in which our origin was involved, expressed to me the wish that, should it ever be cleared up, he might, if it were possible, be interred in the burial-place of our ancestors. That wish is, of course, sacred to me; and I feel confident that so natural an aspiration will recommend itself to your lordship's sympathy, and that you will be glad, as chief of the family, to grant the sanction, and give the directions,

which will enable me to carry it into effect. To ask for this is my sole object in now writing to you. This is not the occasion to allude to other bearings of the discovery; but I cannot be wrong, I think, in expressing a hope that, whatever difference has unfortunately existed between us, your lordship will see nothing in my past conduct which can discredit my present request, by making you ashamed to recognise my kinsmanship. —I have the honour to be your lordship's obedient servant,

"COSMO DOUGLAS
(formerly GLENCAIRN)."

Cosmo then wrote a second letter to his father announcing the discovery which had been made shortly after the despatch of a previous one, in which he had reported his uncle's death. He also explained the step which he had consequently taken with regard to the funeral, and begged his father to return at once, if it were at all practicable. When his writing was finished he lay down to rest, but not before the sun had long been up.

CHAPTER LVII.

If the proverbial thunderbolt had fallen through the roof of Lord Germistoune's business-room, it could hardly have produced a more agitating effect upon the noble occupant than did the perusal of Cosmo's letter. In the former case, however, it would have been the agitation of fear; in this, it was simply wrath, but wrath intensified to such a pitch that it almost paralysed the patient. He sat glaring at the letter, livid, trembling, and speechless. We have seen him in not a few transports of the sort, but only of the sort; for this, in degree, probably surpassed any previous passion which had fired the combustible spirit of the old gentleman. "Glencairn! Glencairn! Glencairn!" were the first words he uttered, after a long interval of dumb frenzy; and then, his voice being again available, he poured forth such volleys of miscellaneous malediction as proved the perfection to which the art of cursing may be brought, if a long life is conscientiously devoted to its culture. This Glencairn family appeared to him, in his present mood, to be some emanation from the infernal regions, let loose for the express purpose of outraging and exasperating Viscount Ger-

mistoune; and a long list of their persecutions was crowned by this last supreme act of almost impious audacity. One of them had wounded his dignity by personal slight and insult, and placed large moneys of his in grievous jeopardy. The other had practised upon his daughter with diabolical arts of love, ensnared her affections, perverted her obedient spirit, and lifted his own daring eyes to an alliance with the august house of Germistoune. It might have been supposed that this would exhaust them; but no! the Glencairn pertinacity in evil and torment was a very Hydra—defeated at one point, it rose rampant at another. The attempt on his money (he put it thus) had miscarried; he had foiled the matrimonial design, at the expense of grievous personal annoyance, trouble, and anxiety; and now, here was a deliberate scheme to degrade that which was, in his eyes, most sacred of all, by boldly advancing a claim to kinsmanship! What sort of a claim? founded upon what? Why, on the ground of their descent from a blackguard waif of the family, whose debaucheries had been notorious,—a claim which might, no doubt, be made with equal justice by swarms of similar descendants, born, under hedges or in workhouses, of nameless and degraded mothers. By heavens! this was getting past all bounds of human patience! Burial too! burial among the hallowed dust of the Douglases, for the illegitimate bones of this infernal old Indian impostor! Lord Germistoune felt that it was almost a case for the police; and, at all events, that if justice had anything to do with the moral government of the universe, something must happen to these vampires before long.

Hours elapsed before he was calm enough to write in the strain of awful but judicial severity which he believed to be his *forte;* and then he indited the following response to Cosmo:—

'——, *July* 18—.

"Sir,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, announcing the death of a person whom you describe as 'Sir Robert Glencairn (properly Douglas),' and requesting that the privilege of interment in my family burying-ground may be accorded to his remains.

"It seems improbable that you should have been distraught by grief, on account of the death of the individual in question; but, either from that, or some other circumstance, I presume you to have been suffering from mental alienation at the moment when you permitted yourself to pen that monstrous effusion. On no other hypothesis can I account for it.

"It seems almost a waste of words to negative a request of the sort; but, as it is preferred in a serious tone, I pay it the compliment of a grave refusal. And, when I have done so, I have said all that is strictly necessary; but I will, nevertheless, add one or two brief observations. You have displayed, on a recent occasion, the spirit of a gentleman, which I cheerfully recognised at the time; and if the same spirit continues in some degree to actuate you, you will, I think, see the propriety of discontinuing the use of the name which you appear to have adopted,—only, let me hope, in the moment of frenzy with which I have above credited you. Admitting the possibility of your illegitimate descent from a member of my family who disgraced it and himself, let me point out that the etiquette which guides men of good feeling in your position prompts them to adopt the name, not of the male, but of the female parent or progenitor, from whom an irregular and discreditable origin is derived. The law, I believe, without recognising the *right* of persons in your position to any name at all, sanctions in some sort of way, or perhaps I should say connives at, their adoption of the female surname. I know not whether the name of 'Glencairn' were adopted on this principle; but, if that were not the name borne by your irregular progenitrix, I would suggest that you should now discard it—not for the name of Douglas, but for that of the female in question, which, if she were at any time within the pale of ecclesiastical discipline, may probably be preserved in the disciplinary records of the parish where she lived. This would be to place yourself in, at least, a *quasi* legal position. Be that as it may, persistence on your part in the assumption of the name of Douglas might possibly compel me to expose the impertinence in the public prints; and I shall do so, without fail, if it ever comes to my knowledge that you venture to impute to me the scandal of kinsmanship with yourself.—I am your obedient servant,

"GERMISTOUNE.

"*P.S.*—A more monstrous pretension was, perhaps, never before advanced."

Cosmo did not receive this notable effusion till late at night, and he answered it on the instant.

The next morning Esmè happened to reach the breakfast-room before her father made his appearance, and, while awaiting his arrival, she took up the advertisement-sheet of the 'Times,' and read in the obituary list an announcement which interested, but much perplexed her. It ran as follows:—

"At his chambers, in Pall Mall, on the —th inst., in the 65th year of his age, Sir Robert Douglas (formerly Glencairn), K.C.S.I., late Commissioner of Sirapoore, Bengal; great-grandson of Archibald, 12th Baron Dunerlacht."

When Lord Germistoune entered, Esmè, with the paper still in her hand, exclaimed, with a vivacity now unusual in her dealings with her father—

"Oh, papa, we seem to have lost a relation I never heard of before. It is very strange."

"What do you mean?"

"There is the death of a Sir Robert Douglas, formerly Glencairn, announced here."

"Is every one who chooses to call himself 'Douglas,' *necessarily* a relation of ours?"

"No; but he is described as great-grandson of Archibald, 12th Baron Dunerlacht. What does it mean, if he were not our relation?"

"Mean? It means an imposition—a swindle—a lie; that's what it means."

"But who *was* this Sir Robert Douglas in reality?"

"Ah! read his *alias*."

"Glencairn," said Esmè, utterly bewildered.

"Yes, 'Glencairn;' you have some reason to blush when you read it."

"But—but——"

"He was brother to the man who tried to fleece me of my money; he was uncle to the individual who has virtually robbed me of my daughter's loyalty and affection; he was a third scoundrel of the same accursed gang."

"This is cruelly unjust, papa."

"Be silent! What new villany have they started now? Why, a claim to kinsmanship with me—with *me!*—on the ground of an alleged illegitimate descent from a blackguard cadet of our family! And not content with that, this Mr Cosmo Glencairn completes a long series of outrages by calmly requesting me to admit my 'kinsman' (the reprobate just defunct!)—to admit him to the right of burial among the old lords of Dunerlacht! By heavens! it's enough to make the old lords get up and leave the vaults in disgust! But I daresay you'll defend it. Upon my life, I think you will! Do you? Do you dare? What? Answer me!"

"I think it is natural to wish to be buried among one's own people," said Esmè, speaking like one in sleep, and from the midst of some wild and wondrous dream. Before her father

had time to open new vials of wrath upon her, a servant entered and brought him a letter, addressed in a handwriting which caused his lordship to pause and hastily tear it open. It was Cosmo's letter, and Lord Germistoune tore it open with a sort of gluttonous desire to stimulate his ferocity with some new incentive. He was apparently disappointed. Certainly the letter, which ran as follows, did not produce this effect, but indeed a strangely different one:—

"——, *July* 18—.

"My Lord,—I do not think it would be seemly in me to protract a controversy as to the burial of my uncle, Sir Robert Douglas. I will therefore make other provisional arrangements for his interment, and I have, on that subject, no farther remarks to offer.

"As to the general tone and tenor of your letter, I feel that, though they are offensive, I am not logically entitled to resent them, since they are based on a misconception of facts so great that they are virtually not addressed to me at all, but to a non-existent person.

"Absolute proof of my legitimate descent from Norman Douglas is in my possession; and no strong asseverations will discredit it. Let me add that (failing my father's action in the matter), I shall anticipate your action as to publicity, by at once advertising my resumption of our family name—of which your lordship may be assured that I am as proud as yourself—and the advertisement will report the evidence which justifies the resumption. I shall thus place myself, not, to use your own expression, 'in a *quasi* legal position,' but in the only position tolerable to a gentleman, who considers that the fair fame of his progenitors ought to be sacred in his eyes.

"Your lordship will, of course, see in the advertisement the evidence above alluded to, but I need not say that, should you wish to examine the originals, or the certified copies from marriage registers, &c., they are open to your inspection. At the same time, any attempt on your part to discredit the legality of my resumption of the family name, will compel me, with regret, to have recourse to legal measures for redress and refutation.—I have the honour to be your lordship's obedient servant,

"Cosmo Douglas."

By the time Lord Germistoune had finished reading the above, every vestige of colour had left his face. He folded up the letter with hands that shook as if palsied, and sat down to

the breakfast-table, touching the articles about him in an absent mechanical way, while his features worked spasmodically.

His daughter was anxiously observing him, when he rose and staggered, rather than walked, towards the door. Esmè sprang up and ran to him with a cry of alarm.

"Papa! dear papa! what is wrong? let me help you—let me——"

He turned on her with a ghastly face and wild eyes, and waved her off, muttering, "Don't dare to follow me!"

CHAPTER LVIII.

A few hours after Lord Germistoune's breakfast had been disturbed by the arrival of Cosmo's letter, Tom Wyedale was leisurely enjoying the same meal at his club; and, in the intervals of gossiping with other breakfasters, he glanced at a newspaper which was conveniently propped upon the table in front of him. Presently his eye fell on the announcement of Sir Robert Glencairn's death, which had perplexed Esmè, and which now, almost as much, bewildered Tom. "Cosmo's uncle, of course," he thought to himself. "There can't have been two Sir Robert Glencairns living in the same rooms in Pall Mall; but, hang it! why 'Douglas'? and how 'great-grandson of the 12th Baron Dunerlacht'? Either poor Cosmo has, at last, gone mad, or some fiend has been playing a practical joke on him—to make yet more mischief between him and old Germistoune. Yes, that must be it. A woman, of course. It's too bad: upon my life it *is* too bad!"

When Tom had finished his breakfast he went up-stairs to the library, and attentively studied the history of the Germistoune-Dunerlacht family, in Burke's Peerage. After which he decided to go and call Cosmo's attention to the obituary notice. "He must take *some* notice of it," he said to himself; "malicious chaff of that sort ought to be jumped upon heavily."

A very few minutes brought Tom to his friend's room, and, saddening his face, discreetly, to suit the occasion, he entered. Cosmo was busily writing, but looked up and bade his visitor "good morning." "I won't stop an instant," said the latter, "if you are too much occupied."

"To tell you the truth, Tom, I am excessively busy. Perhaps you could come back, by-and-by?"

"Certainly; but I have just half-a-dozen words to say, which won't keep you an instant. Poor uncle gone, I hear?"

"Yes—poor old gentleman—the night before last."

"Premature, I suppose, to speculate about his little—a—testamentary arrangements?"

"Scarcely decent, perhaps; but I may tell you that there is no mystery about them at all."

"My dear Cosmo, I do hope Sir Robert has been loyal? Excuse the question; you know my affectionate interest."

"I don't quite understand you; but I believe my uncle has kindly left me all he had to leave, if that is what you mean."

"I am awfully glad to hear it! There is always a risk about uncles of that sort, you see. Satan is so apt to suggest a religious charity to a solitary old man when he is making his will. This is really charming: and since he *was* to die, he has timed his death so admirably!"

"Well, Tom, that is not the way I care to consider the subject. If you have nothing important to say, I fear I must ask you to let me go on with my work."

"I *have* something important to say. Have you seen that scandalous notice of his death in the papers?"

"Scandalous notice? No! Where?"

"In the 'Times.' Here it is. Look!"

"There is nothing scandalous about it. I inserted it myself."

"*My* dear Cosmo!" exclaimed Tom, searching in his friend's face for symptoms of lunacy.

"Well, it is a simple statement of facts."

"But 'Dunerlacht'? and 'Douglas'? Have I now the privilege of talking to Mr Cosmo Douglas, then?"

"Certainly."

"O Lord! this is beyond me. When did the transformation scene take place?"

"I discovered the history of our family immediately after my uncle's death."

"Well, Cosmo, my dear fellow, it can't possibly be a very creditable kind of descent. I do think you were wrong, under the circumstances, to mix the poor old man up with the name. He wouldn't have liked it."

"What *do* you mean?"

"That ought to be *my* question. Well, you must know that when I saw the newspaper notice, I took the trouble to get hold

of 'Burke' and hunt up the Dunerlacht history; and, you mustn't be angry with me for saying so, old fellow, but it really *is* impossible that you can be descended from the 12th Lord Dunerlacht."

"I know, however, that I am."

"No, no; not legitimately."

"I have the proofs in this room."

"In that case you must be—your father, at least, must be—Lord Dunerlacht. You don't claim that, do you?"

"No, I don't."

"Then you can't claim the descent at all. I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll just rush into Bobus Packer's, two doors off, and borrow his 'Burke' for a minute, and show you. His father was what Lord Germistoune calls a 'flagrant huckster,' and he is sure to have a 'Burke.' I shan't be a moment." Tom was off and back immediately, with the volume in question.

"Now, Cosmo," he cried, "here is the place; but listen, and I'll read you off a *résumé* of it, as I've been over the ground before. Listen—

"The 12th Lord had three sons—Archibald, George, and Norman. *None* of them survived him. He was succeeded by his *only* grandson, George—the only child of George, his second son. Very well; young George, the 13th Baron, died, in his youth unmarried. The title then went back to a nephew of the 12th Baron, who thus became 14th Baron, and, having received the British peerage of Germistoune, was succeeded, on his death, by Archibald, 2d Viscount Germistoune and 15th Baron Dunerlacht—our not altogether satisfactory old friend. All this is as clear as daylight; so that you see, Cosmo, there is really no one for you to descend from—no one, at least, who was married."

"I am descended from Norman."

"Who died unmarried."

"The proofs of his marriage are in this room."

"In that case your father is Lord Dunerlacht."

"Nonsense! Here, look at the proofs, and a short *résumé* of the case to connect them, which I had from my uncle's lips."

Tom carefully examined them, and presently looked up with an expression of eager astonishment. "Then,—then, by George! Cosmo, there's no error about it. These proofs seem to establish the marriage, and, the marriage being established, your father *is* the 15th Baron Dunerlacht, as certainly as I am not."

"I—I don't understand," faltered Cosmo.

"Hang it! man, take the book and use your common-sense. Read it; I should think it's the pleasantest bit of reading you

ever did in your life. I suppose there is no doubt that a man's great-grandson is his heir, rather than his grand-nephew?"

"Yes, of course, he is."

"Well, then, read, mark, and learn that your father becomes Lord Dunerlacht *vice* the Right Honourable Jupiter Tonans, who retires upon an allowance, retaining his rank as Viscount Germistoune—and his Thistle;—we must leave him his Thistle."

Cosmo examined the book, and re-examined it, and at last said, "I can scarcely credit my own eyes; but if this book is authentic—if there is no mistake——"

"How *can* there be? The facts are supplied by Lord Germistoune himself."

"Then it is—it must be, as you say; but—but what will happen?"

"The first thing that happens is that I offer you the right hand of fellowship, and hail you 'the Master of Dunerlacht!' The next thing is that old Germistoune will lie down on his back and kick and bite and struggle, with all the forms of law, to resist eviction. The next thing is that he will be evicted. The next—oh! all sorts of glorious events will happen, in a mellow future. The eye of prophecy grows clear, and I can see—among other things—about sundown, on the 12th of August, next year, two graceful, yet manly, forms, slowly descending the hills which overhang the beautiful valley of the Erlacht. They are in earnest converse. The less attractive of the two appears to plead with his handsomer companion, who at last replies, with a winning smile, 'Well, well; so be it! I'll throw them all over. Hang the duke! I'll disappoint him, and stay with you till the end of the season. I'm not the selfish beast people say.' The speaker is Thomas Wyedale, Esquire, and he addresses his friend, the Master of Dunerlacht."

"This is not the time for fooling, Tom. It is a very grave crisis for me, and there are a hundred other reasons which make a different tone suitable and necessary."

"I beg your pardon, Cosmo; I forgot that I was, to a certain extent, in the house of mourning. You must forgive me, however, for feeling jolly; I can't help it, you know: but perhaps, under the circumstances, I had better leave you?"

"I think so, Tom."

"Very well; I'll look in to-morrow, when I've sobered down a bit. At present I *must* go and laugh somewhere. When I think of the old patriarch's face—O Lord! it's too much for me. Good-bye, Cosmo!" and Tom disappeared in convulsions. He went, like an arrow from a bow, straight to the most fre-

quented of his clubs, and on thence to the many other centres of life and gossip, which boasted his membership. At each he retailed this startling novelty, this splendid material for a *cause célèbre;* and made a most dramatic story of the discovery, in which he figured as a kind of over-ruling providence, righting the wronged and casting down the wicked in the naughtiness of their hearts. It was all over the town by sunset; and, before that time, a good many people had remembered and remarked that they had always detested old Germistoune, who had no merits, except in regard to his wine and his shooting, which were quite over-handicapped by his intolerable bumptiousness.

Tom dashed in to his sister's, for just one moment, before dinner, and, without sitting down, breathlessly gave her the news, asking, as he left, "How about the foundling now?"—which cast Mrs Ravenhall into deep thought. What she *did* think about "the foundling" may perhaps be gathered from this nice little unconscious note which Cosmo received next morning:—

"Dear Mr Glencairn,—I forget who my informant was, but some one of my numerous visitors, this afternoon, mentioned incidentally that Sir Robert Glencairn, whose death was announced this morning, was your uncle; and, I trust, one little word of sympathy, from a not very old but a very sincere friend, will not be unacceptable to you. I need scarcely say that you have been *much* in my thoughts for many months past. No true woman could but have felt for the *cruel* position in which I know you to have been *so cruelly* placed; and it touches me deeply to think that another sorrow has been added to the *great grief* which you have borne so manfully. But your uncle has served his country faithfully, and gone honourably to his rest, and this reflection will support you in your bereavement. My husband sends his kind regards and condolences. He had a very high opinion of the late Sir Robert's administrative ability.—With sincere sympathy, believe me, dear Mr Glencairn, yours very truly, Lucy Ravenhall.

"*P.S.*—I observe that Sir Robert had recently assumed another name. Is it *indiscreet* to ask if this were done in consequence of succeeding to a property? In any case, it cannot be indiscreet to express a hope that, if so, you now inherit it. Dear Mr Glencairn, I *do* so hope and trust that *happy* days are yet in store for you!—L. R.

"Belgrave Square,
"Wednesday Evening."

Cosmo laid the note down with a grim smile.

"Tom," he said, "has lost no time."

CHAPTER LIX.

The agitation into which the receipt of Cosmo's letter threw Lord Germistoune was very natural. He had, of course, no suspicion that Norman Douglas had ever been married. The history of that strange being was, indeed, involved in utter obscurity; but, before Lord Germistoune's father had entered on the succession opened by the death of young George, the 13th Baron, the interval of time prescribed by law had been suffered to elapse, and during it, every effort had been made to trace the lost heir. By the time young George died, however, Norman Glencairn had himself been some years dead, and the secret of his identity with Norman Douglas, slumbered in the neglected leaves of the old pocket Bible. Thus all searches or advertisements for him, or for any child he might have left, necessarily failed to attain their object; and in due time, the law being inferentially satisfied of his death and childlessness, the succession passed to the Germistounes, to whom, after nearly two generations of undisputed possession, the possibility of disturbance was unlikely to occur. But, when a man of probity, intelligence, and position came forward and gravely asserted, not merely that Norman Douglas had been married and left descendants, but that clear evidence of these facts was in his possession, and that he himself was prepared to prove, by legal process, his legitimate descent from the individual in question, —a host of terrible possibilities, and even probabilities, rushed into the old lord's mind, and temporarily overwhelmed him. To contemplate the loss of everything that, in his eyes, made life worth having, was sufficiently horrible; but to contemplate the transfer of all he prized to the men whom, of all others, he hated, was enough to madden a quieter brain. No wonder that he staggered like a drunken man, and succumbed, for a time, to this thunderbolt from a serene sky. Suspense, however, was intolerable; and, since every document purporting to bear on the question was in possession of the claiming party, suspense must endure till their evidence had been examined and an opinion as to its validity obtained. Within a couple of hours, therefore, Lord Germistoune, having so far mastered his agitation, summoned his solicitor, and in the course of the day, that gentleman called upon Cosmo and possessed himself of all the facts of the case. Thereafter, he returned to his lordship with words of comfort and good cheer, born, in great measure, of his

haziness on the subject of Scotch marriage-law, which, in truth, *is* a hazy subject, and "a marvel to many."

"My lord, I do not think that they have the shadow of a case. *Primâ facie*, at least, it appears to me that it won't hold water at all. Make your mind easy, and take no notice of them. They will, in all probability, be better advised than to attempt a fight. In the meantime, silence is our true tactics."

Thus the lawyer delivered himself; but silence was, under the circumstances, impossible for Lord Germistoune. He wrote to Cosmo a violent, browbeating letter, pointing out that, since the claim to descent involved a claim to the family honours and estates, he might bring himself into perilous relations with the criminal law, if he attempted to establish his position upon grounds which should prove to be inauthentic, frivolous, or suspicious.

Cosmo replied, in a few temperate lines, merely stating that it was impossible so momentous a matter should be permitted to remain undecided, and that an action would be at once raised to establish his father's right to the estates and title of the Dunerlacht family.

No movement was made in the matter until after Sir Robert's funeral. Then, for the first time, Mr Glencairn, who was of a sceptical turn, came to admit, on a closer investigation of the case, that there was "something in it," and he was induced to go with Cosmo to Edinburgh, for legal advice. The case was placed into the most experienced hands, and pronounced to be "full of promise." It took a considerable time to prepare, however; for reference had to be made to India, and affidavits had to be obtained from the proper officers there, establishing the authenticity of the certificates which proved the birth and marriage of Cosmo's grandfather, as well as of the birth of his father, which had also taken place in Bengal. In this way several months elapsed—months of anxiety and suspense for Cosmo, and, in a minor degree, for his father also, but which restored the equanimity of Lord Germistoune, who was satisfied, by the apparent inaction of the claimants, that their claim had been definitively abandoned.

From this fool's paradise he was rudely awakened in the early winter, by receiving notice of an action to be at once raised before the Court of Session, by which Archibald Glencairn, or Douglas, sought to establish his title to the lands of Dunerlacht and Ferniehall, now in the wrongful possession of Viscount Germistoune.

It would not be interesting to the reader, were we to do more

than summarise the results of the various legal processes. Suffice it to say that, after a very keen contest, conducted on either side with the highest talent and skill which the Scotch Bar could produce, a decision was given unreservedly in favour of the claimant. Archibald Glencairn was pronounced to be Archibald Douglas, and the legal possessor of the estates claimed.

With regard to the family honours, the Court of Session having no jurisdiction to decide any question as to a peerage, Mr Douglas thereupon presented a petition to the Queen, setting forth that his right to the Dunerlacht peerage was inferentially affirmed by the judgment as to the Dunerlacht estates, and praying, therefore, that he might now be permitted to assume it. This petition was referred by her Majesty to the House of Lords, and by them to the Committee of Privileges. The hearing came on at the beginning of the parliamentary session, and was concluded, in one or two consecutive sittings, with a celerity as satisfactory as it is unusual.

Lord Germistoune had unbounded faith in the wisdom of the Peers, and he had no doubt that their decision would be in his favour; and, since this would involve the eventual reduction of the Scotch Court's finding as to the estates, he confidently looked forward to his full restoration to the *status quo ante*.

The Peers, however, disappointed his lordship's anticipations. They decided unanimously that Archibald Douglas, the petitioner, was the 15th Baron Dunerlacht, and lord of the lands of Dunerlacht and Ferniehall.

So that Archibald Douglas, the opponent, was the second Viscount Germistoune, the squire of a moderate estate in Wales —and nothing more.

CHAPTER LX.

The new Lord Dunerlacht and his son passed the evening together, on the day when the final decision was given. The former bore his honours not meekly—for he did nothing meekly —but with profound indifference. A title was valueless, in his eyes; for though, theoretically, it altered his social position, practically, it could not much affect a man who had always avoided society, and who had no intention of permitting his

way of life to be disturbed, because other people might now think more of him, and desire his acquaintance.

Then—with regard to the pecuniary succession—the fortune was, indeed, large, for the rental of the Scotch estates turned out to be considerably over thirty thousand a-year; but, large as this fortune was, it produced no agitating effects on a man accustomed to vast financial operations, and to the ups and downs of financial life. It represented a grand capital, to be sure, but *unavailable* capital, for the entail stood between the family estates and speculation; and this, at a time when available capital was his chief desideratum, appeared to him to neutralise, in a great degree, the value of his new acquisition.

Cosmo, on the other hand, having believed the decision in their favour to be a foregone conclusion, had long ago familiarised himself by anticipation with his new position; and two thoughts almost exclusively occupied him to-night. One was, that her father's deposition could not but be distressing to Esmè; and the other concerned the bearing which the change of circumstances might have upon his hopes of eventually winning her.

Engrossed, therefore, with very different trains of thought, father and son passed the evening without much conversation. Towards its close, the former broke a long silence by saying—"I must be going immediately, Cosmo; but, before I go, there is a matter of business to be settled between us. I am glad to say that things in the commercial world are beginning to improve; the iron business is paying its way, and some of the foreign stocks which have double-locked the remains of my capital, are decidedly moving upwards in value. Still, I may never be able to repay you your advance. If I ever can do so, it will be after a long delay."

"My dear father, I wish for no repayment."

"Yes, you do; at least you require money; and you shall have it, in one way or another—and at once. If my affairs ever came right, it would be my wish simply to turn the whole of this Scotch property over to you, on condition that I was never bothered about affairs I know nothing of. At present, since a man must live, that cannot be; but what I can, I will do. In the first place, I propose, of course, to give you the interest on your large advance. Don't interrupt me; that admits of no discussion. This brings me to another point: you wish to be married, and objections to you on the score of position are now removed; may I ask if the lady has given her consent?"

"Yes, father, she has, but——"

"Very well, then, what extra income shall you require? You can ask nothing that, up to my abilities, I will not be glad to give."

"You are most good; but I fear it will still be difficult to get the young lady's father to consent. I have not yet told you that she is Lord Germistoune's daughter."

"Good heavens! what do you say?"

Cosmo repeated his statement, and Lord Dunerlacht expressed his astonishment by a prolonged whistle.

"Very strange," he said, "and very unlucky. That is a man who won't readily forgive us for recovering our rights at his expense."

"I fear not."

"I presume that the young lady is—is very attractive?"

"She has every perfection. I don't suppose that there ever yet lived any one who——"

"Exactly. Therefore, I suppose, you are not likely to abandon the idea?"

"I would far sooner abandon life. I could never live if——"

"I understand. Well, it must be managed somehow."

Lord Dunerlacht sat in deep thought for some time, and at last said—

"After all, the match ought to suit him exactly. His daughter and you are the last of the family; your marriage would unite all interests, and the family he thinks so much about, would, if continued at all, be continued through his own descendants. It would really be much the same to him, as having a son of his own for his successor."

"No doubt these considerations ought to have powerful influence with him; but personal interest is often sacrificed to pride and animosity. I fear this may be a case in point."

Lord Dunerlacht again reflected silently for a little, and then said: "The question I have been weighing is,—whether a man like Lord Germistoune is likely to be cooled, or embittered, by reflection. Do you think that if the proposal were made to him at once, he might accept it, as an immediate salve to his dignity and a counterpoise to his loss?"

Whatever Cosmo's cool judgment might have said, the impatience of a lover spoke, and pronounced for immediate action.

"Very well, I will make the proposal to him myself," said Lord Dunerlacht.

"*You*, father?"

"Yes; he stands on forms and ceremonies, and I am now, ha! ha! the head of the house! A proposal from me, with the offers I am prepared to make as to settlements, would probably be the best move."

"I assure you I feel your affectionate interest very deeply, and I hope you will not misunderstand me, if I beg to be allowed to see your letter before it is sent. The great thing is to avoid wounding Lord Germistoune's susceptibilities. I know him better than you do, and——"

"Say no more, Cosmo. I'll write the letter now, and you shall edit and improve it to the best of your ability."

This was accordingly done: and though it took a long time to get the letter into a shape which Cosmo approved, that was, at last, to a certain extent achieved. It expressed, in very good taste, the writer's sympathy with Lord Germistoune under his loss of lands and title; also a desire to consult his wishes in all ways that could tend to make his loss as little irksome as possible, and to act, in every way, as a kinsman ought to act. The marriage was then proposed; the expediency of the arrangement —from a family point of view—was pointed out, and an offer was made to assure to the young couple such an income as Lord Germistoune himself might name as suitable. The letter was not all that Cosmo could have desired, though his father made many concessions to him in adopting what he considered a tone of unmerited courtesy, but it seemed pretty unobjectionable on the whole; and in this shape it was despatched.

The impatient lover could not complain that he was kept long in suspense. Very early next forenoon, Lord Dunerlacht received the following reply:—

"My Lord,—I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of the letter which your lordship has done me the favour to address to me. As a comprehensive and sufficient answer to its contents, I beg leave to say that I must decline, for myself and for my daughter, any further communication, upon any subject whatsoever, with your lordship or your lordship's son.—I have the honour to be, my lord, your lordship's most obedient humble servant, Germistoune.

"The Right Honourable
"Lord Dunerlacht."

"The man is a raving lunatic," said Lord Dunerlacht, when he had given the letter to his son; "but don't be cast down,

Cosmo. He'll come to his senses by-and-by, and see reason. Self-interest asserts itself, in the long-run."

This philosophical reflection was cold enough comfort, however; and Cosmo *was* cast down, and very far down indeed.

In the course of the day, a letter came for him, addressed, in a lady's handwriting, to

"THE MASTER OF DUNERLACHT."

It was the first time he had seen himself thus styled, and he opened it with curiosity. It ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR MASTER,—I took a fancy to you, the first time I saw you (and heard you), in the House of Commons. I think I must have told you so, when we met, as I generally say what I think. We all worship the rising sun—we worldlings—so you will not be surprised to find me *now* repeating that I *have* a fancy for you, and that I hope you will come and see me. While the legal decision was pending, it would have been indiscreet in me, for many reasons, to have anything to do with you; but now all is changed. It seems that you are as much my cousin, in a far-away Scotch fashion, as the poor old lord is; and I am very anxious that we should be friends. You know, of course, that I was set as a watch-dog to guard a certain lamb from a certain wolf; and you may be certain that, if the wolf had made it necessary (which, to do him justice, he never did), I was prepared to spring upon him and worry him without mercy. But now it turns out that he was no wolf, after all, but the most valuable animal of the flock, in disguise; so that the watch-dog is naturally anxious to cherish him, and look after his interests.

"Parables apart, I hope everything will now be soon settled, as you and dear Esmè wish. Such an arrangement would be a most sensible, not to say romantic, way of setting things to rights, allaying bitter feelings, and so forth. Come and talk to me about it.—Yours very truly, OCTOPA HAWKER.

"*P.S.*—Men are such wretches, the horrible thought occurs to me, that prosperity may make you fickle. It generally does; but, if you do not prove an exception, you shall never more be cousin of mine, my Master; and if you don't come and see me very soon, I shall believe that you are just like all the rest of them."

Cosmo would have clung to a straw for assistance, in the renewed shipwreck of his hopes; and here was a good, sound,

serviceable plank at his disposal. It is not surprising that he caught at it eagerly, and went, that very afternoon, to renew his acquaintance with this friendly far-away cousin. Arrived at Lady Octopa's house, Cosmo, inadvertently, gave his name to the servant as "Mr Glencairn," and was thus announced.

Now it so happened that, at that very moment, her ladyship was discussing the Dunerlacht decision, with several friends, over afternoon tea, and, in the discussion, occupied a commanding position from her announced relationship with the parties, and also from a pretty broad hint, on her part, that she had a scheme on hand for giving romantic point and finish to a story which was admitted to be romantic. Her audience, in fact, gathered, that her ladyship's matrimonial skill was about to be again tested (and no doubt with results equal to her reputation), under circumstances of extraordinary difficulty and interest. Lady Octopa, in a word, looking upon the marriage as a foregone conclusion, was discounting the success of manœuvres, which she had no reason to believe would take place, except in her own imagination.

Nothing, then, could be better timed or more welcome than this visit of Cosmo's. In a society which worships novelty, *prestige* accrues even from a remote connection with the novelty or sensation of the hour. Cosmo was unquestionably the topic of the hour, and Lady Octopa could exactly appreciate the value of his visit. His accidental introduction under what was now a misnomer, gave her ladyship an admirable, almost a dramatic, opportunity of advertising to her visitors that the *topic* himself was in their midst.

"My dear Master!" she cried, going to meet him, with both her hands extended, "I *do* call it very charming of you to come so soon,—before your worries are a day over; but why *incognito?*"

"It was a very natural act of obliviousness, on my part, Lady Octopa," said Cosmo, in some confusion, as his hostess led him back with an air of proprietorship to the circle, which stared at him with the steadfast scrutiny of curiosity and criticism, distinctive of the more highly cultured classes in England. The advertisement being then completed, Lady Octopa made no further special allusions; but gave her guests what she considered a generous allowance of time to feast their eyes upon her lion, and to pick up materials for table-talk, from such stray roarings as he chanced to emit. But there are limits to the greatest generosity; and when her guests had transgressed these, by sitting at gaze for an unseemly time, her ladyship,

who was one of those privileged persons, for whom force of character, or caprice of fashion, secures great latitude of speech and action, suddenly gave them their *congé*.

"Now, my dear people," she cried, with charming frankness, "I am going to send you all away,—all but the Master. I have only a few minutes to spare, for we are going to the play to-night, and dine early; and these few minutes I must give to my cousin, and some family matters."

So the guests went away, reluctantly,—consoled, however, by the reflection that they knew more than any one else, and might *almost* say they had been present when Lady Octopa made the first move in her game of intrigue and romance, which was, no doubt, destined to culminate in one of the season's great sensations.

"Tell me why you have come so soon?" was her ladyship's first question when she and Cosmo were left by themselves.

"You were so warm in your invitation, Lady Octopa, I could not think of postponing the pleasure."

"If I had been thirty years younger, that might have been a correct answer; as it is—no! Young men don't rush to see old women of sixty, for the pleasure of looking at their faces. Let us try again."

"Really, Lady Octopa, you are—very—very——"

Cosmo broke down, and her ladyship went on—

"Either you wish me to help you in a certain affair, or you wish to explain that I was under a misapprehension—and that what was believed to be a wolf was only a butterfly; which is it?"

"I certainly require advice and help, and if you will be so kind as to give them to me, I shall be for ever grateful."

"Why not have said that at once? I told you I had only five minutes to spare. You are not a butterfly, then?"

"Certainly not."

"Very well, you shall have my help. What's the matter?"

"Lord Germistoune will not listen to my proposals."

"Why? have you tried him? *since?*"

"Yes, and we received his reply this morning."

"Refusing?"

"Absolutely."

"The old goose! He will repent."

"I fear not; his tone is very decided."

"No matter, he will repent."

"But why, and how?"

"For various reasons. It will be wise in him to repent; but

he won't repent because he is wise, but because he is crazy. The name of Douglas of Dunerlacht is very dear to him. To be pushed out of the line of ancestry will be very grievous to him. A strange mind, you will say, which covets the ancestral position as a grand object? yes, and Germistoune has a strange mind. He has looked forward all his life to being a Dunerlacht ancestor; and now—well, when he realises all this, he will begin to repent. Then, if Esmè only assures him, and he can be got to believe, that she will never marry any one else, he will repent altogether; for, if there is one set of people he hates worse than another, it is the Williamses, who, failing Esmè, inherit the Welsh property. So that, though he may come to a wise decision, his reasons for reaching it won't be those of a sage, you see. The dilemma will be a cruel one for him,—between two hatreds. But, after all, he ought not to go hating people in the promiscuous way he does—the wretch!"

"Then you think all I can do is to wait in patience?"

"All *you* can do, but not all *I* can do. I will bring it about, Master. Leave it to me."

"My dear Lady Octopa, how good! how kind!"

"Perhaps. I like Esmè; I have a sort of fancy for you; but the affair also has attractions for its own sake. I'm quite frank with you, you see. Yes, I will bring it about; but you must promise to leave the whole affair in my hands, and not to interfere yourself, or consult others."

"I promise most willingly."

"I don't like partnerships, in such matters. I don't mind doing all the work, and I insist upon having all the glory. I will go and see how the land lies to-morrow, and you shall have a note reporting progress. On second thoughts, though, I won't write. You shall come here for your news. I wish that we should be friends, and we can't become friends if we never meet *en petit comité*, which we never should, if interested motives did not bring you here."

"You take a cynical view of me."

"Of men; and I don't know you, yet, to be different from the rest of them. Now, good-bye, I must go and dress. I am very glad to have seen you, and I needn't tell you to come back; the difficulty will be to keep you out of the house. *Au revoir.*"

CHAPTER LXI.

The state of Lord Germistoune's mind, when the final award was given, it would be rather hard to define. Every one else was prepared for the result, but not so his lordship, who had laughed at the finding of the Court of Session. The "Bible" marriage he had decided to be an absurdity; the "Glencairn" marriage to be invalid, from having been contracted under a false name; while the construction of a valid marriage out of these two factors, involved a monstrosity beyond the consideration of sane men. He had formulated this in a phrase which had become axiomatic in his eyes—"You can't have a *composite* marriage,"—and, with the profoundest reverence for the wisdom of the peers, he believed that the axiom would, at once, be recognised as such by them. When, therefore, they trampled it under foot, though he submitted, perforce, to their decision, the disappointment was utterly crushing. It crushed out the capability of violent wrath, replacing it with bitter chagrin and abject woe. His sensitive family pride was brayed as in a mortar. The legitimate chief of his house—the successor of peerless paladins—was a "huckster"! Their escutcheon was tarnished, their race degraded: he felt that he himself was lowered, not by loss of the title, but by the damnification which the title had now sustained. The loss of land and money was bitter, but nothing to the loss of family *prestige*. And then, that his supplanter in everything should be his arch-foe Glencairn!—this was the very abomination of desolation!

His first feeling was that he would retire in mournful dignity from the world, like a dethroned monarch. As for the new Dunerlachts, he could not dispute their title, but he would disown them, with scorn, as their ancestor had been disowned, and the real traditions of the family would die with himself. His answer to Lord Dunerlacht had been conceived in this spirit. He had ostentatiously acknowledged his rank, and, at the same time, though in the tone due to rank, he had expressed his personal contempt.

In this frame of spirit Lady Octopa found him when she paid her first diplomatic visit.

She found him alone, and looking terribly broken and woe-begone. "Ah! Cousin Octopa," he said, "I am glad to see you; but, if you have come to condole, let me tell you that I hate condolences"

"No, I haven't come to condole; but is the subject tabooed? Remember that my mother was a Douglas."

"You are distinctly entitled to converse with me on the family catastrophe; but I will have no condolences."

"My dear lord, be at ease on that subject; I have no heart."

"You have, however, no doubt, some feeling for the degradation of the name."

"Is the man so *very* bad?"

"He is a pestilent *roturier*."

"Come! remember he is our chief, and we ought to make the best of him. He can't be a *roturier*, whatever he is."

"I repeat that he is personally pestilent, and a *roturier* in his instincts. He will trade under our title: we shall have vans labelled,—'Lord Dunerlacht & Co. (Limited),' plying in the streets of London. There are a number of members of the peerage, whose fathers, or grandfathers, were picked out of the gutter, washed, and put into ermine. None of these men, even, would be guilty of such a thing; but this fellow will—I know it, I feel it."

"Not a bit of him; and I hear he is not likely to be *en evidence* at all—no one will see him. Let us make the best of him."

"How?"

"Why, the common-sense thing would be, to countenance the son, and help him on in every way. He has the makings of a very distinguished man."

"An insufferable prig—a dogmatic puppy!"

"Perhaps; but a man of talent and not a *roturier*. With your countenance, he might come to anything, and restore the dignity of the name."

"He shall have no countenance from me; and as for the name, it is hopelessly degraded. What do you think the scoundrels have done?"

"What?"

"Why, written me this letter; there! read it."

He handed Lord Dunerlacht's letter to Lady Octopa, who read it, and said—

"The tone is proper, and, I should say, gentlemanlike; though the proposal is, certainly, rather premature."

"*Rather* premature?"

"Well, *very* premature."

"Damnably premature, I say!"

"Well, 'damnably' premature. I'm not afraid of your brimstone words."

"'Premature' isn't the word for it at all; it is an impertinence which would not mend by keeping."

"Half the grand dames in London would be overjoyed at such an offer."

"Possibly. Thank heaven! I'm not a grand dame."

"Maria, Marchioness of Mopus, has vowed to secure him for Lady Ermyntrude."

"Maria, Marchioness of Mopus, be——"

"Stop, my dear Germistoune; I won't have a marchioness brutalised. Such a thing is quite unheard of. I am astonished."

"I beg your ladyship's pardon. I suffer from gout. It is responsible for my indiscretion."

"I'm sorry to hear of the gout. I daresay all these worries have brought it on. Poor man!"

"Don't condole."

"I beg your lordship's pardon. I suffer from neuralgia. It is responsible for my indiscretion."

"He will trade under the title; mark my words. He will—to spite me."

"Not the young man?"

"No; the old villain. 'Lord Dunerlacht & Co. (Limited).' 'Archibald 15th Baron Dunerlacht & Co. (Limited)'! It's maddening!"

"I don't believe he will do anything of the sort. But even if he did, surely the *prestige* of the family is sufficient to carry off the eccentricities of one generation. In any case, a word from you would set everything to rights; you see that the tone of his letter is really deferential."

"I would not condescend to express any interest in his proceedings."

"Though you condescend to let his proceedings interest you to a 'maddening' extent?"

"I beg you, Lady Octopa, not to argue. Under present circumstances, argument is in—sufferable to me."

"Very well, I won't; and under present circumstances I will suspend my judgment, which was beginning to be that Lord Germistoune is not the acute and finished man of the world which the world takes him to be. Gout is, no doubt, responsible for temper, and temper clouds our views of everything. The gout being gone, the eclipse will cease."

"I think your ladyship allows yourself a considerable latitude of criticism," said Lord Germistoune, rearing himself up to the springing position.

"I always do, my dear lord; all the world knows that. Come, Germistoune, don't be cross; you know you can't frighten me,—never could, since we were children. However, I won't tease you any more to-day. I believe a little teasing *has* a good effect, when a man is in the dumps; but you have had enough of it, for one dose, so let us change the subject. What do you think of the majority last night? etc. etc. etc."

Lady Octopa came away from the visit, rather thoughtful. The thing was not to be done by a *coup de main*. The slower operations of sapping and mining must be had recourse to.

CHAPTER LXII.

The next few weeks went past, without any break in the clouds which obscured the lovers' heaven. Cosmo constantly visited Lady Octopa, but could get nothing definite from her. He must be content to wait, she said; her success was certain—of that he might be assured—but her measures required time for their development; "Wait and Trust" must be his motto. So he waited and trusted, in good heart and hope, and followed the business of his life with earnestness and energy. He spoke in the House several times, and it was clear that he was destined to make his mark there. His romantic story and accession of rank assisted his personal *prestige*. Society not only extended its hand to him, but cast out eager arms constraining him to its close embraces. These, however, he resisted in a great degree, seeking in his parliamentary duties the chief distraction of a thoughtful, and otherwise somewhat solitary, way of life.

Lord Germistoune's loss of fortune necessarily compelled him to alter his style of living; but he, in his *rôle* of dethroned monarch, naturally did a great deal more than was at all necessary in that way. He was still left with £7000 a-year, and, since his expenditure had always been moderate, the change need not have involved any great shock. He was determined to have the shock, however. He gave up his house in Grosvenor Square, and removed to a small and rather lugubrious abode in Hans Place; he put down his carriage, and reduced the rest of his establishment to a minimum. He ceased to entertain and declined entertainment; and abandoning, for the present at least, all ambitions as to Esmè's marriage, which, in-

deed, had been conceived with reference to circumstances now non-existent, he discouraged all efforts of Lady Octopa and other friends to give the poor girl any of the distractions of society. "Under the circumstances," he said, "nothing of the sort would be seemly."

So that he was quite the dethroned monarch. Probably he would have also abdicated his parliamentary functions altogether, had not the Welsh miners again thought fit to strike:—a "flagrant circumstance" which offered an alleviation to the despondency of a gouty and disgusted old age, which threatened to get the better of him. For his political instincts were thus fired by personal interest, the loss of his mineral royalties being severely felt in his altered circumstances. And so he set himself to concoct a bill for the suppression of trades-unions by the strong arm of the law; also to compose a tremendous pamphlet, intended to pioneer the bill, and in which these associations were described in colossal language, as "parts of a felonious, piratical, cosmopolitan polype, moving darkly under the surface of European society, and seeking to asphyxiate all the capital of Europe with its obscene tentacles."

A good deal of gout, and general bitterness of soul, were blown off in these literary efforts, and in constant propagandist visits to the House, where he bored his brother peers with the eternal subject of his forthcoming bill. In this characteristic way, he was preserved from succumbing to his reverse of fortune, during the first stage of that dire experience.

In all these chances and changes, the greatest sufferer was poor Esmè, whose life was now made, simply, a burden to her. No hope seemed to offer promise of better days; the change in Cosmo's position only seemed to thicken the wall of separation which kept them apart. It did not enter into Lady Octopa's policy to confide to Esmè the existence of her friendly strategy; and Cosmo's name was never mentioned between them. The only occasions on which Esmè heard that name uttered, were, when Lord Germistoune, enraged by some new hardship, arising from the change of his fortunes, loaded Cosmo and his father with maledictions, as the authors of the calamity. On such occasions, too, she not uncommonly received a share of his abuse, being held, in some mysterious way, responsible for the villanies of the Glencairns, including, apparently, the audacious nuptials of Norman Glencairn and Jean Lothian.

The distractions of society were now denied to her. She was a prisoner whose solitary confinement was only relieved by the occasional companionship of an old man who had lost even

such kindly characteristics as he once possessed, and who now, in his best moods, was bitter and cantankerous, and, in his less happy moments, displayed the qualities of a highly seasoned fiend.

If all sunshine and all hope of sunshine are taken from life, the hardiest human plant will droop and wither. If all outlet for generous and loving emotions is denied to a tender and ardent heart, it will fret itself till it breaks. Such was Esmè's case; she drooped and withered, and her heart was breaking. The colour left her beautiful face, the light faded from her innocent eyes, and the blithesome elasticity of youthful movement was replaced by the languid gait and gestures of apathy.

CHAPTER LXIII.

Lady Octopa's diplomatic overtures had been renewed over and over again; she had tried many different forms of approach, but as yet with signal failure. One day, coming to Hans Place, on one of these missions, after an interval of ten days, she was startled by the change in Esmè's appearance.

"My dear child!" she cried, "what is the matter? You look like a ghost."

"Nothing," said Esmè. When the whole life is brought down to the level of utter wretchedness,—when *everything* is the matter,—we find it hard to particularise, and we say, "nothing."

"Nothing! why, you are thin and pale and—oh, you are *dreadfully* ill! Any one can see that. I must have Sir Cavy to see you at *once*. Where is your papa?"

"I believe he is in the next room; but he is unwell."

"I'll go and see him, at once; I never beheld such an object as you have become!" So saying, the vigorous dame went to the lion's den.

"Good morning, Germistoune!" she cried, bouncing into his lordship's presence.

"Hush! hush! Lady Octopa. Pray don't speak so loud. I am in agony—in torment. This accursed foot—oh!"

"Gout again?"

Lord Germistoune rolled his agonised eyes upon her, but, for reply, he only groaned

"I wish to speak to you about Esmè," said Lady Octopa.

"Now, Lady Octopa, let me tell you, once for all, that I will have no more of this confounded intriguing," cried the old lord, forgetting his foot, for the moment, and sitting bolt upright; "let me add that I won't have 'the Glencairns' mentioned in this room. There!"

"My dear Lord, you've got 'Glencairn' on the brain. I should like to know what possible interest I can have in them?"

"Why mention them, then?"

"I didn't mention them. Don't be a baby!"

"Your ladyship forgets yourself."

"Not a bit of it. It is about Esmè I wish to speak to you. She is very ill."

"Rubbish!"

"For you, perhaps, but not for her, or those who really love her. I tell you the child is alarmingly ill; and you must have a doctor to see her at once. Her colour is gone; she is half the size she was; she looks like consumption, but I have tested the action of the heart, and I find that the mischief is *there*."

"It is a little odd, I think, that I should be the last person to observe all this."

"It *would* be, in any other man, but not in your case."

"Why, pray?"

"Because you are entirely engrossed with yourself. There! that's frank. Now, now!" she cried, holding up her hand, as Lord Germistoune was going to break out,—"don't try to shout me down and frighten me; you can't do it; no one can. I tell you the girl is alarmingly ill."

"I tell you she is nothing of the sort."

"Will you use your stupid old eyes?"

"Lady Octopa! I——" But here he was interrupted by a terrific spasm, so that his sentence evaporated in miscellaneous howling.

Lady Octopa, seeing him thus impracticable, and feeling that the thin edge of the wedge was inserted, left him and went promptly to Sir Cavy Bolus—the eminent physician who advised both families.

The doctor was bland and politic, the private friend of all his patients, and the confidant in many domestic mysteries, as doctors are wont to be. He was a kindly man, as it is also the wont of doctors to be, and, in fact, "a good man all round" where it was a question of managing obstreperous patients.

With him Lady Octopa dealt astutely; a ray of light had flashed upon her; she beheld a new point of departure for her manœuvres, and the doctor must be pressed into her service, if it were to be utilised. She told him, then, that she had come to talk to him about Miss Douglas, whose condition caused her anxiety. She told him that there *had* been a love-affair (it would never do to mix a family doctor up with a love-affair *in esse*)—that there *had* been a love-affair through which Esmè had suffered, not merely from disappointment, but from the tyrannical conduct of her father, who, though the affair was past and gone, continued to treat her with extraordinary harshness and even cruelty. Under this, and the absolute seclusion in which he kept her, her health was breaking down:—the doctor would see *that* for himself, at a glance. The great thing was to get her away from her father for a little; so that while she had change of air and scene, and general distraction, her parent's bitterness might have time to evaporate. The doctor must drop in, accidentally, as a private friend to see her; he must be shocked by her appearance, alarm her father, and instantly order change of air. He ought to recommend sea-air; and, since the best kind of sea-air was notoriously to be found at Torquay, he ought to suggest Torquay.

The doctor smiled subtly, and said that his directions must always be guided by the symptoms of his patients; but that, if the symptoms were as stated, change of air would, doubtless, be a wise prescription. As to the seaside, in nine cases out of ten, a change to the seaside would be beneficial. He added that Torquay was a very nice—a very balmy place. He certainly would look in soon, as a private friend, and see Miss Douglas, who was a very dear creature in whom he felt deep interest.

In a word, Lady Octopa and the doctor, who were very fast friends, understood each other, and her ladyship felt that, if it rested with him, Esmè would find herself at Torquay before many days were past.

Sir Cavy called the next day at the Germistounes' house. Miss Douglas was at home; he *was* greatly struck by her appearance, and he *could* honestly say that the state of her health *did* absolutely require change of air and scene, and as early as possible a relief from mental distress.

"I am sorry to find we are looking so poorly, my dear Miss Douglas," said the doctor, making straight for her pulse; "tut! tut! what's all this about? Something wrong here; we are not in our usual vigour by any means; ve-ry far from it. We must see to this." Then followed various queries, and the

doctor said, presently, "We must get away out of this smoky town, for a breath of fresh air. How would a trip to the sea suit?"

"I don't care about it."

"You don't object?"

"No, I don't object."

"Supposing we were to try Torquay?"

"I have no preference for any place." This rather surprised the doctor.

"Any *objection* to Torquay?" he asked.

"No objection at all."

"Torquay is a very nice place; it is a ve-ry balmy place. I should be inclined to say Torquay. *Shall* we say Torquay?"

"If you please, Sir Cavy, but I have no voice in the matter."

"It will not be unpleasant to you if I recommend it to Lord Germistoune?"

"No; but papa will not likely agree to go, or to let me go there."

"I am very sure papa will agree to anything I say is for your good, my dear lady."

Hereupon Esmè completed the doctor's diagnosis by bursting into tears; and he, being a doctor, did not argue with the tears, or even remark on them; but, patting her gently on the head, with a paternal hand, left her, and went to see her father.

Into that awful presence he glided with the suave confidence of an expert in the soothing system.

"How is my lord? Servant tells me we've got a touch of the old enemy?"

"My servant didn't presume to send for you, Sir Cavy?"

"Not he; I was idling about in the neighbourhood, and thought I would look in, and hear your news. This is not a fee visit, ha! ha! but I'll convert it into one, at once, if you wish, ha! ha! ha! Let us have a look at the—tut! tut!"—(as Lord Germistoune gave a yell)—"the limb."

"Don't touch my foot; don't come near it. You must be aware, Sir Cavy, that I never consult you in a case of gout. You know nothing about gout. I treat myself, invariably."

"Well, it's not a bad plan—far from a bad plan—when the patient has got to know himself as thoroughly as you have done. What is your treatment?"

Lord Germistoune described it, was complimented by the doctor on his system, and, there being no gouty paroxysms for a time, the conversation passed to general topics, upon which Sir Cavy was fluent and entertaining. Thus his lordship was

manœuvred into a state of comparative equanimity, and then the doctor developed his attack.

"By the by, I am sorry to see Miss Douglas looking so poorly."

"You have seen her?"

"I have been paying my respects in the drawing-room."

"There's nothing the matter with her."

"Nothing serious, I hope and trust; but *something* is wrong —I can see that."

"Stuff!"

"Come, my lord, I can't let you depose my doctorial authority altogether. You're my superior in gout, we'll admit, but I must be allowed to have an opinion on general hygienics. There's a good deal of low fever going about just now."

Lord Germistoune's dread of fever amounted to a monomania, as the doctor very well knew. His lordship rose at once to the terrible idea.

"Good heavens, doctor! you don't insinuate that she has got anything so horrible?"

"One can never tell, from a superficial glance; but I'm bound to say that she has a very suggestive look about the eyes—ve-ry suggestive!"

"For God's sake, my dear Sir Cavy, go up and examine her, at once!"

"Well, I *do* think it would be expedient," and up the doctor went.

"Just to have another *little* look at you, Miss Douglas, and to ask a few more questions."

This wholly superfluous visit was very soon got over, and the doctor returned to the den, looking grave and thoughtful.

"Not fever of any sort, doctor? not fever?" cried his lordship.

"No, no; make your mind easy on *that* score; but I'm bound to tell you that I find some other symptoms in my dear young friend which I don't like—far from it."

"What are they?"

"She is suffering," said the doctor, in a sombre tone, "from nervous depression, in a very pronounced form."

"One of your new-fangled disorders!"

"No, Lord Germistoune; it may have changed its name a score of times, but it is as old as the human frame."

"But do you mean that it is serious?"

"It is my duty to say that the consequences *may* be as serious—as—as possible."

"Good heavens!" cried the old lord, starting up, "what can have produced it?"

"Several causes may produce it; but acute mental distress is the commonest of all. I could not suppose that to be the cause in this instance, and I did not touch on the question of origin with Miss Douglas; but, if any circumstances of that sort have existed, or do exist, your lordship is probably acquainted with them, and may act accordingly. If she *is* suffering from mental distress, we must, if possible, get rid of that."

"Mental distress is beyond a doctor's skill."

"True; but it can often be reached by a father's love. All this, however, is probably beside the question; but, in any case, we must act at once."

"What would you propose?" said Lord Germistoune, now quite meek and subdued. A crust had been growing over the love which he had for Esmè, and it was broken up now by alarm, and perhaps, also (though he would have resented the imputation), by remorse.

"Immediate change of scene," replied Sir Cavy; "you must take her to the sea."

"I can't move."

"Send some one else with her, then."

"Is it so very urgent?"

"It is my duty to say that it could not well be more urgent. She should go to-morrow."

"Where to?"

"I should be inclined to say Torquay. It is a very nice place; it is a very balmy place."

"She shall go to Torquay to-morrow!"

"Good! ve-ry good! That relieves my mind. Dear, dear, how late it is! Good-bye, my lord."

What between Lord Germistoune's gout and his alarm, and (shall we say?) his remorse, he soon worked himself into a wild state of excitement. He sent for Esmè, and kissed and petted her, in the intervals between the paroxysms, assuring her that she was on the brink of death, and that she must fly to Torquay at once, as the only haven of refuge from the Destroyer.

Then, when she wept—for no particular reason except that her nerves were shattered—he took her tears to be protests against Torquay, and, in combating her supposed objections, he lashed himself into a fury, which was only quelled when she assured him that whatever the doctor thought necessary she would cheerfully submit to.

The question then was, Who could be got to take her to Torquay, and to *chaperon* her till her father was able to join her? While this difficulty was under discussion, in came Lady Octopa, in rather a remarkably *apropos* way. "Well," she said, affecting ignorance of the medical episode just completed —"well, *have* you used your eyes? *Do* you see that the girl is ill? *Will* you send for a doctor?"

"Hush, cousin Octopa! This is no time for a boisterous tone. The dear child is at death's door."

"My turn now to say 'rubbish!'"

"Sir Cavy has been here. I presume you will submit your opinion to his, and I have given you his opinion. He has ordered her to Torquay; she goes to-morrow; but there is this difficulty;—for the life of me, I can't think who I am to get to take her."

"I am sorry I can't volunteer. I am full of engagements, and several of them could not be broken without great inconvenience to other people; but surely some other friend might be able to go. What has become of your old German governess?"

"She is in Germany, with a family."

"No one else? Let me see; ah!—Torquay, you say?"

"Torquay."

"An idea has just occurred to me—so lucky!—my sister Adela has a house there, this winter, and I am sure she would be delighted to receive Esmè. I'll telegraph to her, at once, if you please, to offer. She will be charmed to have her, I know, if she is at home; unfortunately, that's always doubtful with her. I'll telegraph, however, if you wish; shall I?"

"You are more than good, Lady Octopa. Pray do; a thousand thanks!"

As Lady Octopa had written, the day before, at great length to Lady Adela, explaining her purposes, and making the very proposal in question, her telegram only asked for a telegraphic reply as to whether Esmè could be received on the following day; and the reply, "Charmed to see you to-morrow," was sent to Esmè herself.

So Esmè went to Torquay, and Lady Octopa thought she saw her way to success at last.

CHAPTER LXIV.

It was not Lady Octopa's object that Esmè should rapidly improve in health; and Esmè met her wishes by making no improvement, at Torquay. The mental distress was still there, so that the nervous depression continued. Her hostess was a weak edition of Lady Octopa, and believed in her astuter sister, to the extent of being her humble vassal at all times, and her willing instrument whenever her services were required. Inspired, then, by her sister, Lady Adela secured the services of an alarmist doctor, who was so devoted to his profession that, when he got a case, he made the most of it, and parted with it grudgingly. Esmè's case exactly suited him; for a case "on the nerves" is, from its nature, of an almost unlimited ductility, and may, in fact, be protracted according to the convenience of the doctor himself, whose dictum, that grave nervous depression exists, can hardly be controverted by lay opinion, or even by the personal assertion of the patient. After Esmè had been for a week or two under the "anxious observation" of this professional enthusiast, it was suggested to him by Lady Adela, under Octopian inspiration, that a consultation might be a good thing. The doctor thought that it *might* be a *very* good thing —for a consultation gives a sort of fillip to a jog-trot case; and a consultation took place, with the sanction of Lord Germistoune, who was now quite prostrated from the effects of his attack, which had been unusually severe.

The results of the consultation were manipulated, in a gloomy sense, by Lady Adela; and, to the effect that the learned leeches considered the case critical, were transmitted to Lord Germistoune, who was greatly alarmed and distressed thereby. He sent for Sir Cavy and begged him to go down, at once, to Torquay, and make a most searching investigation of his daughter's malady. Sir Cavy went down promptly, returned, and came, in person, to make his report to the anxious father.

"Well, doctor, good news I hope?" exclaimed his lordship, eagerly, when Sir Cavy presented himself.

The doctor shook his head, and sighed slightly.

"Speak out, man! don't keep me in suspense."

"I can see no improvement in my dear young friend," he said.

"Are they treating her properly?"

"Oh yes, very properly, ve-ry much so, indeed; but the

symptoms don't yield,—they develop. It is my duty to say this."

"Good God! what do you recommend?"

"To be frank with you, my dear lord, although the young lady has said *nothing* to me, it is my duty to say that I can see there is some brooding sorrow which is at the root of the mischief. Until we get rid of that brooding sorrow, the symptoms will continue to develop, and I cannot be answerable for the results. We may go on with the present treatment—I can recommend no other; but I am not sanguine of its efficacy—*not* sanguine." The doctor shook his head, again slightly sighed, and went on: "I think that, if your lordship were to deal frankly, as a parent may, with Miss Douglas, you would probably get a clue which might guide your action in some way; or, since you are now unable to move, you might get some lady friend of tact and experience to make the delicate investigation. Between ourselves, my dear lord, I should not say that Lady Adela is *quite* the person for such a commission—charming, brilliant, amiable, but not *quite* the person."

"She is a born idiot."

"Tut! tut! my lord—sharp, that, ve-ry sharp! Well, then, in your wide circle of friends there must be others who——"

"I'll think it over, doctor. You have made me very miserable, very miserable;—why the d—l should *I* be made so miserable? Everything goes wrong; no man was ever so persecuted and beset by all kinds of accursed circumstances."

"Patience! patience! my dear lord; we shall come round yet. Let us discover this brooding sorrow and eliminate it, and——"

"Confound the brooding sorrow!"

"Precisely; let us do that, and all will be well."

"Don't play with my words, Sir Cavy. Go away. You fatigue and irritate me."

The miserable old man lay awake all that night, now stung by his conscience, now maddened by his pride, now softened by love and pity. At one moment the sweet pale face of his daughter came before him, and he thought of her as suffering, perhaps dying;—this dear child, who had been an angel in his home, all the days of her life, till these evil times had come. At the next moment the thought of the "Glencairns" would flash up, casting every tender feeling into remote shadow, and setting ablaze all the fierce elements of the old man's nature.

Thus was his mind alternately worked upon, by good and evil, as the circle of his feverish thoughts went round, through

the long hours of that sleepless night, and morning found him utterly prostrate.

He sent for Lady Octopa, who went to him on the instant.

"I have invited you to come here, cousin Octopa," he said, "because you are a woman of the world and not a humbug, and I wish to consult you. You have heard from Lady Adela?"

"Yes; and I have seen Sir Cavy this morning, in consequence."

"What did Sir Cavy say to you?" asked Lord Germistoune, eagerly.

"Do you wish to know his *very* words?"

"Of course I do."

"'The girl is dying because her heart is breaking.' That's what *he* says."

Lord Germistoune covered his face with his hands.

"I had no idea," Lady Octopa went on, "that this affair with the Master of Dunerlacht had been so very serious. It's not the way of young people nowadays, mercifully; but poor Esmè is an exception, it seems. I was coming to you, this morning, without being sent for, because, after what Adela and the doctor said, I could not take the responsibility of keeping you in ignorance of the real state of things. You'll have to make a choice between two evils, Germistoune; and you'll have to make up your mind at once; I can tell you *that*." She paused, but Lord Germistoune, with his teeth clenched, and his hands pressed tightly to his face, as if in a physical spasm of pain, made no remark, and she went on—

"You must decide between losing your daughter altogether, and allowing her to marry a man whom you hate."

Lord Germistoune gave a sort of muffled shout behind his hands. "Ah! you may roar, like a bull, but that's how it stands: and, of course, there's no question at all about the decision; a sensible man of the world, and an affectionate father, like you, can't hesitate. Of course, it's a horrible nuisance marrying your daughter to a man you detest,—I know that by experience—(I hated Harriet's husband the first moment I set eyes upon him, and I loathe the sight of him now),—and it's a trial to one's pride, and so on; but we can't murder our children to gratify our pride—*that's* clear."

At last Lord Germistoune spoke—

"Does Sir Cavy think that, if this—this accursed resource were sanctioned, she would recover?"

Sir Cavy is very cautious in expressing an opinion, but he

says that, on the whole, he sees no reason to doubt that she would recover, if her happiness were restored; while, if you insist upon her being miserable, you will certainly sign her death-warrant."

"I almost made up my mind this morning, and now I *have* made it up. It's infernal torture and agony to me to do it; I don't know what I've done to deserve such agony; but I can't see my child die. It will kill me,—I know that, but my life is wretched now, so *that* doesn't greatly signify,—it will kill me to see her marry this—this *person;* but she must marry him."

"Of course she must, and equally of course, it won't kill you. In the name of common-sense, why should it? I hear but one opinion of the Master; he is a very good man, and he is full of promise. If there were no money it would be different, of course, for a fine moral nature won't pay the expenses of an establishment. Why do you hate him so?"

"I hate him—because—I hate him."

"Well, I admit that that is a very sound reason; but you'll get over it."

"Never! His father——"

"His father is not going to marry Esmè."

"Look here, Lady Octopa, my consent is extorted by a morbid freak of nature; but I'll make my conditions."

"Certainly."

"I must never see this Lord Dunerlacht."

"Of course not."

"And his son, only in a formal way."

"That's quite reasonable."

"And I must have a distinct understanding that the title is not to be dragged into commerce."

"I should think there will be no difficulty about that."

"That is a *sine qua non.* And they must have Dunerlacht to live at, as *their own* house, and money enough to live in proper style."

"Quite fair. And now, you know, when you have made up your mind to do an unpleasant thing it's better to do it at once; and, besides, moments are precious. Think of the dear child's condition."

"What steps *am* I to take?"

"Send for the Master at once, and settle the matter. I'll go myself and send him to you."

"I'm not equal to the abominable agitation."

"Nonsense; you'll be all the better for having the matter off

your mind. Indecision is worse than anything. I'll go and send him."

Lord Germistoune said nothing, and she went.

She went straight to Cosmo's rooms and entered, with her usual *nonchalance.*

"It's all settled, Master," she said. "I told you I should bring it about; and now you may congratulate me—and yourself."

"Lady Octopa! can you—do you mean that Lord Germistoune has consented?"

"Yes, he is now prepared to say, 'Curse ye, my children, be wretched!'"

"But *consented!* It is incredible!"

"Don't take my word for it, then. You are to go directly to him and receive his parental malediction. Go at once; don't stand sentimentalising, but go at once. He wishes to see you, and good resolutions sometimes evaporate. Mind you be very quiet with him; stand anything he says, and submit to all his conditions; they're not alarming. Go away, now." And she almost hustled the Master out of his rooms.

The interview between him and Lord Germistoune was as brief as it was strange. When Cosmo was announced, the old gentleman lay perfectly still in bed and kept his face covered with his hands, so as to defend himself from the obnoxious aspect of his visitor. He showed no symptom of taking the initiative, so Cosmo found it necessary to say—

"I understand, my lord, that you are good enough to desire an interview with me."

Then Lord Germistoune made answer from behind his intrenchments—

"An interview extorted by the facts that your conduct has destroyed the peace of my family, and brought my daughter to the brink of death. I don't wish to argue, or talk about the matter at any length. Half-a-dozen words will suffice. You have wrecked my unhappy girl, in mind and body—you have destroyed her life; but I cannot take the responsibility of causing her actual death, which, it appears, might probably happen, were she to be longer thwarted in the morbid and disastrous affection which she has conceived for you; and my prohibition of the marriage is therefore withdrawn."

Cosmo thought it prudent to hold his peace, and Lord Germistoune went on—

"There are one or two conditions to my consent which you will note and consider essential—as follows:—

."I must never be brought into contact with your father.

"My intercourse with you must be rare and formal.

"The title which your father now possesses must not be employed as a trade advertisement. He must trade under a pseudonym. Dunerlacht Castle must be made over to you as a residence, and an income suitable to the style and dignity of the place must be secured to you. Are you in a position to guarantee these conditions?"

"Yes, Lord Germistoune, I am; I know that my father will accede to them all. I trust, however, that time will alter the condition which affects the relations between you and me. I do trust that our intercourse may, at least, become friendly, if it cannot be affectionate."

"Our intercourse shall, as I have said, be rare and formal. That is definitive."

"I presume, my lord, that you will not make restrictions as to the date of the marriage?"

"Considering the grounds on which alone it is sanctioned, there can be no objection to its early accomplishment, but the contrary. You can settle the matter with my daughter; I wash my hands of the whole deplorable transaction. I will not detain you, sir."

"My lord, you will give me your hand before I go? Pray remember that I am, at least, a gentleman."

"As a matter of form, I will do so."

A cold, sharp, aquiline claw just touched Cosmo's hand, and the meeting was at an end.

Within a couple of hours, Cosmo was on his way to Torquay, not having given himself time, in any way, to prepare Esmè, who was, of course, unconscious of the friendly plot of which she was the centre,—who had no suspicion of the strange process of evolution, by which it was designed that her joy should develop from her sorrow.

CHAPTER LXV.

"The Master of Dunerlacht!"

When the servant threw open the door of Lady Adela's drawing-room, and made this announcement, Esmè was sitting there alone. It was thoughtless and man-like of Cosmo to

come on her, thus unawares. She heard the name; she beheld her lover; the joy in his face flashed into her mind the glad import of his presence there. But even the little fringe of light, which tells of a silver lining, had faded from the cloud which overshadowed her life, and the sudden blaze of happiness was more than she could bear; it overwhelmed and blinded her. Everything became dark, and she would have fallen, had not Cosmo caught her in his arms.

. . . . . .

"Is it a dream?" were the first words she murmured, after an interval of half-unconsciousness.

"No, dearest; it is the end of dreams. The night is over, and winter is gone."

. . . . . .

Often on the summit of some grand Highland mountain, we find ourselves wrapped in a sudden twilight of cloud and mist. We can see nothing but our dim prison-walls, and we dare not move, for we know that, around us, there are precipices and danger manifold. The vapour-masses mould themselves to peak and ledge, and cling about the rocks with cruel immobility. We feel that we are lost, and our hearts fail us, for the day is far spent.

Then, suddenly comes a breath from heaven, which whispers the mandate of our release. In an instant we see the blue vault and the glorious sun; the walls of our environment are transformed to flying wreaths of light and beauty; below us is the sea, sapphire-like, smiling in its summer sleep; and, beyond it, sun-bright stretches of champaign, and billowy foliage of gladsome woods, and the pure purple of cloudless hills, glowing like gems in the horizon's golden zone.

CHAPTER LXVI.

Happiness is the best of remedies; and, on a bright summer morning, six weeks after Esmè's lover had found her drooping like a dying flower, an immense assemblage which thronged the church of St Peter's in Eaton Square, beheld in her a bride, the radiance of whose beauty and happiness seemed to express the spirit of the blithe and beauteous summer time.

There was a "movement" of admiration as she passed up the

aisle supported by, or rather, as it seemed, supporting her father, who moved with tottering gait but head erect, and wearing on his grim old features an expression which would have done credit to Agamemnon, in the act of leading Iphigenia to the sacrifice. A few minutes earlier, the Master of Dunerlacht had entered, attended by Tom Wyedale, the latter radiant with triumph at having, by a series of masterly manœuvres, supplanted Phil Denwick in the post of "best man," for which Phil had been designed by the bridegroom.

Though the church was crowded the invited guests were few in number; but, among them, near the altar, were to be observed certain forms familiar to us as having played some part in the drama now drawing to a close.

Mrs Ravenhall wept aggressively in the foremost pew, where she had established herself next to the 15th Baron Dunerlacht. From his lordship's other side, his sister, Griselda, cast baleful glances on the happy scene, and confided to her brother, in a rusty whisper, that Viscount Germistoune satisfied her conceptions of a cockatrice. Lady Octopa was there, majestically content; her air seemed to say, "Behold my handiwork!" And Lady Adela was, of course, also there, to whom Sir Cavy murmured slily, that the air of Torquay was very balmy, and had really worked miracles for his dear young friend. A few others, whom we have met, were within the charmed circle, and a few others whom we have not met; and, outside it, one or two not unknown to us—conspicuously, Lady Bugles, whose sombre head loomed darkly behind the splendid coruscations of the bridal party.

When the knot was tied, Cosmo and his bride moved down the aisle, under the inevitable thunder of the "Wedding March." The family romance was universally known, and the young couple were surveyed with breathless interest as they passed. People said that a nobler-looking pair had never met their eyes. If these admiring critics had known that their external gifts were poor, compared with their graces of mind and spirit, they would have considered them still more an exceptional couple.

The wedding breakfast was given at Lady Octopa's house, the abode of Lord Germistoune, in Hans Place, not being equal to the occasion. At first it threatened to be a *triste* affair; for the well-known antagonism of the two old lords, who had to be separated at table by a wide zone of neutrality, cast a certain gloom over the proceedings. Tom Wyedale, however, exerted himself in the most manful way to counteract this; and, since no one else would make a speech, he spoke for everybody. He

proposed toasts and responded to the same himself, and thus personated, in rapid succession, the bridesmaids, the bride's father, the bridegroom's father, Lady Octopa, and others, including Miss Griselda Douglas—(who carried away the firm conviction that Tom was "The Man of Sin")—with a power of reckless fun born of wit, goodwill, and dry champagne, which worked, at last, a complete success. In his oratorical dealings with Lord Germistoune, he employed all the subtle tact with which he had originally conquered that difficult personage, and at last succeeded in producing a smile on his iron features. Tom's genial nature always prompted him to make things pleasant, and he saw, at this critical banquet, the chance of making things pleasant for the young couple, in a permanent way. So he spared no pains, and, perhaps, his pains were not altogether wasted. It is certain that, ever after, he took immense credit to himself, as the author of happier relations between Lord Germistoune and his son-in-law; and explained that, if Phil Denwick had been placed in the prominent position of "best man," nothing of the sort could have occurred. It was, he said, with this view that he had supplanted Phil, who was "really quite an outsider where anything like *savoir faire* was concerned." When the hour of departure had arrived, Esmè went into a little ante-room to take a private farewell of her father. When the old man came to her, and saw her, thus about to leave him finally—saw finally passing away from him that dear companionship which, ever since Esmè's birth, had preserved *some* tender feeling in his nature, he was at length overcome. There flowed into his mind a thousand touching recollections of her happy, innocent childhood, and her happy, loving, dutiful youth. His heart was moved; he took her gently in his arms; he could not speak, but he looked at her, fondly and sadly, through eyes dimmed with an unwonted moisture.

"Dear papa," said Esmè, at last, "your heart has come back to me; promise that you will never take it away again."

Her father kissed her, and she went on, encouraged—

"You wish me to be *quite* happy, papa, do you not?" and again, in the same tender fashion, the old man signified his assent.

"But how can I be quite, *quite* happy, when there is enmity and coldness between those who are dearest to me? O papa! papa! you do know—because you said so yourself, even before you knew that he was a Douglas—you *do* know how good and chivalrous he is; and it is not his fault that we have lost

Dunerlacht; and I know that he will respect all your wishes, because he feels your hardships so keenly—if you only, only knew how keenly! O papa! be kind to him, and he will love you as I love you, and we shall be together again, and you will not be lonely; how can I ever be happy if you are lonely and desolate? You *wish* me to be happy, papa? *make* me happy by saying that you trust him and will be his friend. Say it, dear papa, say it; I will not leave you till you say it!"

She clung to him and poured forth her words with passionate utterance; and the heart of the old man was turned.

"You shall be happy, dear child," he said, at last, "if I can make you happy. Bring your husband."

Cosmo was soon there, and the old lord, by a supreme inspiration and effort of his Good Angel, spoke thus:—

"You are the future head of our house, Master," he said, "and I cannot deny that you are an honourable man. It is a great thing to know *that*. It is a great thing to know that you will not discredit the name. We must try to be friends. You have taken away from me the Douglas lands and the old Douglas title, and you are taking away from me this child, almost the last, and certainly the best, of my possessions. I grudge them all to you;—God help me! I am only a man. But I will try to like you, for her sake; I swear I will. Here is my hand."

To which the Master replied—

"And for her sake, Lord Germistoune, I will swear, not only to like you, but to be your son, if you will allow me. The Douglas lands and honours are great and splendid, but she is above them all, and I would gladly have given them all, a thousand times, to win her own dear self."

They clasped hands cordially, and the cup of Esmè's happiness was full.

Shortly after, volleys of rice and satin slippers darkened the Belgravian atmosphere, in which haze the lovers should now disappear from the pages of an orthodox novel. Let us have one little glimpse of them, however, after their return from the wedding trip, which, wherever else it took them, took them, we may be sure, to the Lake of Como.

When Tom made the genealogical discovery in Cosmo's rooms, it may be remembered that the spirit of prophecy fell upon him, and that he uttered certain predictions. All those bearing on the lawsuit had been literally fulfilled; and now the highly important one which foretold that Dunerlacht grouse should die by Tom's hand on the "Twelfth" of the following year, was

verified. For Cosmo and Esmè returned to their Highland home a little before that anniversary, and Tom was the life of the party which came together there on the 11th. It had occurred to him that his amusement would be enhanced, if the Marquis (for whose society Tom had, what Lord Germistoune called, "a morbid inclination") were also of the party; so of course he had managed that. The Marquis *was* there, in all his mysterious panoply, wearing his *cor de chasse*, without molestation, and breathing forth threats against the *fauna* of Glenerlacht, which, if carried into effect, must leave the district without fur or feather.

The managing partner of Glencairn & Co.—now on the high-road to recover its ancient prosperity and *prestige*—was also present. In him was to be recognised our friend Phil Denwick, whose energy and ability had nobly seconded Cosmo's efforts to procure for him the promotion he had lately obtained. The senior partner of his firm, who "traded under a pseudonym," was not of the party. He was immersed in his old pursuits at Edlisfort; toiling to rebuild the edifice of his fortunes, which had been levelled by the reckless hands of the now secluded Hopper. Nor did the bride's father adorn the scene; but his daughter was at ease about him. In the agreeable company of his friend Sir Cavy he was enjoying the salubrious waters and distractions of Homburg, and wrote cheerfully, and in a spirit of peace and goodwill. The party at the castle was full of pleasant elements, and there were no regrettable blanks, even Mrs Ravenhall's absence not being specially remarked from that point of view.

A great bag was achieved on the "Twelfth." In addition to what Davidson called "a tremendyus birds," it displayed a few novel elements, and, conspicuously, a very fine sheep which had imprudently loitered within the sphere of the Marquis's operations. That he was dubbed of the *Toison d'or* by his friend "Torm" was a matter of course, and that "Le massacre d'un mouton" became a favourite sequel to Tom's narrative of "La bête fauve sans tête," which, as developed by his daring fancy, had achieved a wide popularity.

It may be remembered that the next day was Esmè's birthday; and, it being her twenty-first birthday, at night twenty-one rockets went up, from beside the bonfire on Dunerlacht, and the tenants' banquet and ball took place. In short, the occasion was commemorated with the old rejoicings, but with a relaxation of feudal observance which was much to the advantage of Mr and Mrs M'Haffie's nervous systems. As it was also

a red-letter day in the calendar of their love, Cosmo did not go to the moor, but remained at home, and kept the doubly sacred anniversary with his wife.

In the afternoon they visited the ruins and the Fall, for the first time since their return,—for the first time, that is to say, since that spot had been the scene of their desolate farewells.

Once more they sat down, side by side, above the great abyss; and once more, amidst a hundred landmarks, traced their love's familiar story. Here it had trembled on the brink of a first utterance: here it had mingled the voice of its anguish with the lamentations of the mighty waters; here they had seen in the foam-bow's arch the symbol of a way across the storm and stress of adverse circumstance. Anguish, discord, lamentation, were silenced now,—drowned in the great music which filled their lives to overflowing. The foam-bow had been quenched, but quenched by the sovereign glory of the sun. Thus they sat, through the happy hours, gilding, with fond lovers' fancies, the refined gold of their peace and thankfulness and joy. It was not till the day was dying, that an interruption came to remind them of hungry guests awaiting them at home. It came in the form of old Maggie; once again that inevitable apparition stood before them, and sang and said, in her old style:—

> "Hey the bonny! ho the bonny!
> Hey the bonny breast-knots!
> Blithe and merry were we a',
> When we put on the breast-knots!'

Ye're welcome hame, my bonny leddy! and ye're welcome hame, my braw Maister! Eh, but ye *are* welcome hame!—'tane and tither, baith thegither.' Praise be blessed!"

"Thank you, Maggie, we're very, very glad to be home, and very glad to see you again," said Esmè.

"And we've lost no time in paying you a visit, Maggie," said Cosmo.

"Veesit *me?* Hoot awa', my bonny Maister! hoot awa'! Eh, Maister! I tellt ye I was nae spae-wife, but am I *no* a spae-wife? 'Ye'll be a baron bauld,' quo' I; and are ye *no* a baron bauld? I said ye wus sly: and eh, Maister! but ye *wus* sly. Ye've ta'en a'thing—gudes an' gear, house an' ha', mailen an' biggen—an' a lass that's the wale o' the warld, forbye. I'm a spae-wife noo, and aiblins ye'll cross auld Maggie's han' wi' siller, for the luck that's come and the gude that's comin'."

Cosmo gave her a piece of gold, and wishing her good-night, he and Esmè turned, in haste, to go.

"What's yer hurry?" cried Maggie. "Bide a wee, till I sing ye 'Huntingtower.'"

"Not to-night, Maggie; we're terribly late."

"Ae verse, then?"

"Well, then, one, but only one."

"I'll sing the last; it's the bonniest:—

"'Huntingtower is mine, lassie!
Huntingtower is mine, Jeanie!
Huntingtower an' a' Blairgower,
And a' that's MINE IS THINE, lassie!'"

THE END.

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