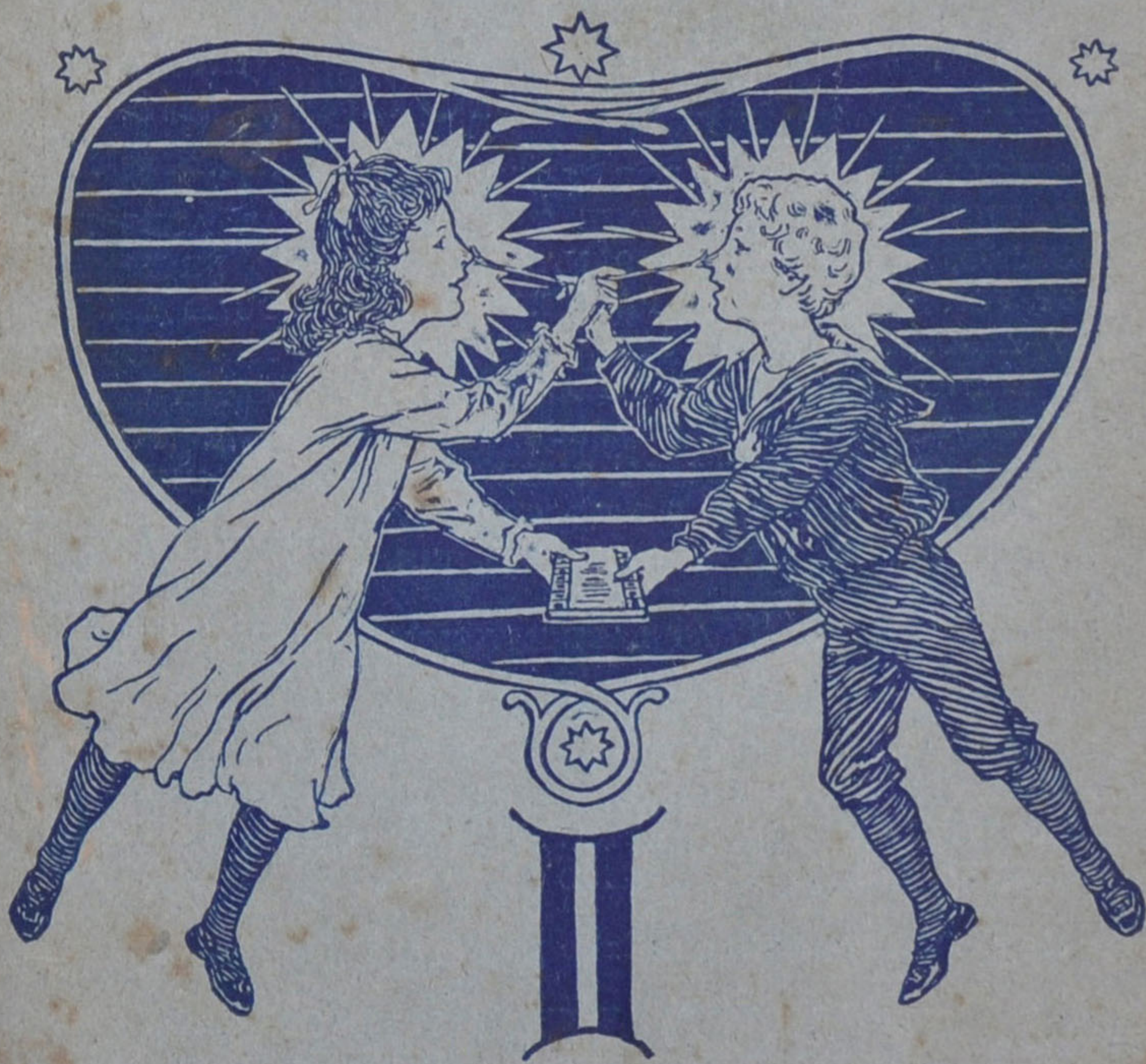


THE HEAVENLY TWINNS

BY SARAH GRAND



LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN
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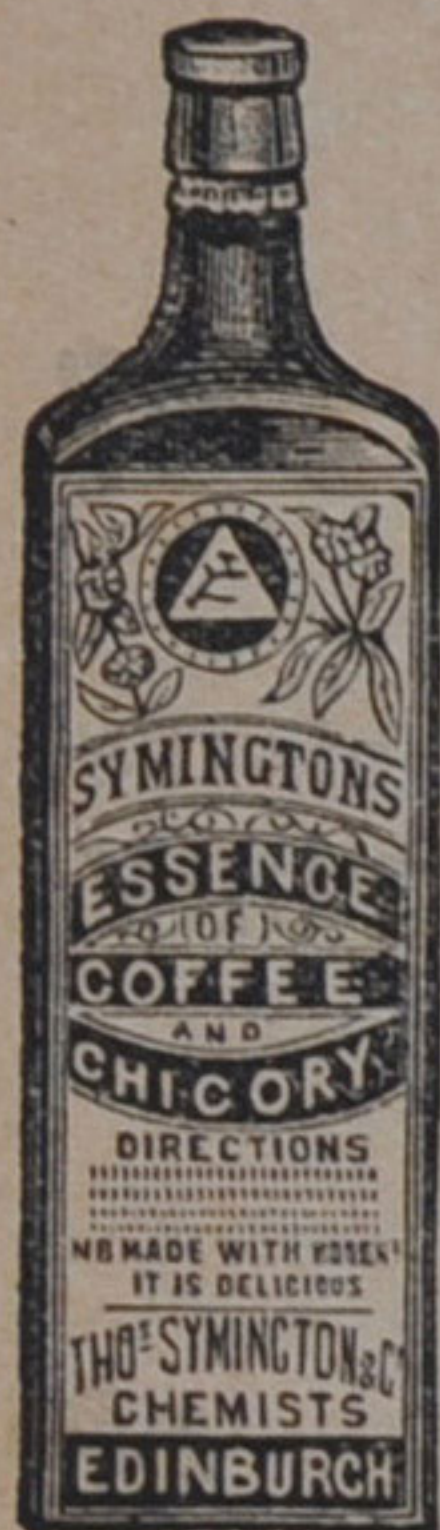
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BY SARAH GRAND

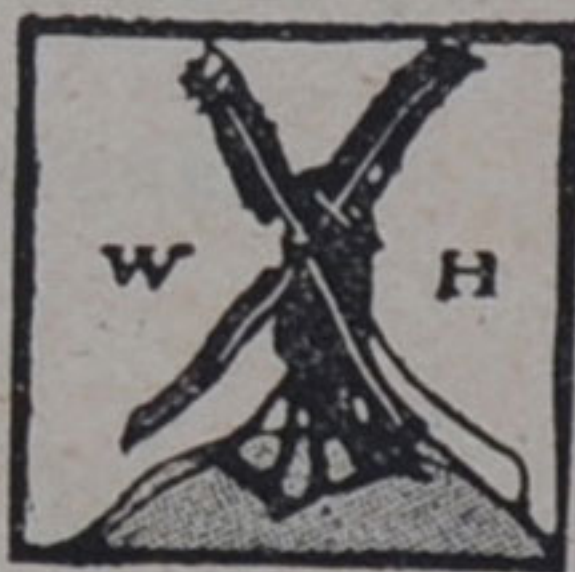
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THE HEAVENLY
TWIN

BY SARAH GRAND

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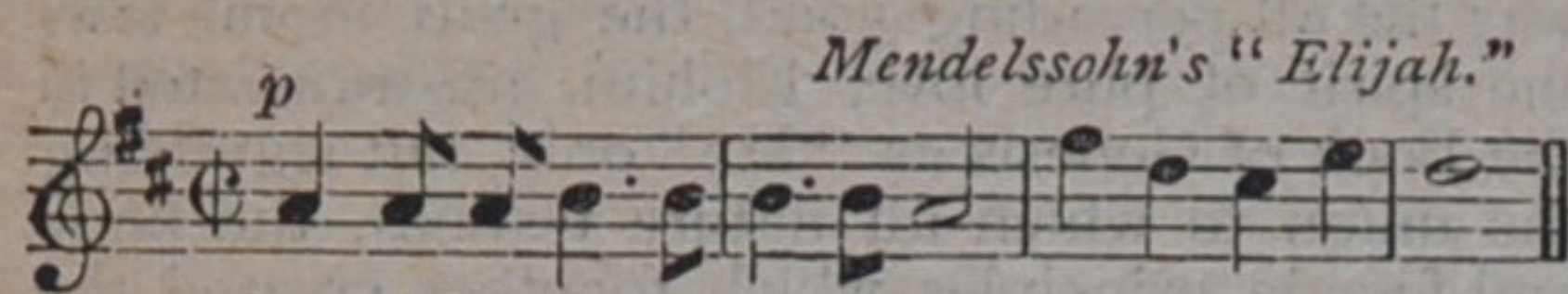
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BOOK I

The time is racked with birth-pangs ; every hour
Brings forth some gasping truth, and truth new-born
Looks a misshapen and untimely growth,
The terror of the household and its shame,
A monster coiling in its nurse's lap
That some would strangle, some would starve ;
But still it breathes, and passed from hand to hand,
And suckled at a hundred half-clad breasts
Comes slowly to its stature and its form,
Calms the rough ridges of its dragon scales,
Changes to shining locks its snaky hair,
And moves transfigured into Angel guise,
Welcomed by all that cursed its hour of birth,
And folded in the same encircling arms
That cast it like a serpent from their hold !

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

PROEM



He, watching o - ver Is - ra - el, slumbers not, nor sleeps.

FROM the high cathedral tower the solemn assurance floated forth to be a warning, or a promise, according to the mental state of those whose ears it filled; and the mind, familiar with the phrase, continued it involuntarily, carrying the running accompaniment, as well as the words and the melody, on to the end. After the last reverberation of the last stroke of every hour had died away, and just when expectation had been succeeded by the sense of silence, they rang it out by day and night—the bells—and the four winds of heaven by day and night spread it abroad over the great wicked city, and over the fair flat country, by many a tiny township and peaceful farmstead and scattered hamlet, on, on, it was said, to the sea—to the sea, which was twenty miles away!

But there were many who doubted this; though good men and true, who knew the music well, declared they had heard it, every note distinct, on summer evenings when they sat alone on the beach and the waves were still; and it sounded then, they said, like the voice of a tenor who sings to himself softly in murmurous monotonies. And some thought this must be true, because those who said it knew the music well; but others maintained that it could not be true just for that very reason; while others again, although they confessed that they knew nothing of the distance sound may travel under special circumstances, ventured, nevertheless, to assert that the chime the people heard on those occasions was ringing in their own hearts; and, indeed, it would have been strange if those in whose mothers' ears it had rung before they were born, who knew it for one of their first sensations, and felt it to be, like a blood relation, a part of themselves, though having a separate existence, had not carried the memory of it with them wherever they went, ready to respond at any moment, like sensitive chords vibrating to a touch.

But everything in the world that is worth a thought becomes food for controversy sooner or later, and the chime was no exception to the rule. Differences of opinion regarding it had always been numerous and extreme, and it was amusing to listen to the wordy warfare which was continually being waged upon the subject.

There were people living immediately beneath it who wished it far enough, they said, but they used to boast about it, nevertheless, when they went to other places—just as they did about their troublesome children, whom they declared, in like manner, that they expected to be the death of them when they and their worrying ways were within range of criticism. It was a flagrant instance of the narrowness of small humanity,

which judges people and things, not on their own merits, but with regard to their effect upon itself; a circumstance being praised to-day because importance is to be derived from *its* importance, and blamed to-morrow because a bilious attack makes thought on any subject irritating.

Other people liked the idea of the chime, but were not content with its arrangement; if it had been set in another way, you know, it would have been so different, they asserted, with as much emphasis as if there were wisdom in the words. And some said it would have been more effective if it had not rung so regularly; and some maintained that it owed its power to that same regularity which suggested something permanent in this weary world of change. Among the minor details of the discussion there was one point in particular which exercised the more active minds, but did not seem likely ever to be settled. It was as to whether the expression given to the announcement by the bells did not vary at different hours of the day and night, or at different seasons of the year at all events; and opinion differed as widely upon this point as we are told it did on one occasion in some other place with regard to the question whether a fish weighed heavier when it was dead than when it was alive—a question that would certainly never have been settled either, had it not happened, after a long time and much discussion, that someone accidentally weighed a fish, when it was found there was no difference. The question of expression, however, could not be decided in that way, expression being imponderable; and it was pretty generally acknowledged that the truth could not be ascertained, and must therefore remain a matter of opinion. But that did not stop the talk. Once, indeed, someone declared positively that the state of a man's feelings at the moment would influence his perceptions, and make the chimes sound glad when he was glad, and mournful when he was melancholy; but nobody liked the solution.

Let them wrangle as they might, however, the citizens were proud of their chime, and for a really good reason. It meant something! It was not a mere jingle of bells, as most chimes are, but a phrase with a distinct idea in it which they understood as we understand a foreign language when we can read it without translating it. It might have puzzled them to put the phrase into other words, but they had it off pat enough as it stood, and they held it sacred, which is why they quarrelled about it, it being usual for men to quarrel about what they hold sacred, as if the thing could only be maintained by hot insistence—the things they hold sacred, that is—although they cannot be sure of them, like the forms of a religion which admit of controversy, as distinguished from the God they desire to worship, about whom they have no doubt, and therefore never dispute.

In this latter respect, however, the case of the people of Morningquest was just the reverse of that which obtains in most other places, for in consequence of the hourly insistence of the chime, their most impressive monitor, they talked much more of Him whom they should worship than of various ways to worship Him; and the most persistent of all the questions which occupied their attention arose out of the involuntary but continuous effort of one generation after another to define with scientific accuracy and to everybody's satisfaction His exact nature and attributes; in consequence of which efforts there had come to be several most distinct but quite contradictory ideas upon the subject. There were some simple-minded folk to whom the chime typified a God essentially masculine, and like a man, hugely exaggerated, but somewhat amorphous, because they could not see exactly in what the exaggeration consisted except in the size of him. They pictured him sitting alone on a throne of ivory and gold inlaid with precious stones; and recited the catalogue of those mentioned in the Book of the Revelation by preference as imparting a fine scriptural flavour to the idea. And he sat upon the throne day and night, looking down upon the earth, and never did anything else nor felt it monotonous. Buddha himself, in Nirvana, could not have attained to a greater perfection of contemplation than that with which they credited this curious divinity, who served solely for a finish to their mental range as the sky was to their visual; a useful point at which to aim their rudimentary faculty of reverence.

But others, again, of a different order of intelligence, had passed beyond this stage and saw in him more

of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised;

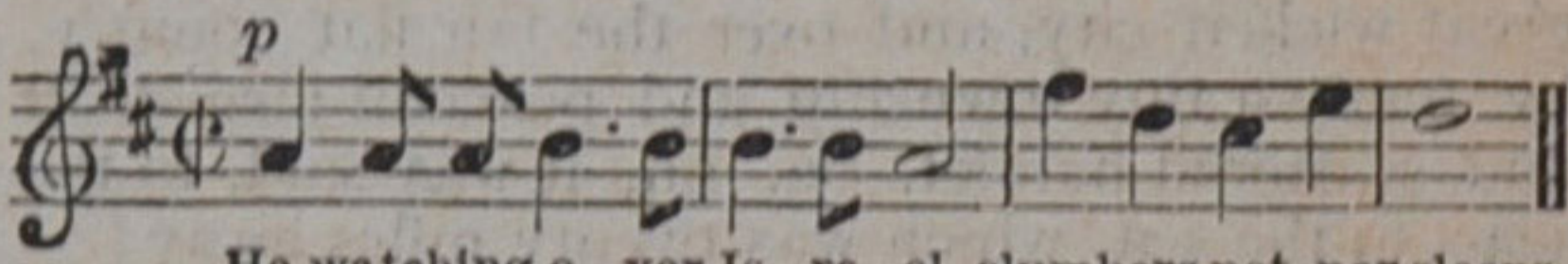
very like Jove, but unmarried. He was both beneficent and jealous, and had to be propitiated by regular attendance at church; but further than that he was not exacting; and therefore they ventured to take his name in vain when they were angry, and also to call upon him for help, with many apologies, when there was nobody else to whom they could apply; although, so long as the current of their lives ran smoothly on, they seldom troubled their heads about him at all.

There were deeper natures than those, however, who were not content with this small advance, and these last had by degrees, as suited their convenience, but without perceiving it, gradually discovered in him every attribute, good, bad, or indifferent, which they found in themselves, thus ascribing to him a nature of a highly complex and most extraordinarily inconsistent kind, less that of a god than of a demon. To them he was still a great shape like a man, but a shape to be loved as well as feared; a God of peace, who patronised war; a gentle lamb, who looked on at carnage complacently; a just God, who condemned the innocent to suffer; an omnipotent God, who was powerless to make his law supreme; and they reserved to themselves the right of constantly adding to or slightly altering this picture; but having completed it so far, they were thoroughly well satisfied with it, and, incongruous as it was, they managed to make it the most popular of all the presentments, partly because, being so flexible, it could be adjusted to every state of mind; but also because there was money in it. Numbers of people lived by it, and made name and fame besides; and these kept it going by damaging

anybody who ventured to question its beauty. For there is no faith that a man upholds so forcibly as the one by which he earns his livelihood, whether it be faith in the fetish he has helped to make, or in a particular kind of leather that sells quickest because it wears out so fast.

In these latter days, however, it began to appear as if the supremacy of the great masculine idea was at last being seriously threatened, for even in Morningquest a new voice of extraordinary sweetness had already been heard, not *his*, the voice of man; but *theirs*, the collective voice of humanity, which declared that "He, watching," was the all-pervading good, the great moral law, the spirit of pure love, Elohim, mistranslated in the Book of Genesis as "He" only, but signifying the union to which all nature testifies, the male and female principles which together created the universe, the infinite father and mother, without whom, in perfect accord and exact equality, the best government of nations has always been crippled and abortive.

Those who heard this final voice were they who loved the chime most truly, and revered it; but they did not speak about it much: only, when the message sounded, they listened with that full-hearted pleasure which is the best praise and thanks. Mendelssohn must have felt it when the melody first occurred to him, and the words had wedded themselves to the music in his soul!



He, watching o - ver Is - ra - el, slumbers not, nor sleeps.

And the chime certainly had power to move the hearts of many; but it would be hard to say when it had most power, or upon whom. Doubtless, the majority of those who had ears to hear in the big old-fashioned city heard not, use having dulled their faculties; or if, perchance, the music reached them, it conveyed no idea to their minds, and passed unheeded. It was but an accustomed measure, one more added to the myriad other sounds that make up the buzz of life, and help, like each separate note of a chord, to complete the varied murmur which is the voice of "a whole city full."

But of course there were times when it was specially apt to strike home—in the early morning, for instance, when the mind was fresh and hope was strong enough to interpret the assurance into a promise of joy; and again at noon, when fatigue was growing, and the mind perceived a sympathetic melancholy in the tones which was altogether restful; but it was at midnight it had most power. It seemed to rise then to the last pitch of enthusiasm, sounding triumphant, like the special effort that finishes a strain, as if to speed the departing interval of time; but when it rang again, after the first hour of the new day, its voice had dropped, as it were, to that tone of indifference which expresses the accustomed doing of some monotonous duty which has become too much of a habit to excite either pleasure or pain. To the tired watcher then, for whom the notes were mere tones conveying no idea, the soft melancholy cadence, dulled by distance, was like the half-stifled echo of her own last stifled sigh.

It is likely, however, that the chime failed less of its effect outside the city than it did within; but there again it depended upon the hearer. When the mellow tones floated above the heath where the gipsies camped, only one, perchance,

might listen, lifting her bright eyes with pleasure and longing in them, dumbly, as a child might, yet showing for a moment some glimmering promise of a soul. But to many in the village close at hand the chime brought comfort. It seemed to assure the sick, counting the slow hours, that they were not forsaken, and helped them to bear their pain with patience; it seemed to utter to the wayworn a word which told them their trouble was not in vain; it seemed to invite all those who waited and were anxious to trust their care to Him and seek repose. It was all this, and much more, to many people: and yet, when it spread in another direction over the fields, it meant nothing to the yawning ploughman, either musical or poetical, had no significance whatever for him if it were not of the time of day, gathered, however, with the help of sundry other sensations, of which hunger and fatigue were chief. It probably conveyed as much, and neither more nor less, to the team he drove.

But perhaps of all the affairs of life with which the chime had mingled, the most remarkable, could they be collected and recorded, would be the occasions on which the hearing of the message had marked a turning-point in the career of some one person, as happened, once on a summer afternoon, when it was heard by a Lancashire collier—a young lad with an unkempt mop of golden hair, delicate features, and limbs which were too refined for his calling, who was coming up the River Morne on a barge.

The river winds for a time through a fertile, undulating bit of country, and nothing of the city can be seen until you are almost in it, except the castle of the Duke of Morningquest, high perched on a hill on the farther side, and the spire of the cathedral, which might not attract your attention, however, if it were not pointed out to you above the trees. When the chime floated over this sparsely peopled tract, filling the air with music, but coming from no one could tell whence, there was something mysterious in the sound of it to an imaginative listener in so apparently remote a place; and once, twice, as the long hours passed, the young collier heard it ring, and wondered. He had nothing to do but listen, and watch the man on the bank who led the horse that was towing the barge; or address a rare remark to his solitary companion—an old sailor, dressed in a sou'-wester, blue jersey, and the invariable drab trousers, tar-besprent, and long boots, of his calling, who steered automatically, facing the meadows in beautiful abstraction. He would have faced an Atlantic gale, however, with that same look.

When the chime rang out for the third time, the young collier spoke—

"It's the varse of a song, maybe?" he suggested.

"Ay, lad," was the laconic rejoinder.

The barge moved on—passed a little farmhouse close to the water's edge; passed some lazy cattle standing in a field flicking off flies with their tails; passed a patient fisherman, who had not caught a thing that day, and scarcely expected to, but still fished on. The sun sparkled down on the water; the weary man and horse plodded along the bank; far away, a sweet bird sang; and the collier spoke again.

"Dost tha' know the varse?" he said.

The old man had been brought up in those parts; he knew it well, and slowly repeated it to the lad, who listened without a sign, sitting with his dreamy eyes fixed on the water—

"He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps."

There was another long silence, and then the lad spoke once more, with apathetic gravity, asking, "Who's *He*?"

The old man kept his eyes fixed on a distant reach of the river, and moved no muscle of his face.

"I guess it's Christ," he said at last.

"Ah niver 'eerd tell on 'im," the collier answered slowly.

"Hast niver 'eerd tell on Christ?" the old man asked, in measured, machine-like tones. "I thowt ivery one know'd on 'im. Why, what religion are you?"

"Well, me feyther's a Liberal—leastways 'im as brought me up," was the passionless rejoinder, slowly spoken; "but ah doan't know no one o' the name o' Christ, an', what's more, ah's sure 'e doan't work down our way,"—with which he sauntered forward with his hands in his trouser pockets, and sat in the bow; and the old man steered on as before.

How like a mind is to a river! both may be pure and transparent and lovable, and strong to support and admirable; each may mirror the beauties of earth and sky, and still have a wonderful beauty of its own to delight us; both are always moving onward, bound irresistibly to be absorbed in a great ocean mystery, to be swept away irreclaimably, without hope of return, but leaving memories of themselves in good or evil wrought by them; and both are pure at the outset, but can be contaminated, when they in turn contaminate; and, being perverted in their use, become accursed, and curse again with all the more effect because the province of each was to bless.

The collier lad in the bow of the barge felt something of the fascination of the river that day. He saw it sparkle in the sunshine, he heard it ripple along its banks, he felt the slow and dreamy motion of the boat it bore; and his mind was filled with unaccustomed thought, and a strange yearning which he did not understand. There was something singularly attractive about the lad, although his clothes were tattered, his golden hair and delicate skin were begrimed, his great bright eyes had no intelligent expression in them, and there was that discontented undisciplined look about his mouth which is common to uneducated men. He had no human knowledge, but he had capacity, and he had music, the divine gift, in his soul, and the voice of an angel to utter it.

What passed through his dim consciousness in the interval which followed his last remark, no one will ever know; but the chime had once more sounded; and, suddenly, as he sat there, he took up the strain, and sang it—and the labourers in the fields, and the loiterers by the river, and the ladies in their gardens, even the very cattle in the meadows, looked up and listened, wondering, while he varied the simple melody, as singers can, finding new meaning in the message, and filling the summer silence with perfect raptures of ecstatic sound.

It was a voice to gladden the hearts of men, and one who heard it knew this, and followed the barge, and took the lad and had him taught, so that in after days the world was ready to fall at his feet and worship the gift.

And so time passed. Change followed change, but the chime was immutable. And always, whatever came, it rang out calmly over the beautiful old city of Morningquest, and entered

into it, and was part of the life of it, mixing itself impartially with the good and evil; with all the sin and suffering, the pitiful pettiness, the indifference, the cruelty, and every form of misery-begetting vice, as much as with the purity above reproach, the charity, the self-sacrifice, the unswerving truth, the patient endurance, and courage not to be daunted, which are in every city—mixing itself with these as the light and air of heaven do, and with effects doubtless as unexpected and as fine; and ready also to be a help to the helpless, a guide to the rash and straying, a comfort to the comfortless, a reproach to the reckless, and a warning to the wicked. Perhaps an ambitious stranger, passing through the city, would hear the chime, and pause to listen, and in the pause a flash of recollection would show him the weary way he had gone, the disappointments which were the inevitable accompaniments of even his most brilliant successes in the years of toil that had been his since he made the world his idol and swerved from the Higher Life; and then he would ask himself the good of it all, and finding that there was no good, he would go his way, cherishing the new impression, and asking of all things—

“Is it too late now?”

And perhaps at the same moment a lady rolling past in her carriage would say, “How sweet!” or the beauty of the bells might win some other thoughtless tribute from her, if she heard the chime at all; but probably she never heard it, because the accustomed tones were as familiar as the striking of the hour—the striking of an hour that bore no special significance for her, and therefore set no chord vibrating in her soul. The thoughts of her mind deafened her heart to it as completely as the thunder of a waggon had at the same time deafened the waggoner’s ears while the bells uttered their message above him. And so it was with the doctor, overworked and anxious, hurrying on his rounds; the grasping lawyer, absorbed in calculation, and all the other money-grubbers; the indolent woman, the pleasure-seeker, and the hard-pressed toiler for daily bread: if they heard they heeded not, because their hour had not yet come. At least this is what some thought, who believed that for everyone a special hour would come, when they would be called, and then left to decide, as it were, between life and death-in-life: if they accepted life, the next message would be fraught with strength and help and blessing; but if they rejected it, the bells would utter their condemnation, and leave them to their fate.

THE HEAVENLY TWINS

BOOK I

CHILDHOODS AND GIRLHOODS

The spring is the pleasantest of the seasons ; and the young of most animals, though far from being completely fashioned, afford a more agreeable sensation than the full grown ; because the imagination is entertained with the promise of something more, and does not acquiesce in the present object of the sense.—BURKE on the *Sublime*.

I am inclined to agree with Francis Galton in believing that education and environment produce only a small effect on the mind of anyone, and that most of our qualities are innate.—DARWIN.

CHAPTER I

AT nineteen Evadne looked out of narrow eyes at an untried world inquiringly. She wanted to know. She found herself forced to put prejudice aside in order to see beneath it, deep down into the sacred heart of things, where the truth is, and the bewildering clash of human precept with human practice ceases to vex. And this not of design, but of necessity. It was a need of her nature to know. When she came across something she did not understand, a word, a phrase, or an allusion to a phase of life, the thing became a haunting demon only to be exorcised by positive knowledge on the subject. Ages of education, ages of hereditary preparation, had probably gone to the making of such a mind, and rendered its action inevitable. For generations knowledge is acquired, or, rather, instilled by force in families, but, once in a way, there comes a child who demands instruction as a right ; and in her own family Evadne appears to have been that child. Not that she often asked for information. Her faculty was sufficient to enable her to acquire it without troubling herself or anybody else, a word being enough on some subjects to make whole regions of thought intelligible to her. It was as if she only required to be reminded of things she had learnt before. Her mother said she was her most satisfactory child. She had been easy of education in the schoolroom. She had listened to instruction with interest and intelligence, and had apparently accepted every article of faith in God and man which had been offered for her guidance through life with unquestioning confidence ; at least she had never been heard to object to any time-honoured axiom. And she did, in fact, accept them all, but only provisionally. She wanted to know. Silent, sociable, sober, and sincere, she had walked over the course of her early education and gone on far beyond it with such ease that those in authority over her never

suspected the extent to which she had outstripped them.

It was her father who struck the keynote to which the tune of her early intellectual life was set. She was about twelve years old at the time, and they were sitting out on the lawn at Fraylingay one day after dinner, as was their wont in the summer—he, on this occasion, under the influence of a good cigar, mellow in mind and moral in sentiment, but inclining to be didactic for the moment because the coffee was late ; she in a receptive mood, ready to gather silently, and store with care, in her capacious memory any precept that might fall from his lips, to be taken out and tried as opportunity offered.

“Where is your mother ?” he asked.

“I don't know, father,” Evadne answered. “I think she is in the drawing-room.”

“Never say you *think*, my dear, about matters of fact,” he said. “When it is possible to *know*, it is your business to find out, and if you cannot find out you must say you don't know. It is moral cowardice, injurious to yourself, not to own your ignorance ; and you may also be misleading, or unintentionally deceiving, someone else.”

“How might the moral cowardice of not owning my ignorance be injurious to myself, father ?” she asked.

“Why, don't you see,” he answered, “you would suffer in two ways ? If the habit of inaccuracy became confirmed, your own character would deteriorate ; and by leading people to suppose that you are as wise as themselves, you lose opportunities of obtaining useful information. They won't tell you things they think you know already.”

Evadne bent her brows upon this lesson and reflected ; and doubtless it was the origin of the verbal accuracy for which she afterward became notable. Patient investigation had always been a pleasure, but from that time forward it became a

principle also. She understood from what her father had said that to know the facts of life exactly is a positive duty; which, in a limited sense, was what he had intended to teach her; but the extent to which she carried the precept would have surprised him.

Her mind was prone to experiment with every item of information it gathered, in order to test its practical value; if she could turn it to account she treasured it; if not, she rejected it, from whatever source it came. But she was not herself aware of any reservation in her manner of accepting instruction. The trick was innate, and in no way interfered with her faith in her friends, which was profound. She might have justified it, however, upon her father's authority, for she once heard him say to one of her brothers, "Find out for yourself, and form your own opinions," a lesson which she had laid to heart also. Not that her father would have approved of her putting it into practice. He was one of those men who believe emphatically that a woman should hold no opinion which is not of masculine origin, and the maxims he had for his boys differed materially in many respects from those which he gave to his girls. But these precepts of his were, after all, only matches to Evadne which fired whole trains of reflection, and lighted her to conclusions quite other than those at which he had arrived himself. In this way, however, he became her principal instructor. She had attached herself to him from the time that she could toddle, and had acquired from his conversation a proper appreciation of masculine precision of thought. If his own statements were not always accurate, it was from no want of respect for the value of facts; for he was great on the subject, and often insisted that a lesson or principle of action is contained in the commonest fact; but he snubbed Evadne promptly all the same on one occasion when she mentioned a fact of life, and drew a principle of action therefrom for herself. "Only confusion comes of women thinking for themselves on social subjects," he said. "You must let me decide all such matters for you, or you must refer them to your husband when you come under his control."

Evadne did not pay much attention to this, however, because she remembered another remark of his with which she could not make it agree. The remark was that women never had thought for themselves, and that therefore it was evident that they could not think, and that they should not try. Now, as it is obvious that confusion cannot come of a thing that has never been done, the inaccuracy in one or other of these statements was glaring enough to put both out of the argument. But what Evadne did note was the use of the word control.

As she grew up she became her father's constant companion in his walks, and, flattered by her close attention, he fell into the way of talking a good deal to her. He enjoyed the fine flavour of his own phrase-making, and so did she, but in such a silent way that nothing ever led him to suspect it was having any but the most desirable effect upon her mind. She never attempted to argue, and only spoke in order to ask a question on some point which was not clear to her, or to make some small comment when he seemed to expect her to do so. He often contradicted himself, and the fact never escaped her attention, but she loved him with a beautiful confidence, and her respect remained unshaken.

When she had to set herself right between his discrepancies she did not dwell on the latter as

faults in him, but only thought of how wise he was when he warned her to be accurate, and felt grateful. And in this way she formed her mind upon his sayings; and as a direct result of the long, informal, generally peripatetic lectures to which she listened without prejudice, and upon which she brought unsuspected powers of discrimination to bear, he had unconsciously made her a more logical, reasoning, reasonable being than he believed it possible for a woman to be. Poor papa! All that he really knew of his most interesting daughter was that she was growing up a good child, physically strong and active, morally well educated, with a fortunately equable temper; and that she owed a great deal to him. What, precisely, was never defined. But when the thought of his kindness recurred to him it always suffused him with happiness.

He was a portly man, with a place in the country and a house in town; not rich for his position, but well off; a magistrate, and much respected; well educated in the ideas of the ancients, with whom his own ideas on many subjects stopped short, and hardly to be called intellectual; a moderate Churchman, a bigoted Conservative, narrow and strongly prejudiced rather than highly principled. He was quite ignorant of the moral progress of the world at the present time, and ready to resent even the upward tendency of evolution when it presented itself to him in the form of any change, including, of course, changes for the better, and more especially so if such change threatened to bring about an improvement in the position of women, or increase the weight of their influence for good in the world. The mere mention of the subject made him rabid, and he grew apoplectic whenever he reflected upon the monstrous pretensions of the sex at the present time. But the thing that roused his scorn and indignation most was when a woman ventured to enter any protest against the established order of iniquity. He allowed that a certain number of women must of necessity be abandoned, and raised no objection to that; but what he did consider intolerable was that any one woman should make a stand against the degradation of her own sex. He thought that immoral.

He was well enough to live with, however, this obstinate English country gentleman, although without sympathetic insight, and liable to become a petty domestic tyrant at any moment. "Sound" was what he would have called himself. And he was a man to be envied upon the whole, for his family loved him, and his friends knew no ill of him.

CHAPTER II

EVADNE, like the Vicar of Wakefield, was by nature a lover of happy human faces, and she could be playful herself on occasion; but she had little if any of the saving sense of humour.

Her habit was to take everything *au grand sérieux*, and to consider it. When other people were laughing she would be gravely observant, as if she were solving a problem; and she would sooner have thought of trying to discover what combination of molecules resulted in a joke, with a view to benefiting her species by teaching them how to produce jokes at will, than of trying to be witty herself. She had, too, a quite irritating trick of remaining, to all outward seeming, stolidly unmoved by events which were causing an otherwise general commotion; but in cases of

danger or emergency she was essentially swift to act—as on one occasion, for instance, when the Hamilton House twins were at Fraylingay.

The twins had arrived somewhat late in the married lives of their parents, and had been welcomed as angel visitants, under which fond delusion they were christened respectively Angelica and Theodore. Before they were well out of their nurse's arms, however, society, with discernment, had changed Theodore's name to Diavolo, but "Angelica" was sanctioned, the irony being obvious.

The twins were alike in appearance, but not nearly so much so as twins usually are. It would have been quite easy to distinguish them apart, even if one had not been dark and the other fair, and for this mercy everybody connected with them had reason to be thankful, for as soon as they reached the age of active indiscretion they would certainly have got themselves mixed if they could. Angelica was the dark one, and she was also the elder, taller, stronger, and wickeder of the two, the organiser and commander of every expedition. Before they were five years old everybody about the place was upon the alert, both in self-defence and also to see that the twins did not kill themselves. Bars of iron had to be put on the upstairs windows to prevent them making ladders of the traveller's joy and wistaria, modes of egress which they very much preferred to commonplace doors; and Mr. Hamilton-Wells had been reluctantly obliged to have the moat, which was deep and full of fish, and had been the glory of Hamilton House for generations, drained for fear of accidents. Argument was unavailing with the twins as a means of repression, but they were always prepared to argue out any question of privilege with their father and mother cheerfully. Punishment, too, had an effect quite other than that intended. They were interested at the moment, but they would slap each other's hands and put each other in the corner for fun five minutes after they had received similar chastisement in solemn earnest.

They would have lived out of doors altogether by choice, and they managed to make their escape in all weathers. If the vigilant watch that was kept upon them were relaxed for a moment, they disappeared as if by magic, and would probably only be recovered at the farthest limit of their father's property, or in the kitchen of some neighbouring country gentleman, where they were sure to be popular. They were always busy about something, and when every usual occupation failed, they fought each other. After a battle they counted scars and scratches for the honour of having most, and if there were not bruises enough to satisfy one of them, the other was always obligingly ready to fight again until there were.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells had great faith in the discipline of the Church service for them, and was anxious that they should be early accustomed to go there. They behaved pretty well while the solemnity was strange enough to awe them, and one Sunday when Lady Adeline—their mother—could not accompany him, Mr. Hamilton-Wells ventured to go alone with them. He took the precaution to place them on either side of him so as to separate them and interpose a solid body between them and any signals they might make to each other; but in the quietest part of the service, when everybody was kneeling, some movement of Diavolo's attracted his attention for a moment from Angelica, and when he looked

again the latter had disappeared. She had discovered that it was possible to creep from pew to pew beneath the seats, and had started to explore the church. On her way, however, she observed a pair of stout legs belonging to a respectable elderly woman who was too deep in her devotion to be aware of the intruder, and, being somewhat astonished by their size, she proceeded to test their quality with a pin, the consequence being an appalling shriek from the woman, which started a shrill treble cry from herself. The service was suspended, and Mr. Hamilton-Wells, the most precise of men, hastened down the aisle, and fished his daughter out, an awful spectacle of dust, from under the seat, incontinently.

When Mr. and Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells went from home for any length of time they were obliged to take their children with them, as servants who knew the latter would rather leave than be left in charge of them, and this was how it happened that Evadne made their acquaintance at an early age.

It was during their first visit to Fraylingay, while they were still quite tiny, and she was hardly in her teens, that the event referred to in illustration of one of Evadne's characteristics occurred.

The twins had arrived late in the afternoon, and were taken into the dining-room, where the table was already decorated for dinner. It evidently attracted a good deal of their attention, but they said nothing. At dessert, however, to which Evadne had come down with the elder children, the dining-room door was seen to open with portentous slowness, and there appeared in the aperture two little figures in long nightgowns, their forefingers in their mouths, their inquisitive noses tilted in the air, and their bright eyes round with astonishment. It was like the middle of the night to them, and they had expected to find the room empty.

"Oh, you naughty children!" Lady Adeline exclaimed.

"The *darlings!*" cried Mrs. Frayling, Evadne's mother. "Do let them come in," and she picked up Angelica, and held her on her knee, one of the other ladies at the opposite end of the long table taking Diavolo up at the same time. But the moment the children found themselves on a level with the table they made a dart for the centre-piece simultaneously on their hands and knees, regardless of the smash of dessert plates, decanters, wineglasses, and fruit dishes, which they upset by the way.

"It *is!*" shrieked Angelica, thumping the flat mirror which was part of the table decorations triumphantly.

"It is *what?*" cried Lady Adeline, endeavouring to reach the child.

"It's looking-glass, mamma. Diavolo said it was water."

There was much amusement at the words, and at the quaint spectacle of the two little creatures sitting amid the wreckage in the middle of the table not a bit abashed by the novelty of their conspicuous position. Only Evadne, who was standing behind her mother's chair, remained grave. She seemed to be considering the situation severely, and, acting on her own responsibility, she picked Diavolo up in the midst of the general hilarity, and carried him out of the room with her hand pressed tight on his thigh. The child had come down armed with an open penknife, with which to defend Angelica should they encounter

any ogres or giants on the stairs, and in scrambling up the table he had managed to strike himself in the thigh with it, and had severed the femoral artery; but, with the curious shame which makes some children dislike to own that they are hurt, he had contrived to conceal the accident for a moment with his nightgown under cover of the flowers, and it was only Evadne's observant eye and presence of mind that had saved his life. No one in the house could make a tourniquet, and she sat with the child on her knee while a doctor was being fetched, keeping him quiet as by a miracle, and stopping the hemorrhage with the pressure of her thumb, not even his parents daring to relieve her, since Diavolo had never been known to be still so long in his life with anybody else. She held him till the operation of tying the artery was safely accomplished, by which time Mr. Diavolo was sufficiently exhausted to be good and go to sleep; and then she quietly fainted. But she was about again in time to catch him when he woke, and keep him quiet, and so by unwearied watching she prevented accidents until all danger was over.

Diavolo afterward heard his parents praise her in unmeasured terms to *her* parents one day in her absence. She happened to return while they were still in the room, and, being doubtless wide awake to the advantages of such a connection, he took the opportunity of promising solemnly, in the presence of such respectable witnesses, to marry her as soon as he was able.

She had added the word "tourniquet" to her vocabulary during this time, and having looked it up in the dictionary, she requested the doctor to be so good as to teach her to make one. While doing so the doctor became interested in his silent, intelligent pupil, and it ended in his teaching her all that a young lady could learn of bandaging, of antidotes to poisons, of what to do in case of many possible accidents, and also of nursing, theoretically.

But this was not a solitary instance of the quiet power of the girl which already compelled even elderly gentlemen, much overworked and self-absorbed, to sacrifice themselves in her service.

CHAPTER III

It is a notable thing that in almost every instance it was her father's influence which forced Evadne to draw conclusions in regard to life quite unlike any of his own, and very distasteful to him. He was the most conservative of men, and yet he was continually setting her mind off at a tangent in search of premises upon which to found ultra-liberal conclusions.

His primitive theories about women and "all that they are good for," for one thing, which differed so materially from the facts as she observed them every day, formed a constant mental stimulus to which her busy brain was greatly indebted. "Women should confine their attention to housekeeping," he remarked once when the talk about the higher education of women first began to irritate elderly gentlemen. "It is all they are fit for."

"Is it?" said Evadne.

"Yes. And they don't know arithmetic enough to do that properly."

"Don't they? Why?" she asked.

"Because they have no brains," he answered.

"But some women have been clever," she ventured seriously.

"Yes, of course; exceptional women. But you can't argue from exceptional women."

"Then ordinary women have no brains, and cannot learn arithmetic?" she concluded.

"Precisely," he answered irritably. Such signs of intelligence always did irritate him, somehow.

Evadne found food for reflection in these remarks. She had done a certain amount of arithmetic herself in the schoolroom, and had never found it difficult, but then she had not gone far enough, perhaps. And she went at once to get a Colenso or a Barnard Smith to see. She found them more fascinating when she attacked them of her own free will and with all her intelligence than she had done when necessity, in the shape of her governess, forced her to pay them some attention, and she went through them both in a few weeks at odd times, and then asked her father's advice about a book on advanced mathematics.

"Advanced mathematics!" he exclaimed.

"Can you keep accounts?"

"I don't know," she answered doubtfully.

"Then what is this nonsense about advanced mathematics?"

"Oh, I have finished Barnard Smith, and I thought I should like to go on," she explained.

"Now, isn't that like your sex?" he observed, smiling at his own superiority. "You pick things up with a parrot-like sharpness, but haven't intelligence enough to make any practical application of them. A woman closely resembles a parrot in her mental processes, and in the use she makes of fine phrases which she does not understand to produce an effect of cleverness—such as 'advanced mathematics'!"

Evadne bent her brow, and let him ruminate a little in infinite self-content, then asked abruptly, "Can men keep accounts who have never seen accounts kept?"

"No, of course not," he answered, seeing in this a new instance of feminine imbecility, and laughing.

"Ah," she observed, then added thoughtfully as she moved away, "I should like to see how accounts are kept."

She never had any more conversation with her father upon this subject, but from that time forward mathematics, which had before been only an incident in the way of lessons, became an interest in life, and a solid part of her education. But, although she found she could do arithmetic without any great difficulty, it never occurred to her either that her father could be wrong or that there might be in herself the making of an exceptional woman. The habit of love and respect kept her attention from any point which would have led to a judgment upon her father, and she was too unconscious of herself as a separate unit to make personal application of anything as yet. Her mind at this time, like the hold of a ship with a general cargo, was merely being stored with the raw materials which were to be distributed over her whole life, and turned by degrees to many purposes, useful, beautiful—not impossibly detestable.

But that remark of her father's about "all that women are fit for," which he kept well watered from time to time with other conventional expressions of a contemptuous kind, was undoubtedly the seed of much more than a knowledge of the higher mathematics. It was that which set her mind off on a long and patient inquiry into the condition and capacity of women, and made her, in the end of the nineteenth century, essentially

herself. But she did not begin her inquiry of set purpose; she was not even conscious of the particular attention she paid to the subject. She had no foregone conclusion to arrive at, no wish to find evidence in favour of the woman which would prove the man wrong. Only, coming across so many sneers at the incapacity of women, she fell insensibly into the habit of asking why. The question to begin with was always, "Why are women such inferior beings?" But, by degrees, as her reading extended, it changed its form, and then she asked herself doubtfully, "Are women such inferior beings?" a position which carried her in front of her father at once by a hundred years, and led her rapidly on to the final conclusion that women had originally no congenital defect of inferiority, and that, although they have still much way to make up, it now rests with themselves to be inferior or not, as they choose.

She had an industrious habit of writing what she thought about the works she studied, and there is an interesting record still in existence of her course of reading between the ages of twelve and nineteen. It consists of one thick volume, on the title-page of which she had written roundly, but without a flourish, "Commonplace Book," and the date. The first entries are made in a careful, unformed, childish hand, and with diffidence evidently; but they became rapidly decided both in caligraphy and tone as she advanced. The handwriting is small and cramped, but the latter probably with a view to economy of space, and it is always clear and neat. There are few erasures or mistakes of grammar or spelling, even from the first, and little tautology; but she makes no attempt at literary style or elegance of expression. Still, all that she says is impressive, and probably on that account. She chooses the words best calculated to express her meaning clearly and concisely, and undoubtedly her meaning is always either a settled conviction or an honest endeavour to arrive at one. It is the honesty, in fact, that is so impressive. She never thinks of trying to shine in the composition of words; there was no idea of budding authorship in her mind; she had no more consciousness of purpose in her writing than she had in her singing, when she sang about the place. The one was as involuntary as the other, and the outcome of similar sensations. It pleased her to write, and it pleased her to sing, and she did both when the impulse came upon her. She must, however, have had considerable natural facility of expression. Writing seems always to have been her best mode of communication. She was shy from the first in conversation, but bold to a fault with her pen. Some of the criticisms she wrote in her "Commonplace Book" are quite exhaustive; most of them are temperate, although she does give way occasionally to bursts of fiery indignation at things which outrage her sense of justice; but the general characteristic is a marked originality, not only in her point of view, but also in the use she makes of quite unpromising materials. In fact, the most notable part of the record is the proof it contains that all the arguments upon which she formed her opinions were found in the enemy's works alone. She had drawn her own conclusions; but after having done so, as it happened, she had the satisfaction of finding confirmation strong in John Stuart Mill on *The Subjection of Women*, which she came across by accident—an accident, by the way, for which Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells was responsible. She brought the book to Fraylingay, and forgot it

when she went home, and Evadne, happening to find it throwing about, took charge of it, read it with avidity, and found for herself a world of thought in which she could breathe freely.

The Vicar of Wakefield was one of her early favourites. She read it several times, and makes mention of it twice in her "Commonplace Book." Her first notice of it is a childish little synopsis, very quaint in its unconscious irony; but interesting, principally from the fact that she was struck even then by the point upon which she afterward became so strong.

"The vicar," she says, "was a good man, and very fond of his wife and family, and they were very fond of him, but his wife was queer, and could only read a little. *And he never taught her to improve herself, although he had books and was learned.*¹ He had two daughters, who were spiteful and did not like other girls to be pretty. They had bad taste, too, and wanted to go to church overdressed, and thought it finer to ride a plough-horse than walk. It does not say that they ever read anything, either. If they had they would have known better. There is a very nasty man in the book called Squire Thornhill, and a nice one called Sir William Thornhill, who was his uncle. Sir William marries Sophia, and Squire Thornhill marries Olivia, although he does not intend to. Olivia was a horrid deceitful girl, and it served her right to get such a husband. They have a brother called Moses, who used to talk philosophy with his father at dinner, and once sold a cow for a gross of green spectacles. A gross is twelve dozen. Of course they were all annoyed, but the vicar himself was cheated by the same man when he went to sell the horse. He seemed to think a great deal of knowing Latin and Greek, but it was not much use to him then. It was funny that he should be conceited about what he knew himself, and not want his wife to know anything. He said to her once, 'I never dispute your abilities to make a goose pie, and I beg you'll leave argument to me'; which she might have thought rude, but perhaps she was not a lady, as ladies do not make goose pies. I forgot, though, they had lost all their money. They had great troubles, and the vicar was put in prison. He was very ill, but preached to the prisoners, and everybody loved him. I like *The Vicar of Wakefield* very much, and if I cannot find another book as nice I shall read it again. *Turn, Gentle Hermit* is silly. I suppose *Punch* took Edwin and Angelina out of it to laugh at them."

Quite three years must have elapsed before she again mentions *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and in the meantime she had been reading a fair variety of books, but for the most part under schoolroom supervision, carefully selected for her. Some, however, she had chosen for herself—during the holidays when discipline was relaxed; but it was a fault which she had to confess, and she does so always, honestly. *Lewes' Life of Goethe* was one of these. She wrote a glowing description of it, at the end of which she says—

"I found the book on a sofa in the drawing-room, and began it without thinking, and read and read until I had nearly finished it, quite forgetting to ask leave. But of course I went at once to tell father as soon as I thought of it. Mother was there too, and inclined to scold; but father frowned, and said, 'Let her alone. It will do her no harm; she won't understand it.' I asked if I might finish it, and he said, 'Oh yes' im-

¹ This is the point alluded to.

patiently. I think he wanted to get rid of me, and I am sorry I interrupted him at an inconvenient time. Mother often does not agree with father, but she always gives in. Very often she is right, however, and he is wrong. Last week she did not want us to go out one day because she was sure it would rain; but he did not think so, and said we had better go. It did rain—poured—and we got wet through, and have had colds ever since, but when we came in mother scolded me for saying, 'You see, you were right.' She said I should be saying, 'I told you so!' next, in a nasty, jeering way as the boys do, which really means rejoicing because somebody else is wrong, and is not generous. I hope I shall never come to that; but I know if I am ever sure of a thing being right which somebody else thinks is wrong, it won't matter what it is or who it is, I shall not give in. I don't see how I could.'

Her pen seldom ran away with her into personal matters like these, in the early part of the book; but from the first she was apt to be beguiled occasionally by the pleasure of perceiving a powerful stimulant under the influence of which everything is lost sight of but the point perceived. She had never to fight a daily and exhausting battle for her private opinions as talkative people have, simply because she rarely if ever expressed an opinion; but her father stood ready always, a post of resistance to innovation, upon which she could sharpen the claws of her conclusion silently whenever they required it.

When next she mentions *The Vicar of Wakefield*, she says expressly—

"I do not remember what I wrote about it the first time I read it, and I will not look to see until I have written what I think now, because I should like to know if I still agree with myself as I was then."

And it is interesting to note how very much she does agree with herself as she "was then"; the feeling, in fact, is the same, but it has passed from her heart to her head, and been resolved by the process into positive opinion, held with conscious knowledge, and delivered with greatly improved power of expression.

"*The Vicar of Wakefield* makes me think a good deal," she continues, "but there is no order in my thoughts. There is, however, one thing in the book that strikes me first and foremost and above all others, which is that the men were educated and the women were ignorant. It is not to be supposed that the women preferred to be ignorant, and therefore I presume they were not allowed the educational advantages upon which the men prided themselves. The men must accordingly have withheld these advantages by main force, yet they do not scorn to sneer at the consequences of their injustice. There is a sneer implied in the vicar's remark about his own wife: 'She could read any English book without much spelling.' That her ignorance was not the consequence of incapacity is proved by the evidence which follows of her intelligence in other matters. Had Mrs. Primrose been educated she might have continued less lovable than the vicar, but she would probably have been wiser. The vicar must always have been conscious of her defects, but had never apparently thought of a remedy, nor does he dream of preventing a repetition of the same defects in his daughters by providing them with a better education. He takes their unteachableness for granted, remarking complacently that an hour of recreation 'was taken up in innocent mirth between my wife and

daughters, and in philosophical arguments between my son and me,' as if 'innocent mirth' were as much as he could reasonably expect from such inferior beings as a wife and daughters must necessarily be. The average schoolgirl of to-day is a child of light on the subject of her own sex compared with the gentle vicar, and incapable, even before her education is half over, of the envy and meanness which the latter thinks it kindest to take a humorous view of, and of the disingenuousness at which he also smiles as the inevitable outcome of feminine inferiority—at least I never met a girl in my position who would not have admired Miss Wilmot's beauty, nor do I know one who would not answer her father frankly, however embarrassing the question might be, if he asked her opinion of a possible lover."

The next entry in the book is on the subject of *Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures*, and, like most of the others, it merits attention from the unexpected view she takes of the position. It does not strike her as being humorous, but pathetic. She feels the misery of it, and she had already begun to hold that human misery is either a thing to be remedied or a sacred subject to be dwelt on in silence; and she considers Mrs. Caudle entirely with a view to finding a cure for her case.

"The Caudles were petty tradespeople," she says, "respectable in their own position, but hardly lovable according to our ideas. Mr. Caudle, with meek persistency, goes out to amuse himself alone when his day's work is done. Mrs. Caudle's day's work never is done. She has the wearing charge of a large family, and the anxiety of making both ends meet on a paltry income, which entails much self-denial and sordid parsimony; but is conscientiously done, if not cheerfully, nevertheless. It is Mr. Caudle, however, who grumbles, making no allowance for extra pressure of work on washing days, when she is too busy to hash the cold mutton. The rule of her life is weariness and worry from morning till night, and for relaxation in the evening she must sit down and mend the children's clothes; and even when that is done she goes to bed with the certainty of being roused from her hard-earned rest by a husband who brings a sickening odour of bad tobacco and spirits home with him, and naturally her temper suffers. She knows nothing of love and sympathy; she has no pleasurable interest in life. Fatigue and worry are succeeded by profound disheartenment. One can imagine that while she was young, the worn garments she was wont to mend during those long lonely evenings were often wet with tears. The dulness must have been deadly, and dulness added to fatigue time after time ended at last not in tears, but in peevish irritation, ebullitions of spleen, and ineffectual resistance. The woman was thoroughly embittered, and the man had to pay the penalty. Whatever pleasure there might have been in their joint lives he had secured for himself, leaving her to stagnate for want of a little variety to keep her feelings flowing wholesomely; and she did stagnate dutifully, but she was to blame for it. Had she gone out and amused herself with other wives similarly situated, and had tobacco and beer, if she liked them, every evening, it would have been better for herself and her husband."

There must have been some system in Evadne's reading, for *The Naggletons* came immediately after *Mrs. Caudle*, and are dismissed curtly enough—

"Vulgar, ill-bred, lower class people," she calls them. "Objectionable to contemplate from every

point of view. But a book which should enlighten the class whom it describes on the subject of their own bad manners. *We don't nag.*"

She owed her acquaintance with the next two books she mentions to the indirect instigation of her father, and she must have read them when she was about eighteen, and emancipated from schoolroom supervision, but not yet fairly entered upon the next chapter of her existence; for they are among the last she notices before she came out.

The date is fixed by an entry which appears on a subsequent page with the note: "I was presented at court to-day by my mother." After this entry life becomes more interesting than literature, evidently, for the book ceases to be a record of reading and thought with an occasional note on people and circumstances, and becomes just the opposite, namely, a diary of events interspersed with sketches of character and only a rare allusion to literature. But, judging by the number and variety and the careful record kept of the works she read, the six months or so immediately preceding her presentation must have been a time of the greatest intellectual activity, her father's influence being, as usual, often apparent as primary instigator. Once, when they were having coffee out on the lawn after dinner, he began a discussion in her hearing about books with another gentleman who was staying in the house, and in the course of it he happened to praise *Roderick Random* and *Tom Jones* eloquently. He said they were superior in their own line to anything which the present day has produced. "They are true to life in every particular," he maintained, "and not only to the life of those times, but of all time. In fact, you feel as you read that it is not fiction, but human nature itself that you are studying; and there is an education in moral philosophy on every page."

Evadne was much impressed, and being anxious to know what an education in moral philosophy might be, she got *Roderick Random* and *Tom Jones* out of the library when she went in that evening, and took them to her own room to study. They were the two books already referred to as being among the last she read just before she came out. They did not please her, but she waded through them from beginning to end conscientiously, nevertheless, and then she made her remarks.

Of *Roderick Random* she wrote—

"The hero is a kind of king-can-do-no-wrong young man; if a thing were not right in itself he acted as if the pleasure of doing it sanctified it to his use sufficiently. After a career of vice, in which he revels without any sense of personal degradation, he marries an amiable girl named Narcissa, and everyone seems to expect that such a union of vice and virtue would be productive of the happiest consequences. In point of fact he should have married Miss Williams, for whom he was in every respect a suitable mate. If anything, Miss Williams was the better of the two, for Roderick sinned in weak wantonness, while she only did so of necessity. They repent together, but she is married to an unsavoury manservant named Strap as a reward; while Roderick considers himself entitled to the peerless Narcissa. Miss Williams, moreover, becomes Narcissa's confidential friend, and the whole disgraceful arrangement is made possible by Narcissa herself, who calmly accepts these two precious associates at their own valuation, and admits them to the closest intimacy without any knowledge of their true characters and early lives.

The fine flavour of real life in the book seems to me to be of the putrid kind, which some palates relish, perhaps; but it cannot be wholesome, and it may be poisonous. The moral is: Be as vicious as you please, but prate of virtue."

Tom Jones she dismissed with greater contempt, if possible—

"Another young man," she wrote, "steeped in vice, although acquainted with virtue. He also marries a spotless heroine. Such men marrying are a danger to the community at large. The two books taken together show well the self-interest and injustice of men, the fatal ignorance and slavish apathy of women; and it may be good to know these things, but it is not agreeable."

The ventilation of free discussion would doubtless have been an advantage to Evadne at this impressionable period, when she was still, as it were, more an intellectual than a human being, travelling upon her head rather than upon her heart—so to speak—and one cannot help speculating about the probable modification it would have wrought in some of her opinions. Unfortunately, however, her family was one of those in which the *clôture* is rigorously applied when any attempt is made to introduce ideas which are not already old and accustomed. It was as if her people were satisfied that by enforcing silence they could prevent thought.

CHAPTER IV

IT is interesting to trace the steps by which Evadne advanced: one item of knowledge accidentally acquired compelling her to seek another, as in the case of some disease mentioned in a story-book, the nature of which she could not comprehend without studying the construction of the organ it affected. But haphazard seems to have determined her pursuits much more than design, as a rule. Some people in after-life, who liked her views, said they saw the guiding hand of Providence directing her course from the first; but those who opposed her said it was the devil; and others again, in idleness or charity, or the calm neutrality of indifference, set it all down to the Inevitable, a fashionable first cause at this time, which is both comprehensive, convenient, and inoffensive, since it may mean anything, and so suits itself to everybody's prejudices.

But she certainly made her first acquaintance with anatomy and physiology without design of her own. Her mother sent her up to a lumber room one day to hunt through an old box of books for a story she wanted her to read to the children, and the box happened to contain some medical works, which Evadne peeped into during her search. A plate first attracted her attention, and then she read a little to see what the plate meant, and then she read a little more because the subject fascinated her, and the lucid language of a great scientific man, certain of his facts, satisfied her, and carried her on insensibly. She continued standing until one leg tired, then she rested on the other; then she sat on the hard edge of the box, and finally she subsided on to the floor, in the dust, where she was found hours later, still reading.

"My dear child, where *have* you been?" her mother exclaimed irritably, when at last she appeared. "I sent you to get a book to read to the children."

"There it is, mother—*The Gold Thread.*"

Evadne answered. "But I cannot read to the children until after their tea. They were at their lessons this morning, and we are all going out this afternoon." She had neither forgotten the children nor the time they wanted their book, which was eminently characteristic. She never did forget other people's interests, however much she might be absorbed by the pleasure of her own pursuits.

"And I found three other books, mother, that I should like to have; may I?" she continued. "They are all about our bones and brains, and the circulation of the blood, and digestion. It says in one of them that muriatic acid, the chemical agent by which the stomach dissolves the food, is probably obtained from muriate of soda, which is common salt contained in the blood. Isn't that interesting? And it says that pleasure—not excitement, you know—is the result of the action of living organs, and it goes on to explain it. Shall I read it to you?"

"My dear child, what nonsense have you got hold of now?" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed, laughing.

"It is all here, mother," Evadne remonstrated, tapping her books. "Do look at them."

Mrs. Frayling turned over a few pages with dainty fingers. "Tracing from without inward, the various coverings of the brain are," she read in one. "The superior extremity consists of the shoulder, the arm, the forearm, and the hand," she saw in another. "Dr. Harley also confirms the opinion of M. Chaveau that the sugar is not destroyed in any appreciable quantity during its passage through the tissues," she learned from the third. "Oh, how nasty!" she ejaculated, alluding to the dust on the cover. "And what a state you are in yourself! You seem to have a perfect mania for grubbing up old books. What do you want with them? You cannot possibly understand them. Why, I can't! It is all vanity, you know. Here, take them away."

"But, mother, I want to keep them. They can't do me any harm if I don't understand them."

"You really *are* tiresome, Evadne," her mother rejoined. "It is quite bad taste to be so persistent."

"I am sorry, mother; I apologise. But I can read them, I suppose, as you don't see anything objectionable in them?"

"Don't *you* see, dear child, that I am trying to write a letter? How do you suppose I can do so while you stand chattering there at my elbow! You won't understand the books, but you are too obstinate for anything, and you had better take them and try. I don't expect to hear anything more about them," she added complacently, as she resumed her letter. Nor did she, but she felt the effect of them strongly in after years.

When Evadne went out for a ride with three of her sisters that afternoon her mind was full to overflowing of her morning studies, and she would have liked to share such interesting information with them, but they discouraged her.

"Isn't it curious," she began, "our skulls are not all in one piece when we're born"—

"I call it simply *nasty*," said Julia. She was the one who screamed at a mouse.

"You'll be a bore if you don't mind," cried Evelyn, who monopolised the conversation, as a rule.

Barbara politely requested her to "Shurrup!" a word of the boys which she permitted herself to borrow in the exuberance of her spirits and the

sanctity of private life whenever Evadne threatened, as on the present occasion, to be "*too kind*."

Evadne turned back then and left them, not because they vexed her, but because she wanted to have her head to the wind and her thick brown hair blown back out of her eyes, and full leisure to reflect upon her last acquisition as she cantered home happily.

CHAPTER V

EVADNE was never a great reader in the sense of being omnivorous in her choice of books, but she became a very good one. She always had a solid book in hand, and some standard work of fiction also; but she read both with the utmost deliberation, and with intellect clear and senses unaffected by anything. After studying anatomy and physiology, she took up pathology as a matter of course, and naturally went on from that to prophylactics and therapeutics, but was quite unharmed, because she made no personal application of her knowledge as the coarser mind masculine of the ordinary medical student is apt to do. She read of all the diseases to which the heart is subject, and thought of them familiarly as "*cardiac affections*," without fancying she had one of them; and she obtained an extraordinary knowledge of the digestive processes and their ailments without realising that her own might ever be affected. She possessed, in fact, a mind of exceptional purity as well as of exceptional strength, one to be enlightened by knowledge, not corrupted; but had it been otherwise she must certainly have suffered in consequence of the effect of the curiously foolish limitations imposed upon her by those who had charge of her conventional education. Subjects were surrounded by mystery which should have been explained. An impossible ignorance was the object aimed at, and so long as no word was spoken on either side it was supposed to be attained. The risk of making mysteries for an active intellect to feed upon was never even considered, nor did anyone perceive the folly of withholding positive knowledge, which, when properly conveyed, is the true source of healthy-mindedness, from a child whose intelligent perception was already sufficiently keen to require it. Principles were dealt out to her, for one thing, with a generous want of definition which must have made them fatal to all progress had she been able to take them intact. Her mother's favourite and most inclusive dictum alone, that "*everything is for the best, and all things work together for good*," should have forced her to a matter-of-fact acceptance of wickedness as a thing inevitable which it would be waste of time to oppose, since it was bound to resolve itself into something satisfactory in the end, like the objectionable refuse which can be converted by ingenious processes into an excellent substitute for butter. But she was saved from the stultification of such a position by finding it impossible to reconcile it practically with the constant opposition which she found herself at the same time enjoined to oppose to so many things. If everything is for the best, it appeared to her, clearly we cannot logically oppose ourselves to anything, and there must accordingly be two trinities in ethics: good, better, best, and bad, worse, worst, which it is impossible to condense into one comprehensive axiom.

But most noticeably prominent, to her credit, through all this period are the same desirable

characteristics, namely, that provisional acceptance already noticed of what she was taught by those whom she delighted to honour and obey, and the large-minded absence of prejudice which enabled her to differ from them, when she saw good cause, without antagonism. "Drop the subject when you do not agree: there is no need to be bitter because you know you are right," was the maxim she used in ordinary social intercourse; but she was at the same time forming principles to be acted upon in opposition to everybody when occasion called for action. Another noticeable point, too, was the way in which her mind returned from every excursion into no matter what abstruse region of research, to the position of women, her original point of departure. "Withholding education from women was the original sin of man," she concludes.

Mind as creator appealed to her less than mind as recorder, reasoner, and ruler; and for one gem of poetry or other beauty of purely literary value which she quotes, there are fifty records of principles of action. The acquisition of knowledge was her favourite pastime, her principal pleasure in life, and there were no doubts of her own ability to disturb her so long as there was no self-consciousness. Unfortunately, however, for her tranquillity, the self-consciousness had to come. She approached the verge of womanhood. She was made to do up her hair. She was encouraged to think of being presented, coming out, and having a home of her own eventually. Her liberty of action was sensibly curtailed, but all supervision in the matter of her mental pursuits was withdrawn. She had received the accustomed education for a girl in her position, which her parents held, without knowing it themselves, perhaps, to consist for the most part in being taught to know better than to read anything which they would have considered objectionable. But the end of the supervision, which should have been a joy to her, brought the first sudden sense of immensity, and was chilling. She perceived that the world is large and strong, and that she was small and weak; that knowledge is infinite, capacity indifferent, life short—and then came the inevitable moment. She does not say what caused the first overwhelming sense of self in her own case; but the change it wrought is evident, and the disheartening doubts with which it was accompanied are expressed. She picks her

Flower in the crannied wall,

and realises her own limitations—

... but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

And from this time forward there is less literature and more life in the "Commonplace Book."

CHAPTER VI

MR. and Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells, with the inevitable twins, came constantly to Fraylingay while Evadne was in the schoolroom, and generally during the holidays, that she might be at liberty to look after the twins, whose moral obliquities she was supposed to be able to control better than anybody else. They once told their mother that they liked Evadne, "because she was so good"; and Lady Adeline had a delicious moment of hope. If the twins had begun to

appreciate goodness they would be better themselves directly, she was thinking, when Diavolo exclaimed, "We can shock her easier than anybody," and hope died prematurely. They had been a source of interest, and also of some concern, to Evadne from the first. She took a grave view of their vagaries, and entertained doubts on the subject of their salvation should an "all-wise Providence" catch them peering into a sewer, resolve itself into a poisonous gas, and cut them off suddenly—a fate which had actually overtaken a small brother of her own who was not a good little boy either—a fact which was the cause of much painful reflection to Evadne. She understood all about the drain and the poisonous gas, but she could not fit in the "all-wise Providence acting only for the best," which was introduced as primary agent in the sad affair by "their dear Mr. Campbell," as her mother called him, in "a most touching and strengthening" discourse he delivered from the pulpit on the subject. If Binny were naughty—and Binny *was* naughty beyond all hope of redemption, according to the books; there could be no doubt about that, for he not only committed one, but each and every sin sufficient in itself for condemnation, all in one day, too, when he could, and twice over if there were time. He disobeyed orders. He fought cads. He stole apples. He told lies—in fact, he preferred to tell lies; truth had no charm for him. And all these things he was in the habit of doing regularly to the best of his ability when he was "cut off"; and how such an end could be all for the best, if the wicked must perish, and it is not good to perish, was the puzzle. There was something she could not grasp of a contradictory nature in it all that tormented her. The doctrine of Purgatory might have been a help, but she had not heard of it.

She told the twins the story of Binny's sad end once in the orthodox way, as a warning, but the warning was the only part of it which failed to impress them. "And do you know," she said solemnly, "there were some green apples found in his pockets after he was dead, actually!"

"What a pity!" Diavolo exclaimed. If they had been found in his stomach it would have been so much more satisfactory. "How did he get the apples? Off the tree or out of the store-room?"

"I don't know," said Evadne.

"They wouldn't have green apples in the store-room," Angelica thought.

"Oh yes, they might," Diavolo considered. "Those big cooking fellows, you know—they're green enough."

"But they're not nice," said Angelica.

"No, but you don't think of that till you've got them," was the outcome of Diavolo's experience. "Is your storeroom on the ground floor?" he asked Evadne.

"No," she answered.

"Is there a creeper outside the window?" he pursued.

"No, creepers won't grow because a big lime tree overhangs it."

The children exchanged glances.

"I shouldn't have made that room a store-room," said Angelica. "Lime trees bring flies. There's something flies like on the leaves."

"But any tree will bring flies if you smear the leaves with sweet stuff," said Diavolo. "You remember that copper-beech outside papa's dressing-room window, Angelica?"

"Yes," she said thoughtfully. "He had to

turn out of his dressing-room this summer; he couldn't stand them."

"But was Binny often caught, Evadne?" Diavolo asked.

"Often," she said.

"And punished?"

"Always."

"But I suppose he had generally eaten the apples?" Angelica suggested anxiously.

"It's better to eat them at once," sighed Diavolo. "Did you say he did everything he was told not to do?"

"Yes."

"I expect when he was told not to do a thing he could not think of anything else until he *had* done it," said Angelica.

"And now he's in heaven," Diavolo speculated, looking up through the window with big bright eyes pathetically.

The twins thought a good deal about heaven in their own way. Lady Adeline did not like them to be talked to on the subject. They were indefatigable explorers, and it was popularly supposed that only the difficulty of being present at an inquest on their own bodies, which they would have thoroughly enjoyed, had kept them so far from trying to obtain a glimpse of the next world. They discovered the storeroom at Fraylingay half an hour after they had discussed the improving details of Binny's exciting career, and had found it quite easy of access by means of the available lime tree. They both suffered a good deal that night, and they thought of Binny.

"But there's nothing in *our* pockets, that's one comfort," Diavolo exclaimed suddenly, to the astonishment of his mother, who was sitting up with him. Angelica heaved a sigh of satisfaction.

Evadne's patience with the twins was wonderful. She always took charge of them cheerfully on wet days and in other times of trouble, and managed them with infinite tact.

"How do you do it, my dear?" Lady Adeline asked. "Do you talk to them and tell them stories?"

"No," said Evadne, "I don't talk much; I—just don't lose sight of them—or interfere—if I can possibly help it."

The twins had no reverence for anything or anybody. One day they were in Evadne's little sitting-room which overlooked the courtyard. It was an antechamber to her bedroom, and peculiarly her own by right of primogeniture. Nobody ever thought of going there without her special permission—except, of course, the twins; but even they assumed hypocritical airs of innocent apology for accidental intrusion when they wanted to make things pleasant for themselves.

On this particular occasion Evadne was sitting beside her little work-table busy with her needle, and the twins were standing together looking out of the window.

"There's papa," said Diavolo.

"He's going for a ride," said Angelica.

"Doesn't he mount queerly?" Diavolo observed.

"He'd be safer in a bath chair."

"Not if we were wheeling him," Angelica suggested, with a chuckle.

"What shall we do?" yawned Diavolo. "Shall we fight?"

"Yes; let's," said Angelica.

"You must do no such thing," Evadne interfered.

"Not fight! Why?" Angelica demanded.

"We *must* fight, you know," Diavolo asserted.

"I don't see that," said Evadne. "Why should you fight?"

"It's good for the circulation of the blood," said Angelica. "Warms the body, you know."

"And there's the property, too!" said Diavolo. "We've got to fight for that."

Evadne did not understand, so Angelica kindly explained: "You see I'm the eldest, but Diavolo's a boy, so he gets the property because of the entail, and we neither of us think it fair; so we fight for it, and whichever wins is to have it. I won the last battle, so it's mine just now; but Diavolo may win it back if we fight again before papa dies. That's why he wants to fight now, I expect."

"Yes," Diavolo candidly confessed. "But we generally fight when we see papa go out for a ride."

"Because you are afraid he will catch you and punish you, as you deserve, if he's at home, I suppose, you bad children."

"Not at all," said Angelica. "It's because he looks so unsafe on a horse; you never know what'll happen."

"It's a kind of a last chance," said Diavolo, "and that makes it exciting."

"But wouldn't you be very sorry if your father died?" Evadne asked.

The twins looked at each other doubtfully.

"Should we?" Diavolo said to Angelica.

"I wonder?" said Angelica.

One wet day they chose to paint in Evadne's room because they could not go out. She found pictures, and got everything ready for them good-naturedly, and then they sat themselves down at a little table opposite each other; but the weather affected their spirits, and made them both fractious. They wanted the same picture to begin with, and only settled the question by demolishing it in their attempts to snatch it from each other. Then there was only one left between them, but happily they remembered that artists sometimes work at the same picture, and it further occurred to them that it would be an original method—or "funny," as they phrased it—for one of them to work at it wrong side up. So Angelica daubed the sky blue on her side of the table, and Diavolo flung green on the fields from his. They had large genial mouths at that time, indefinite noses, threatening to turn up a little, and bright dark eyes, quick glancing, but with no particular expression in them—no symptom either of love or hate, nothing but living interest. It was pretty to see Diavolo's fair head touching Angelica's dark one across the little table; but when it came too close Angelica would dunt it sharply out of the way with her own, which was apparently the harder of the two, and Diavolo would put up his hand and rub the spot absently. He was too thoroughly accustomed to such sisterly attentions to be altogether conscious of them.

The weather darkened down.

"I wish I could see," he grumbled.

"Get out of your own light," said Angelica.

"How can I get out of my own light when there isn't any light to get out of?"

Angelica put her paint brush in her mouth, and looked up at the window thoughtfully.

"Let's make it into a song," she said.

"Let's," said Diavolo, intent upon making blue and yellow into green.

"No light have we, and that we do resent,
And learning this, the weather will relent,
Repent! Relent! Ah-men,"

Angelica sang. Diavolo paused with his brush half-way to his mouth, and nodded intelligently.

"Now!" said Angelica, and they repeated the parody together, Angelica making a perfect second to Diavolo's exquisite treble.

Evadne looked up from her work surprised. Her own voice was contralto, but it would have taken her a week to learn to sing a second from the notes, and she had never dreamt of making one.

"I didn't know you could sing," she said.

"Oh yes, we can sing," Angelica answered cheerfully. "We've a decided talent for music."

"Angelica can make a song in a moment," said Diavolo. "Let me paint your nose green, Evadne."

"You can paint mine, if you like," said Angelica.

"No, I shan't. I shall paint my own."

"No, you paint mine, and I'll paint yours," Angelica suggested.

"Well, both together, then," Diavolo answered.

"Honest Injun," Angelica agreed, and they set to work.

Evadne sat with her embroidery in her lap and watched them. Their faces would have to be washed in any case, and they might as well be washed for an acre as for an inch of paint. She never nagged with, "Don't do this," and "Don't do that," about everything, if their offences could be summed up, and wiped out in some such way all at once.

"We'll sing you an anthem some day," Angelica presently promised.

"Why not now?" said Evadne.

"The spirit does not move us," Diavolo answered.

"But you may forget," said Evadne.

"We never forget our promises," Angelica protested as proudly as was possible with a green nose.

Nor did they, curiously enough. They made a point of keeping their word, but in their own way, and this one was kept in due course. The time they chose was when a certain Grand Duke was staying in the house. They had quite captivated him, and he expressed a wish to hear them sing.

"Shall we?" said Diavolo.

"We will," said Angelica. "Not because he's a prince, but because we promised Evadne an anthem, and we might as well do it now," she added, with true British independence.

The prince chuckled.

"What shall it be?" said Diavolo, settling himself at the piano. He always played the accompaniments.

"Papa, I think," said Angelica.

"What is 'Papa'?" Lady Adeline asked anxiously.

"Very nice, or you wouldn't have married him," answered Angelica. "Go on, Diavolo. If you sing flat, I'll slap you."

"If you're impertinent, miss, I'll put you out," Diavolo retorted.

"Go on," said Evadne sharply, fearing a fight.

But to everybody's intense relief the prince laughed, and then the twins' distinguished manners appeared in a new and agreeable light.

"Papa—Papa—Papa," — they sang — "Papa says—that we—that we—that we are little devils! and so we are—we are—we are and ever shall be—world without end."

"I am a chip," Diavolo trilled exquisitely, "I am a chip."

"Thou art a chip—Thou art a chip," Angelica responded.

"We are both chips," they concluded harmoniously—"chips of the old—old block! And as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!"

"You sang that last phrase flat, you—pulp!" cried Angelica.

"I can't both sing and play," Diavolo protested.

"You'll say you can't eat and breathe next," she retorted, giving his hair a tug.

"What did you do that for?" he demanded.

"Just to waken you up," she answered.

"Are they always like this?" the prince asked, much edified.

"This is nothing," groaned Mr. Hamilton-Wells.

"Nothing if it is not genius," the prince suggested gracefully.

"The ineffectual genius of the nineteenth century, I fancy, which betrays itself by strange incongruities and contrasts of a violent kind, but is otherwise unproductive," Mrs. Orton Beg whispered to Mr. Frayling incautiously.

Lady Adeline looked up: "I could not help hearing," she said.

"Oh, Adeline, I am sorry!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed.

"I thank you," said Lady Adeline, sighing. "Courtly phrases are pleasant plums, even to latter-day palates which are losing all taste for such dainties; but they are not nourishing. I would rather know my children to be merely naughty, and spend my time in trying to make them good, than falsely flatter myself that there is anything great in them, and indulge them on that plea, until I had thoroughly confirmed them in faults which I ought to have been rigorously repressing."

"You're right there," said Mr. Frayling; "but all the same, you'll be able to make a good deal of that boy, or I'm much mistaken. And as for Angelica, why, when she is at the head of an establishment of her own she will require all her smartness. But teach her housekeeping, Lady Adeline; that is the thing for *her*."

Evadne was sitting near her father, not taking part in the conversation, but attending to it; and Lady Adeline, happening to look at her at this moment, saw something which gave her "pause to ponder." Evadne's face recalled somewhat the type of old Egypt, Egypt with an intellect added. Her eyes were long and apparently narrow, but not so in reality—a trick she had of holding them half shut habitually gave a false impression of their size, and veiled the penetration of their glance also, which was exceptionally keen. In moments of emotion, however, she would open them to the full unexpectedly, and then the effect was startling and peculiar; and it was one of these transient flashes which surprised Lady Adeline when Mr. Frayling made that last remark. It was a mere gleam, but it revealed Evadne to Lady Adeline as a flash of lightning might have revealed a familiar landscape on a dark night. She saw what she expected to see, but all transformed, and she saw something beyond, which she did not expect, and could neither comprehend nor forget. So far she had only thought of Evadne as a nice, quiet little thing with nothing particular in her; from that evening, however, she suspended her opinion, suspecting something, but waiting to know more. Evadne was then in her eighteenth year, but not yet out.

CHAPTER VII

MRS. ORTON BEG was a sister of Mrs. Frayling's and an oracle to Evadne. Mrs. Frayling was fair, plump, sweet, yielding, commonplace, prolific; Mrs. Orton Beg was a barren widow, slender, sincere, silent, firm, and tender. Mrs. Frayling, for lack of insight, was unsympathetic; Mrs. Orton Beg was just the opposite, and she and Evadne understood each other, and were silent together in the most companionable way in the world.

When Evadne went to her own room on the evening made memorable by the twins' famous anthem, she was haunted by that word "ineffectual," which Mrs. Orton Beg had used. "Ineffectual genius" — there was something familiar as well as high-sounding in the epithet; it recalled an idea with which she was already acquainted; what was it? She opened her "Commonplace Book," and sat with her pen in her hand, cogitating comfortably. She had no need to weary her fresh young brain with an irritating pursuit of what she wanted; she had only to wait, and it would recur to her. And presently it came. Her countenance brightened. She bent over the book and wrote a few lines, read them when she had blotted them, and was satisfied.

"I have it," she wrote. "Shelley=genius of the nineteenth century—'Beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain.'—*Matthew Arnold*."

When she had done this she took up a book, went to the fire, settled herself in an easy-chair, and began to read. The book was *Ruth*, by Mrs. Gaskell, and she was just finishing it. When she had done so she went back to the table, and copied out the following paragraph:—

"The daily life into which people are born, and into which they are absorbed before they are aware, forms chains which only one in a hundred has moral strength enough to despise, and to break when the right time comes — when an inward necessity for independent action arises, which is superior to all outward conventionalities."

She stopped here, and pushed the volume away from her. It was the only passage in it which she cared to remember.

She had lost the confidence of the child by this time, and become humbly doubtful of her own opinion; and instead of summing up *Ruth* boldly, as she would have done the year before, she paused now a moment to reflect before she wrote with diffidence—

"The principal impression this book has made upon me is that Mrs. Gaskell must have been a very lovable woman.¹ The story seems to me long drawn out, and of small significance. It is full of food for the heart, but the head goes empty away, and both should be satisfied by a work of fiction, I think. But perhaps it is my own mood that is at fault. At another time I might have found gems in it which now in my dulness I have failed to perceive."

Somebody knocked at the door as she blotted the words.

"Come in, auntie," she said, as if in answer to an accustomed signal; and Mrs. Orton Beg

¹ George Eliot thought so too, years before Evadne was born, and expressed the thought in a letter in which she also prophesied that *Ruth* would not live through a generation. The impression the book made upon Evadne is another proof of prescience in the great writer.

entered in a long, loose, voluminously draped white wrapper.

Evadne drew an easy-chair to the fire for her.

"Sit down, auntie," she said, "and be cosy. You are late to-night. I was afraid you were not coming."

Mrs. Orton Beg was in the habit of coming to Evadne's room every evening when she was at Fraylingay, to chat, or sit silently sociable over the fire with her before saying good-night.

"Do I ever fail you?" she asked, smiling.

"No. But I have been afraid of the fatal fascination of that great fat foreign prince. He singled you out for special attention, and I have been jealous."

"Well, you need not have been, for he singled me out in order to talk about you. He thinks you are a nice child. You interest him."

"Defend me!" said Evadne. "But you mistake me, dear aunt. It was not of him I was jealous, but of you. The fat prince is nothing to me, and you are a very great deal."

Mrs. Orton Beg's face brightened at the words, but she continued to look into the fire silently for some seconds after Evadne had spoken, and made no other visible sign of having heard them.

"I don't think I ought to encourage you to sit up so late," she said presently. "Lady Adeline has just been asking me who it is that burns the midnight oil up here so regularly."

"Lady Adeline must be up very late herself to see it," said Evadne. "I suppose those precious twins disturb her. I wish she would let me take entire charge of them when she is here. It would be a relief, I should think!"

"It would be an imposition," said Mrs. Orton Beg. "But you are a brave girl, Evadne. I would not venture."

"Oh, they delight me," Evadne answered. "And I know them well enough now to forestall them."

"When I told Lady Adeline that these were your rooms," her aunt pursued, "she said something about a lily maid high in her chamber up a tower to the east guarding the sacred shield of Lancelot."

"Singularly inappropriate," said Evadne. "For my tower is south and west, thank Heaven."

"And there isn't a symptom of Lancelot," her aunt concluded.

"Young ladies don't guard sacred shields nowadays," said Evadne.

"No," answered her aunt, glancing over her shoulder at the open book on the table. "They have substituted the sacred 'Commonplace Book' — full of thought, I fancy."

"You speak regretfully, auntie; but isn't it better to think and be happy, than to die of atrophy for a sentiment?"

"I don't think it better to extinguish all sentiment. Life without sentiment would be so bald."

"But life with that kind of sentiment doesn't last, it seems, and nobody is benefited by it. It is extreme misery to the girl herself, and she dies young, leaving a legacy of lifelong regret and bitterness to her friends. I should think it small comfort to become the subject for a poem or a picture at such a price. And surely, auntie, sentiments which are silly or dangerous would be better extinguished?"

Mrs. Orton Beg smiled at the fire enigmatically.

"But the poem or the picture may become a lasting benefit to mankind," she suggested presently.

"Humph!" said Evadne.

"You doubt it?"

"Well, you see, auntie, there are two ways of looking at it. When you first come across the poem or the picture which perpetuates the sentiment that slew the girl, and beautifies it, you feel a glow all over, and fancy you would like to imitate her, and think that you would deserve great credit for it if you did. But when you come to consider, there is nothing very noble, after all, in a hopeless passion for an elderly man of the world who is past being benefited by it, even if he could reciprocate it. Elaine should have married a man of her own age, and made him happy. She would have done some good in her time so, and been saved from setting us a bad example. I think it a sin to make unwholesome sentiments attractive."

"Then Lancelot does not charm you?"

"No," said Evadne thoughtfully. "I should have preferred the king."

"Ah yes. Because he was the nobler, the more ideal man?"

"No, not exactly," Evadne answered. "But because he was the more wholesome."

"My dear child, are you speaking literally?"

"Yes, auntie."

"Good heavens!" Mrs. Orton Beg ejaculated softly. "The times *have* changed."

"Yes, we know more now," Evadne answered tranquilly.

"You are fulfilling the promise of your youth, Evadne," her aunt remarked, after a thoughtful pause. "I remember reading a fairy tale of Jean Ingelow's aloud to you children in the nursery long ago. I forget the name of it, but it was the one into which 'One morning, oh, so early,' comes; and you started a controversy as to whether, speaking of the dove, when the lark said, 'Give us glory,' she should have made answer, 'Give us peace' or 'peas.' The latter, you maintained, as being the more natural, and the most sensible."

"I must have been a horrid little prig in those days," said Evadne, smiling. "But, auntie, there can be no peace without plenty. And I think I would rather be a sensible realist than a foolish idealist. You mean that you think me too much of a utilitarian, do you not?"

"You are in danger, I think."

"Utilitarianism is Bentham's *greatest happiness principle*, is it not?" Evadne asked.

"Yes—greatest human happiness," her aunt replied.

"Well, I don't know how that can be dangerous in principle. But, of course, I know nothing of such questions practically. Only I do seem to perceive that you must rest on a solid basis of real advantages before you can reach up to ideal perfection with any chance of success."

"You seem to be very wide awake to-night, Evadne," Mrs. Orton Beg rejoined. "This is the first I have heard of your peculiar views."

"Oh, I am a kind of owl, I think, auntie," Evadne answered apologetically. "You see, I never had anything to do in the schoolroom that I could not manage when I was half asleep, and so I formed a habit of dozing over my lessons by day, and waking up when I came to bed at night. Having a room of my own always has been a great advantage. I have been secure all along of a quiet time at night for reading and thought—and that is real life, auntie, isn't it? I don't care to talk much, as a rule; do you? I like to listen and watch people. But I always wake up at this time of the night, and I feel as if I could be quite

garrulous now when everybody else is going to sleep. But, auntie, don't use such an ominous expression as 'peculiar views' about anything I say, *please*; 'views' are always in ill odour, and peculiarities, even peculiar perfections, would isolate one, and that I *do* dread. It would be awful to be out of sympathy with one's fellow-creatures, and have them look suspiciously at one; and it would be no comfort to me to know that want of sympathy is the proof of a narrow nature, and that suspicion is the inevitable outcome of ignorance and stupidity. I don't want to despise my fellow-creatures. I would rather share their ignorance and conceit and be sociable than find myself isolated even by a very real superiority. The one would be pleasant enough, I should think; the other pain beyond all bearing of it."

Mrs. Orton Beg's heart contracted with a momentary fear for her niece, but she dismissed it promptly.

"The room to yourself has been a doubtful advantage, I fancy," she said. "It has made you theoretical. But you will lose all that by and by. And in the meantime, you must remember that in such matters we have small choice. We are born with superior or inferior faculties, and must make use of them, such as they are, to become inferior cooks or countesses or superior ditto, as the case may be. But there are always plenty of one's own kind, whichever it is, to consort with. Birds of a feather, you know. You need not be afraid of being isolated."

"You are thinking of ordinary faculties, auntie. I was thinking of extraordinary. But even with ordinary ones we are hampered. Birds of a feather would flock together if they could, of course, but then they can't always; and suppose, being superior, you find yourself forced to associate with inferior cooks of your kind, what then?"

"Be their queen."

"Which, unless you were a queen of hearts, would really amount to being an object of envy and dislike, and that brings us back to the point from which we started."

"Evadne, you talk like a book; go to bed!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed, laughing.

"It is you who have made me talk, then," Evadne rejoined promptly, "and I feel inclined to ask now, with all proper respect, what has come to you? It must be the prince!"

"Yes, it must be the prince!" Mrs. Orton Beg responded, raising her slender white hand to smother a yawn. "And it must be good-night, too—or rather, good-morning! Just look at the clock. It is nearly three."

CHAPTER VIII

THE next morning all the guests left Fraylingay, and the family there settled into their accustomed grooves. Evadne and her father walked and rode, conversing together as usual, he enjoying the roll and rumble and fine flavour of his own phrase-making amazingly, and she also impressed by the roll and rumble. But when it was all over, and he had marched off in triumph, she would collect the mutilated remains of the argument and examine them at her leisure, and in nine cases out of ten it proved to be quartz that he had crushed and contemned, overlooking the gold it contained, but releasing it for her to find and add exultingly to her own collection. In this way,

therefore, she continued to obtain her wealth of ore from him, and both were satisfied—he because he was sure that, thanks to him, she was “a thoroughly sensible girl with no nonsense of new-fangled notions about her”; and she because, being his daughter, she had not altogether escaped the form of mental myopia from which he suffered, and was in the habit of seeing only what she hoped and wished to see in those she loved. Man, the unjust and iniquitous, was to her always the outside, vague, theoretical man of the world, never the dear, undoubted papa at home.

Evadne was the eldest of six girls, and their mother had a comfortable as-it-was-in-the-beginning-is-now-and-ever-shall-be feeling about them all; but she prided herself most upon Evadne as answering in every particular to the conventional idea of what a young lady should be.

“The dear child,” she wrote to Lady Adeline, “is *all* and *more* than we dared to hope to have her become. I can assure you she has never caused me a moment’s anxiety in her life, except, of course, such anxiety for her health and happiness as every mother must feel. I have had her educated with the utmost care, and her father has, I may say, *devoted* himself to the task of influencing her in the right direction in matters of opinion, and has ably seconded all my endeavours in other respects. She speaks French and German *well*, and knows a little Italian; in fact, I may say that she has a special aptitude for languages. She does not draw, but is a fair musician, and is still having lessons, being most anxious to improve herself; and she sings very sweetly. But, best of all, as I am sure you will agree with me, I notice in her a deeply religious disposition. She is *really* devout, and beautifully reverential in her manner both in church and to us, her parents, and, indeed, to all who are older and wiser than herself. She is very clever, too, they tell me; but of course I am no judge of that. I do know, however, that she is perfectly innocent, and I am indeed thankful to think that at eighteen she knows nothing of the world and its wickedness, and is therefore eminently qualified to make somebody an excellent wife; and all I am afraid of is, that the destined somebody will come for her all too soon, for I cannot bear to think of parting with her. She is not *quite* like other girls in *some* things, I am afraid—mere trifles, however—as, for instance, about her presentation. I know *I* was in quite a flutter of excitement for days before *I* was presented, and was quite bewildered with agitation at the time; but Evadne displayed no emotion whatever. I never knew *anyone* so equable as she is; in fact, *nothing* seems to ruffle her wonderful calm; it is almost provoking sometimes! On the way home she would not have made a remark, I think, if I had not spoken to her. ‘Don’t you think it was a very pretty sight?’ I said at last. ‘Yes,’ she answered doubtfully; and then she added with genuine feeling, ‘*Mais il y a des longueurs!* Oh, mother, the hours we have spent hanging about draughty corridors, half dressed and shivering with cold; and the crowding and crushing, and unlovely faces, all looking so miserable and showing the discomfort and fatigue they were enduring so plainly! I call it positive suffering, and I never want to see another Drawing Room. My soul desires nothing now but decent clothing and hot tea.’ And that is all she has ever said about the Drawing Room in my hearing. But wasn’t it a very curious view for a girl to take?

Of course the arrangements are detestable, and one does suffer a great deal from cold and fatigue, and for want of refreshments; but still *I* never thought of those things when *I* was a girl; did you? I never thought of anything, in fact, but whether I was looking my best or not. Don’t let me make you imagine, however, that Evadne was whining and querulous. She never is, you know; and I should call her tone sorrowful if it were not so absurd for a girl to be saddened by the sight of other people in distress—well, not quite in distress—that is an exaggeration—but at all events not quite comfortably situated—on what was really one of the greatest occasions of her own life. I am half inclined to fear that she may not be quite so strong as we have always thought her; and that she was depressed by the long fasting and fatigue, which would account for a momentary morbidness.

“But excuse my garrulity. I always have so much to say to *you!* I will spare you any more for the present, however; only *do* tell me all about yourself and your own lovely children. And how is Mr. Hamilton-Wells? Remember that you are to come to us, twins and all, on your way home as usual this year. We are anxiously expecting you, and I hope your next letter will fix the day.—Ever, dear Adeline, your loving friend,

“ELIZABETH FRAYLING.”

“P.S.—We return to Fraylingay to-morrow, so please write to me there.”

The following is Lady Adeline’s reply to Mrs. Frayling’s letter:—

“HAMILTON HOUSE,
MORNINGQUEST, 30th July.

“MY DEAR ELIZABETH,—I am afraid you will have been wondering what has become of us, but I know you will acquit me of all blame for the long delay in answering your letter when I tell you that I have only just received it! We had left Paris before it arrived for (what is always to me) a tiresome tour about the Continent, and it has been following us from pillar to post, finally reaching me here at home, where we have been settled a fortnight. I had not forgotten your kind invitation, but I am afraid I must give up all idea of going to you this year. We hurried back because Mr. Hamilton-Wells became homesick suddenly while we were abroad, and I don’t think it will be possible to get him to move again for some time. But won’t you come to us? Do, dear, and bring your just-come-out, and, I am sure, most charming Evadne for our autumn gaieties. If Mr. Frayling would come too we should be delighted, but I know he has a poor opinion of *our* coverts, and I despair of being able to tempt him from his own shooting; and therefore I ask *you* first and foremost, in the hope that you will be able to come whether he does or not.

“I have been thinking much of all you have told me about Evadne. She had already struck me as being a most interesting child and full of promise, and I do hope that now she is out of the schoolroom I shall see more of her. I know you will trust her to me—although I do think that in parts of her education you have been acting by the half-light of a past time, and following a method now out of date. I cannot agree, for instance, that it is either right or wise to keep a girl in ignorance of the laws of her own being, and of the state of the community in which she will have to pass her existence. While she is at an age to

be influenced in the right way she should be fully instructed, by those she loves, and not left to obtain her knowledge of the world haphazard from anyone with whom accident may bring her acquainted—people, perhaps, whose point of view may not only differ materially from her parents', but be extremely offensive to them. The first impression in these matters, you know, is all-important, and my experience is that what you call 'beautiful innocence,' and what I consider *dangerous ignorance*, is not a safe state in which to begin the battle of life. In the matter of marriage especially (an ignorant girl) may be fatally deceived, and indeed I know cases in which the man who was liked well enough as a companion was found to be objectionable in an unendurable degree as soon as he became a husband.

"You will think I am tainted with new notions, and I do hope I am in so far as these notions are juster and better than the old ones. For, surely, the elder ages did not discover all that is wisdom; and certainly there is still room for 'nobler modes of life' and 'sweeter manners, purer laws.' If this were not allowed, moral progress must come to a standstill. So I say, 'instruct! instruct!' The knowledge must come sooner or later; let it come wholesomely. A girl must find out for herself if she is not taught, and she may, in these plain-spoken times, obtain a wholly erroneous theory of life and morality from a newspaper report which she reads without intention in an idle moment while enjoying her afternoon tea. We are in a state of transition, we women, and the air is so full of ideas that it would be strange if an active mind did not catch some of them; and I find myself that stray theories swallowed whole without due consideration are of uncertain application, difficult in the working, if not impracticable, and apt to disagree. Theories should be absorbed in detail as dinner is if they are to become an addition to our strength, and not an indigestible item of inconvenience, seriously affecting our mental temper.

"But you ask me about my twins. In health they continue splendid, in spirits they are tremendous, but their tricks are simply terrible. We never know what mischief they will devise next, and Angelica is much the worst of the two. If we had taken them to Fraylingay it would have been in fear and trembling; but we should have been obliged to take them had we gone ourselves, for they somehow found out that you had asked them, and they insisted upon going, and threatened to burn down Hamilton House in our absence if we did not take them, a feat which we doubt not they would have accomplished had they had a mind to. Indeed, I cannot tell you what these children are! Imagine their last device to extort concessions from their father. You know how nervous he is; well, if he will not do all that they require of him they blow him up literally and actually! They put little trains of gunpowder about in unexpected places, with lucifer matches that go off when they are trodden upon, and you can imagine the consequence! I told him what it would be when he would spoil them so, but it was no use, and now they rule him instead of him them, so that he has to enter into solemn compacts with them about not infringing what they call their rights; and, only fancy, he is so fond to foolishness as to be less annoyed by their naughtiness than pleased because, when they promise not to do anything again 'honest Injun,' as they phrase it, they keep their word. Dr. Galbraith calls them in derision 'The Heavenly Twins.'

"But have I told you about Dr. Galbraith? He is the new master of Fountain Towers, and a charming as well as remarkable man, quite young, being in fact only nine-and-twenty, but already distinguished as a medical man. He became a professional man of necessity, having no expectation at that time of ever inheriting property; but now that he is, comparatively speaking, a rich man, he continues to practise for the love of science, and also from philanthropic motives. He is a fine-looking young man physically, with a strong face of most attractive plainness, only redeemed from positive ugliness, in fact, by good grey eyes, white teeth, and an expression which makes you trust him at once. After the first five minutes' conversation with him I have heard people say that they not only could but would positively have enjoyed telling him all the things that ever they did, so great is the confidence he inspires. He and Sir Daniel Galbraith's adopted son—Sir Daniel is Dr. Galbraith's uncle—were my brother Dawne's great friends at Oxford, where the three of them were known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, because they passed unscathed through the burning fiery furnace of temptation to which young men of position at the universities are exposed. Dr. Galbraith is somewhat abrupt in manner, and quick of temper, but most good-naturedly long-suffering with my terrible children, nevertheless. Of course they impose upon his good nature. And they are always being punished; but that they do not mind. In fact, I heard Angelica say once, 'It is all in the day's work,' when she had a long imposition to do for something outrageous; and Diavolo called to her over the stairs only yesterday, 'Wait for me a minute in the hall till I've been thrashed for letting the horses and dogs loose, and then we'll go and snare pheasants in the far plantation!' They explained to me once that being found out and punished added the same zest to their pleasures that cayenne pepper does to their diet; a little too much of it stings, but just the right quantity relieves the insipidity and adds to the interest; and then there is the element of uncertainty, which has a charm of its own: they never know whether they will 'catch it hot' or not! When they *are* found out they always confess everything with a frankness which is quite provoking, because they so evidently enjoy the recital of their own misdeeds; and they defend themselves by quoting various anecdotes of the naughty doings of children which have been written for our amusement. And it is in vain that I explain to them that parents who are hurt and made anxious by their children's disobedience cannot see anything to laugh at in their pranks—at least not for a very long time afterward. They pondered this for some time, and then arrived at the conclusion that when they were grown up and no longer a nuisance to me, I should be a 'very jolly old lady,' because I should have such a lot of funny stories all my own to tell people.

"But I shall weary you with this inexhaustible subject. You must forgive me if I do, for I am terribly anxious about my young Turks. If they are equal to such enormities in the green leaf, I am always asking myself, what will they do in the dry? I own that my sense of humour is tickled sometimes, but never enough to make me forget the sense of danger, present and to come, which all this keeps for ever alive. Come and comfort me, and tell me how you have made your own children so charming.—Ever lovingly yours,

"ADELINE HAMILTON-WELLS."

Mrs. Frayling wrote a full account of Evadne's presentation at court to her sister, Mrs. Orton Beg—who was wandering about Norway by herself at the time—and concluded her description of the dear child's gown, very charming appearance, and dignified self-possession with some remarks about her character to the same effect as those which she had addressed to Lady Adeline. It was natural, perhaps, that the last conversation Mrs. Orton Beg had had with Evadne at Fraylingay, which was in fact the first articulate outcome of Evadne's self-training, coming as it did at the end of a day of pleasurable interest and excitement, should have made no immediate impression upon her tired faculties; but she recollected it now, and smiled as she read her sister's letter. "If that is all you know of your daughter, my dear Elizabeth," was her mental comment, "I fancy there will be surprises at Fraylingay!" But in reply she merely observed that she was glad Evadne was so satisfactory. She was too wise a woman to waste words on her sister Elizabeth, who, in consequence of having had them in abundance to squander all her life long, had lost all sense of their value, and would have failed to appreciate the force which they collect in the careful keeping of such silent folk as Mrs. Orton Beg.

Mrs. Frayling was not able to accept Lady Adeline's invitation that year.

CHAPTER IX

THIS was the period when Evadne looked out of narrow eyes at an untried world inquiringly, and was warmed to the heart by what she saw of it. Theoretically, people are cruel and unjust, but practically, to an attractive young lady of good social position and just out, their manners are most agreeable; and when Evadne returned to Fraylingay after her first season in town, she thought less and sang more.

"A little bird in the air,
Is singing of Thyri the fair,
The sister of Svend the Dane;
And the song of the garrulous bird
In the streets of the town is heard,
And repeated again and again,"

she carolled about the house, while the dust collected upon her books. She took up one old favourite after another when she first returned, but her attention wandered from her best beloved, and all that were solid came somehow to be set aside and replaced, the nourishing fact by inflated fiction, reason and logic by rhyme and rhythm, and sense by sentimentality, so far had her strong, simple, earnest mind deteriorated in the unwholesome atmosphere of London drawing-rooms. It was only a phase, of course, and she could have been set right at once had there been anybody there to prescribe a strengthening tonic; but failing that, she tried sweet stimulants that soothed and excited, but did not nourish: tales that caused chords of pleasurable emotion to vibrate while they fanned the higher faculties into inaction—vampire things inducing that fatal repose which enables them to drain the soul of its life-blood and compass its destruction. But Evadne escaped without permanent injury, for, fortunately for herself, among much that was far too sweet to be wholesome she discovered Oliver Wendell Holmes' *The Breakfast Table Series*,

Elsie Venner, and *The Guardian Angel*, and was insensibly fixed in her rightful place and sustained by them.

The sun streaming into her room one morning at this time awoke her early and tempted her up and out. There was a sandy space beyond the grounds, a long level of her father's land extending to the eastern cliffs, and considered barren by him, but rich with a certain beauty of its own, the beauty of open spaces which rest and relieve the mind; and of immensity in the shining sea-line beyond the cliffs, and the arching vault of the sky overhead dipping down to encircle the earth; and of colour for all moods, from the vividest green of grass and yellow of gorse to the amethyst ling, and the browns with which the waning year tipped every bush and bramble—things which, when properly appreciated, make life worth living. It was in this direction that Evadne walked, taking it without design, but drawn insensibly as by a magnet to the sea.

She had thought herself early up, but the whole wild world of the heath was before her, and she began to feel belated as she went. There was a suspicion of frost in the air which made it deliciously fresh and exhilarating. The early morning mists still hung about, but the sun was brightly busy dispelling them. The rabbits were tripping hither and thither, too intent on their own business to pay much heed to Evadne. A bird sprang up from her feet, and soared out of sight, and she paused a moment with upturned face, dilated eyes, and lips apart, to watch him. But a glimpse of the gorse recalled her, and she picked some yellow blooms with delicate finger tips, and carried them in her bare hand savouring the scent, and at the same time looking and listening with an involuntary straining to enjoy the perception of each separate delicate delight at once, till presently the enthusiasm of nature called forth some further faculty, and she found herself sensible of every tint and tone, sight and sound, distinguishing, deciphering, but yet perceiving all together as the trained ear of a musician does the parts played by every instrument in an orchestra, and takes cognisance of the whole effect as well.

At the end of the waste there was a little church overlooking the sea. She saw that the door was open as she approached it, and she paused to look in. The early week-day service was in progress. A few quiet figures sat apart in the pews. The light was subdued. Something was being read aloud by a voice of caressing quality and musical. She did not attend to the words, but the tone satisfied. It seemed to her that the peace of God invited, and she slipped into the nearest pew. She found a Bible on the seat beside her, and opening it haphazard her eyes fell upon the words—

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep."

The lap of the little waves on the beach below was distinctly audible, the bird calls, and their twitterings, intermittent, incessant, persistent, came close and departed; and the fragrance of the blossoms, crushed in her hand, rose to remind her they were there.

"They that go down to the sea in ships."

It was a passage to be felt at the moment with the sea itself so near, and as she paused to ponder it, her mind attuned itself involuntarily to the habit of holy thought associated with the place, while the scents and sounds of nature streamed in

upon her, forming now a soft undercurrent, now a delicious accompaniment which filled the interval between what she knew of this world and all that she dreamt of the next. The cycle of sensation was complete, and in a moment her whole being blossomed into gladness. Her intellectual activity was suspended—her senses awoke. It was the morning of life with her, and she sank upon her knees, and lifted up her heart to express the joy of it in one ecstatic note: "O blessed Lord!"

Lord of the happy earth! Lord of the sun and our senses. He who comes to us first in Love's name, and bids us rejoice and be glad; not he who would have us mourn.

CHAPTER X

AFTER the experiences of that early morning's walk Evadne did not go to bed so late; she got up early and went to church. The agreeable working of her intellectual faculties during the early part of her absorbing self-education had kept her senses in abeyance; but when the discipline of all regular routine was relaxed, they were set free to get the upper hand if they would, and now they had begun to have their way—a delicate, dreamy way, of a surety, but it was a sensuous way nevertheless, and not at all a spiritual way, as her mother maintained it to be, because of the church-going. Sometimes sense, sometimes intellect, is the first to awake in us—supposing we are dowered with an intellect; but pain, which is the perfecting of our nature, must precede the soul's awakening, and for Evadne at that age, with her limited personal knowledge of life and scant experience of every form of human emotion which involves suffering, such an awakening was impossible. The first feeling of a girl as happily situated, healthy-minded, and physically strong as she was is bound to be pleasurable; and had she been a young man at this time she would not improbably have sought to heighten and vary her sensations by adding greater quantities of alcohol to her daily diet; she would have grown coarse of skin by eating more than she could assimilate; she would have smelt strongly enough of tobacco, as a rule, to try the endurance of a barmaid; she would have been anxious about the fit of coats, fastidious as to the choice of ties, quite impossible in the matter of trousers, and prone to regard her own image in the glass caressingly. She would have considered that every petticoat held a divinity, or every woman had her price according to the direction in which nature had limited her powers of perception with a view to the final making of her into a sentimental or a vicious fool. When she should have been hard at work she would have stayed in bed in the morning flattering her imagination with visions of the peerless beauties who would all adore her, and the proud place she would conquer in the world; and she would have gone girl-stalking in earnest—*probably*—had she been a young man. But being as she was, she got up early and went to church. It was the one way she had of expressing the silent joy of her being, and of intensifying it. She practised an extreme ritual at this time, and found in it the most complete form of expression for her mood possible. And in those early morning walks, when she brushed the dew-bespangled cobwebs from the gorse, and startled the twittering birds from their morning meal—in the caressing of healthy odours, the uplifting of all sweet natural

sounds, the soothing of the great sea-voice, the sense of infinity in the level landscape, of beauty in form and colour, of rest and peace in the grateful shadow of the little church on the cliff, but, above all, in the release from mental tension, and the ease of feeling after the strain of thought, she found the highest form of pleasure she had tasted, the most rarefied, the most intense. The St. Valentine's Day of her development was approaching, and her heart had begun already to practise the notes of the song-significant into which she would burst when it came.

It is a nice question that, as to where the sensuous ends and the spiritual begins. The dovetail is so exact just at the junction that it is impossible to determine, and it is there that "spirit and flesh grow one with delight" on occasion; but the test of the spiritual lies in its continuity. Pleasures of the senses pall upon repetition, but pleasures of the soul continue and increase. A delicate dish soon wearies the palate, but the power to appreciate a poem or a picture grows greater the more we study them—illustrations as trite, by the way, as those of the average divine in his weekly sermon, but calculated to comfort to the same extent in that they possess the charm of familiarity which satisfies self-love by proving that we know quite as much of some subjects as those who profess to teach them. Still, a happy condition of the senses may easily be mistaken for a great outpouring of spiritual enthusiasm, and many an inspiring soul unconsciously stimulates them in ways less pardonable perhaps than the legitimate joy of a good dinner to a hungry man, or the more subtle pleasure which a refined woman experiences while sharing the communion of well-dressed saints on a cushioned seat, listening to exquisite music in a fashionable church. Sensations of gladness send some people to church whom grief of any kind would drive from thence effectually. It is a matter of temperament. There are those who are by nature grateful for every good gift, who even bow their heads and suffer meekly if they perceive that they will have their reward, but are ready to rebel with rage against any form of ineffectual pain. This was likely to be Evadne's case. Yet her mother had been right about her having a deeply religious disposition.

The vicar in charge of the church on the cliff—he of the musical voice, Mr. Borthwick by name—became aware at once of Evadne's regular attendance. He was a young man, very earnest, very devout, worn thin with hard work, but happy in that he had it to do, and with that serene expression of countenance which comes of the habit of conscientious endeavour. As a matter of course, with such men at the present time, he sought solace in ritual. His whole nature thrilled to the roll of the organ, to the notes of a grateful anthem, to the sight and scent of his beautiful flowers on the altar, and to the harmony of colour and conventional design on the walls of his little church. He spent his life and his substance upon it, doing what he could to beautify it himself, in the name of the Lord, and finding in the act of worship a refinement of pleasure difficult of attainment, but possible and precious. And while all that sufficed for him, he honestly entertained the idea of celibacy as a condition necessary for the perfect purification of his own soul, and desirable as giving him a place apart which would help to maintain and strengthen his influence with his people. A layman may remain a bachelor without attracting attention, but a priest who abjures matrimony

insists that he makes a sacrifice, and deserves credit for the same. He says that the laws of nature are the laws of God, yet arranges his own life in direct opposition to the greatest of them. He can give no unanswerable reason for maintaining that the legitimate exercise of one set of natural functions is less holy than the exercise of the others, but that is what he believes, and curiously inconsistent as the conclusion is, the Rev. Henry Borthwick had adopted this view emphatically at the outset of his clerical career, and had announced his intention of adhering to it for the rest of his life. But, just as the snow under the cool and quiet stars at dusk might feel full force in itself to vow to the rising moon that it will not melt, and find nevertheless of necessity when the sun appears that it cannot keep its vow, so did the idea of celibacy pass from the mind of the Rev. Henry Borthwick when Evadne began to attend his morning services. Insensibly his first view of the subject vanished altogether, and was immediately replaced, first by an uplifting vision of the advantages of having a wife's help in the parish, then by a glimpse of the tender pleasure of a wife's presence in the house; and—extraordinary as it may seem, this final thought occurred to him while the Psalms were being sung in church one morning, so uncertain is the direction of man's mind at any time—he even had a vision of the joy of a wife's kiss when the sweet red lips that gave it were curved like those of the girl before him. He felt a great outpouring of spiritual grace during that service; his powers of devotion were intensified. But the moment it was over he hurried to the vestry, tore off his surplice and threw it on the floor, met Evadne as she left the church, and lingered long on the cliffs with her in earnest conversation.

She was late for breakfast that morning, and her mother asked her what had detained her.

"Mr. Borthwick was talking to me about the sacraments of the Church, mother," she answered, her calm true eyes meeting her mother's without confusion; "and about the necessity for, and the advantage of, frequent communions."

"And what do you think about it, dear?"

"I think I should like it."

Her mother said no more. Young Borthwick was a cadet of good family with expectations in the way of money, influence enough to procure him a deanery at least, and with a reputation for ability which, with his other advantages, gave him as fair a prospect as anybody she knew of a bishopric eventually—just the thing for Evadne, she reflected, so she did not interfere.

This was really a happy time for Evadne. The young priest frequently met her after the early service, and she liked his devotion. She liked his clean-featured, close-shaven face too, and his musical voice. He was her perfection of a priest, and when he did not meet her she missed him. She did not care for him so much when he called at the house, however. She associated him somehow with her morning moods, with religious discourses, and the Church service; but when he ventured beyond these limits, they lost touch, and so she held him down to them rigorously. He tried to resist. He even conceived a distaste for ecclesiastical subjects, and endeavoured to float her attention from these on little boats of fancy phrases made out of the first freshness of new days, the beauty of the sun on the sea, the jade-green of grass on the cliffs, the pleasure he took in the songs of birds, and other more mundane matters; but he lost her sympathetic interest

when he did so, receiving her polite attention instead, which was cold in comparison, and therefore did not satisfy him, so he determined to try and come to a perfect understanding, and during one of their morning walks, he startled her by making her a solemn and abrupt offer of marriage.

She considered the proposition in silence for some time. Then she looked at him as if she had never seen him before. Then she said, not knowing she was cruel, and only desiring to be frank, "I have never thought of you as a man, you know—only as a priest; and in that character I think you perfect. I respect and reverence you, I even love you, but"—

"But what?" he asked eagerly, his delicate face flushing, his whole being held in suspense.

"But I could not marry a priest. It would seem to be a sort of sacrilege."

She was very pale when she went in that morning, and her mother noticed it, and questioned her.

"Mr. Borthwick asked me to marry him, mother," she answered, straight to the point, as was her wont. "He surprised me."

"I am not surprised, dear," her mother rejoined, smiling.

"Did you suppose he would, mother?"

"Yes. I was sure of it."

"Oh, I wish you had warned me!"

"Then you haven't accepted him, Evadne?"

"No. I have always understood that it is not right for a priest to marry, and the idea of marrying one repels me. He has lowered himself in my estimation by thinking of such a thing. I could not think of him as I do of other men. I cannot dissociate him from his office. I expect him somehow to be always about his reading-desk and pulpit."

Mrs. Frayling's face had fallen, but she only said, "I wish you could have felt otherwise, dear."

Evadne went up to her room, and stood leaning against the frame of the open window, looking out over the level landscape. The poor priest had shown deep feeling, and it was the first she had seen of such suffering. It pained her terribly.

She got up early next morning, and went out as usual; but the scent of the gorse was obtrusive, the bird-voices had lost their charm, the far-off sound of the sea had a new and melancholy note in it, and the little church on the cliff looked lonely against the sky. She could not go there again to be reminded of what she would fain have forgotten. No; that phase was over. The revulsion of feeling was complete, and to banish all recollection of it she tried with a will to revive the suspended animation of her interest in her books.

CHAPTER XI

"ALL excitements run to love in women of a certain—let us not say age, but youth," says the professor. "An electrical current passing through a coil of wire makes a magnet of a bar of iron lying within it, but not touching it. So a woman is turned into a love-magnet by a tingling current of life running round her. I should like to see one of them balanced on a pivot properly adjusted, and watch if she did not turn so as to point north and south, as she would if the love-currents are like those of the earth, our mother."

This passage indicates exactly the point at

which Evadne had now arrived, and where she was pausing.

The attempt to return to her books had been far from successful. Her eye would traverse page after page without transferring a single record to her brain, and she would sit with one open in her lap by the hour together, not absorbed in thought, but lost in feeling. She was both glad and sad at the same time, glad in her youth and strength, and sad in the sense of something wanting; what was it?

If she had— Well! She longed, and knew not wherefore.

Had the world nothing she might live to care for? No second self to say her evening prayer for?

The poor little bird loved the old nest, but she had unconsciously outgrown it, and was perplexed to find no ease or comfort in it any more.

She certainly entertained the idea of marriage at this time. She had acquired a sort of notion from her friends that it was good to marry, and her own inclinations seconded the suggestion. She meant to marry when she should find the right man, but the difficulty of choice disturbed her. She had still much of the spirit which made her at twelve see nothing but nonsense in the "Turn, Gentle Hermit of the Dale" drivel, and she was quite prepared to decide with her mind. She never took her heart into consideration, or the possibility of being overcome by a feeling which is stronger than reason.

She made her future husband a subject of prayer, however. She prayed that he might be an upright man, that he might come to her soon; she even asked for some sign by which she should know him. This was during the morning service in church one Sunday—not the little one on the cliff, which was only a chapel-of-ease, but the parish church to which the whole family went regularly. Her thoughts had wandered away, from the lesson that was being read, to this subject of private devotion, and as she formulated the desire for a sign, for some certainty by which she might know the man whom the dear Lord intended to be her husband, she looked up, and from the other side of the aisle she met a glance that abashed her. She looked away, but her eyes were drawn back inevitably, and this time the glance of those other eyes enlightened her. Her heart bounded—her face flushed. This was the sign, she was sure of it. She had felt nothing like it before, and although she never raised her eyes again, she thrilled through the rest of the service to the consciousness that there, not many yards away, her future husband sat and sighed for her.

After the service, the subject of her thoughts claimed her father's acquaintance, and was introduced by him to her as Major Colquhoun. He looked about thirty-eight, and was a big blond man, with a heavy moustache, and a delicate skin that flushed easily. His hair was thin on the forehead; in a few more years he would be bald there.

Mr. Frayling asked him to lunch, and Evadne sat beside him. She scarcely spoke a word the whole time, or looked at him; but she knew that he looked at her; and she glowed and was glad. The little church on the cliff seemed a long way off, and out in the cold now. She was sorry for Mr. Borthwick. She had full faith in the sign. Was not the fact that Major Colquhoun, whom she had never even heard of in her life before, was sitting beside her at that moment, confirmation

strong, if any were wanting? But she asked no more.

After lunch her father carried his guest off to smoke, and she went up to her own room to be alone, and sat in the sun by the open window, with her head resting on the back of her chair, looking up at the sky; and sighed, and smiled, and clasped her hands to her breast, and revelled in sensations.

Major Colquhoun had been staying with a neighbouring county gentleman, but she found when she met him again at afternoon tea that her father had persuaded him to come to Fraylingay for some shooting. He was to go back that night, and return to them the following Tuesday. Evadne heard of the arrangement in silence, and unsurprised. Had he gone and *not* returned, she would have wondered; but this sudden admission of a stranger to the family circle, although unusual, was not unprecedented at Fraylingay, where, after it was certain that you knew the right people, pleasant manners were the only passport necessary to secure a footing of easy intimacy; and, besides, it was inevitable—that the sign might be fulfilled. So Evadne folded her hands, as it were, and calmly awaited the course of events, not doubting for a moment that she knew exactly what that course was to be.

She did not actually *see* much of Major Colquhoun in the days that followed, although, when he was not out shooting, he was always beside her; but such timid glances as she stole satisfied her. And she heard her mother say what a fine-looking man he was, and her father emphatically pronounced him to be "a very good fellow." He was Irish by his mother's side, Scotch by his father's, but much more Irish than Scotch by predilection, and it was his mother tongue he spoke, exaggerating the accent slightly to heighten the effect of a tender speech or a good story. With the latter he kept Mr. Frayling well entertained, and Evadne he plied with the former on every possible occasion.

His visit was to have been for a few days only, but it extended itself to some weeks, at the end of which time Evadne had accepted him, the engagement had been announced in the proper papers, Mrs. Frayling was radiant, congratulations poured in, and everybody concerned was in a state of pleasurable excitement from morning till night.

Mrs. Frayling was an affectionate woman, and it was touching to see her writing fluent letters of announcement to her many friends, the smiles on her lips broken by ominous quiverings now and then, and a handkerchief held crumpled in her left hand, and growing gradually damper, as she proceeded, with the happy tears that threatened her neat epistle with blots and blisters.

"It has been the prettiest idyl to us onlookers," she wrote to Lady Adeline. "Love at first sight with both of them, and their first glimpse of each other was in church, which we all take to be the happiest omen that God's blessing is upon them, and will sanctify their union. Evadne says little, but there is such a delicate tinge of colour in her cheeks always, and such a happy light in her eyes, that I cannot help looking at her. George is senior major, and will command the regiment in a very short time, and his means are quite ample enough for them to begin upon. There is twenty years' difference in their ages, which sounds too much theoretically, but practically, when you see them together, you never think of it. He is very handsome, every inch a soldier,

and an Irishman, with all an Irishman's brightness and wit, and altogether the most taking manners. I tell Evadne I am quite in love with him myself! He is a thoroughly good churchman too, which is a great blessing—never misses a service, and it is a beautiful sight to see him kneeling beside Evadne as rapt and intent as she is. He was rather wild as a young man, I am sorry to say, but he has been quite frank about all that to Mr. Frayling, and there is nothing now that we can object to. In fact, we think he is exactly suited to Evadne, and we are thoroughly satisfied in every way. You can imagine that I find it hard to part with her, but I always knew that it would be the case as soon as she came out, and so was prepared in a way; still, that will not lessen the wrench when it comes. But of course I must not consider my own feelings when the dear child's happiness is in question, and I think that long engagements are a mistake; and as there is really no reason why they should wait, they are to be married at the end of next month, which gives us only six weeks to get the trousseau. We are going to town at once to see about it, and I think that probably the ceremony will take place there too. It would be such a business at Fraylingay, with all the tenants and everything, and altogether one has to consider expense. But do write at once and promise me that we may expect you, and Mr. Hamilton-Wells, and the *dear* twins, wherever it is. In fact, I believe Evadne is writing to Theodore at this moment to ask him to be her page, and Angelica will, of course, be a bridesmaid."

During the first days of her absorbing passion Evadne's devotion to God was intensified. "Sing to the Lord a new song" was for ever upon her lips.

When the question of her engagement came to be mooted she had had a long talk with her father, following upon a still longer talk which he had had with Major Colquhoun.

"And you are satisfied with my choice, father?" she said. "You consider George in every respect a suitable husband for me?"

"In all respects, my dear," he answered heartily. "He is a very fine, manly fellow."

"There was nothing in his past life to which I should object?" she ventured timidly.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," he assured her. "He has been perfectly straightforward about himself, and I am satisfied that he will make you an excellent husband."

It was all the assurance she required, and after she had received it she gave herself up to her happiness without a doubt, and unreservedly.

The time flew. Major Colquhoun's leave expired, and he was obliged to return to his regiment at Shorncliffe; but they wrote to each other every day, and this constant communion was a new source of delight to Evadne. Just before they left Fraylingay she went to see her aunt, Mrs. Orton Beg. The latter had sprained her ankle severely, and would therefore not be able to go to Evadne's wedding. She lived in Morningquest, and had a little house in the Close there. Morningquest was only twenty miles from Fraylingay, but the trains were tiresomely slow, and did not run in connection, so that it took as long to get there as it did to go to London, and people might live their lives in Fraylingay, and know nothing of Morningquest.

Mrs. Orton Beg's husband was buried in the old cathedral city, and she lived there to be near his grave. She could never tear herself away from it for long together. The light of her life

had gone out when he died, and was buried with him; but the light of her love, fed upon the blessed hope of immortality, burnt brighter every day.

Her existence in the quiet Close was a very peaceful, dreamy one, soothed by the chime, uplifted by the sight of the beautiful old cathedral, and regulated by its service.

Evadne found her lying on a couch beside an open window in the drawing-room, which was a long, low room, running the full width of the house, and with a window at either end, one looking up the Close to the north, the other to the south, into a high-walled, old-fashioned flower garden; and this was the one near which Mrs. Orton Beg was lying.

"I think I should turn to the cathedral, Aunt Olive," Evadne said.

"I do," her aunt answered; "but not at this time of day. I travel round with the sun."

"It would fill my mind with beautiful thoughts to live here," Evadne said, looking up at the lonely spire reverently.

"I have no doubt that your mind is always full of beautiful thoughts," her aunt rejoined, smiling. "But I know what you mean. There are thoughts carved on those dumb grey stones which can only come to us from such a source of inspiration. The sincerity of the old workmen, their love and their reverence, were wrought into all they produced, and if only we hold our own minds in the right attitude, we receive something of their grace. Do you remember that passage of Longfellow's?—

Ah! from what agonies of heart and brain,
What exultations trampling on despair,
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
This mediæval miracle, . . . !

Sitting here alone, sometimes I seem to feel it all—all the capacity for loving sacrifice and all the energy of human passion which wrought itself into that beautiful offering of its devotion, and made it acceptable. But, tell me, Evadne—are you very happy?"

"I am *too* happy, I think, auntie. But I can't talk about it. I must keep the consciousness of it close in my own heart, and guard it jealously, lest I dissipate any atom of it by attempting to describe it."

"Do you think, then, that love is such a delicate thing that the slightest exposure will destroy it?"

"I don't know what I think. But the feeling is so fresh now, auntie, I am afraid to run the risk of uttering a word, or hearing one, that might tarnish it."

She strolled out into the garden during the afternoon, and sat on a high-backed chair in the shade of the old brick wall, with eyes half closed and a smile hovering about her lips. The wall was curtained with canaryensis, virginia creeper rich in autumn tints, ivy, and giant nasturtiums. Great sunflowers grew up against it, and a row of single dahlias of every possible hue crowded up close to the sunflowers. They made a background to the girl's slender figure.

She sat there a long time, happily absorbed, and Mrs. Orton Beg's memory, as she watched her, slipped back inevitably to her own love days, till tears came of the inward supplication that Evadne's future might never know the terrible blight which had fallen upon her own life.

Evadne walked through the village on her way

back to Fraylingay. A young woman with her baby in her arms was standing at the door of her cottage looking out as she passed, and she stopped to speak to her. The child held out his little arms, and kicked and crowed to be taken, and when his mother had intrusted him to Evadne, he clasped her tight round the neck, and nibbled her cheek with his warm, moist mouth, sending a delicious thrill through every fibre of her body, a first foretaste of maternity.

She hurried on to hide her emotion.

But all the way home there was a singing at her heart, a certainty of joys undreamt of hitherto, the tenderest, sweetest, most womanly joys—her own house, her own husband, her own children—perhaps; it all lay in that, her *own*!

CHAPTER XII

THE next few weeks were decked with the richness of autumn tints, the glory of autumn skies; but Evadne was unaware of either. She had no consciousness of distinct days and nights, and indeed they were pretty well mingled after she went to town, for she often danced till daylight and slept till dusk. And it was all a golden haze, this time, with impressions of endless shops; of silks, satins, and lovely laces; of costly trinkets; of little notes flying between London and Shorncliffe; and of everybody so happy that it was impossible to help sitting down and having a good cry occasionally.

The whirl in which she lived during this period was entered upon without thought, her own inclinations agreeing at the time to every usage sanctioned by custom; but in after years she said that those days of dissipation and excitement appeared to her to be a curious preparation for the solemn duties she was about to enter upon.

Evadne felt the time fly, and she felt also that the days were never ending. It was six weeks at first; and then all at once, as it seemed, there was only one week; and then it was "to-morrow!" All that last day there was a terrible racket in the house, and she was hardly left alone a single moment, and was therefore thankful when finally, late at night, she managed to escape to her own room—not that she was left long in peace even then, however, for two of her bridesmaids were staying in the house, and they and her sisters stormed her chamber in their dressing-gowns and had a pillow fight to begin with, and then sat down and cackled for an hour, speculating as to whether they should like to be married or not. They decided that they should, because of the presents, you know, and the position, and the delight of having such a lot of new gowns, and being your own mistress, with your own house and servants; they thought of everything, in fact, but the inevitable husband, the possession of whom certainly constituted no part of the advantages which they expected to secure by marriage. Evadne sat silent, and smiled at their chatter with the air of one who has solved the problem and knows. But she was glad to be rid of them, and when they had gone, she got her sacred "Commonplace Book," and glanced through it dreamily. Then, rousing herself a little, she went to her writing-table, and sat down and wrote, "This is the close of the happiest girlhood that girl ever had. I cannot recall a single thing that I would have had otherwise."

When she had locked the book away, with some other possessions in a box that was to be sent to await her arrival at her new home, she took up a photograph of her lover and gazed at it rapturously for a moment, then pressed it to her lips and breast, and placed it where her eyes might light on it as soon as she awoke.

She was aroused by a kiss on her lips and a warm tear on her cheek next morning. "Wake, darling," her mother said. "This is your wedding-day."

"Oh, mother," she cried, flinging her arms round her neck; "how good of you to come yourself! I *am* so happy!"

Mr. Hamilton-Wells, Lady Adeline, and the Heavenly Twins had been at the Fraylings' since breakfast, and nothing had happened.

Lady Adeline, having seen the children safely and beautifully dressed for the ceremony, Angelica as a bridesmaid, Diavolo as page, left them sitting, with a picture-book between them, like model twins.

"Really," she said to Mr. Hamilton-Wells, "I think the occasion is too interesting for them to have anything else in their heads."

But the moment she left them alone those same heads went up, and set themselves in a listening attitude.

"Now, Diavolo; *quick!*" said Angelica, as soon as the sound of her mother's departing footsteps had died away.

Diavolo dashed the picture-book to the opposite side of the room, sprang up, and followed Angelica swiftly but stealthily to the very top of the house.

When the wedding party assembled in the drawing-room the twins were nowhere to be found. Mr. Hamilton-Wells went peering through his eyeglass into every corner, removed the glass and looked without it, then dusted it, and looked once more to make sure, while Lady Adeline grew rigid with nervous anxiety.

The search had to be abandoned, however; but when the party went down to the carriages, it was discovered, to everybody's great relief, that the children had already modestly taken their seats in one of them with their backs to the horses. Each was carefully covered with an elegant wrap, and sitting bolt upright, the picture of primness. The wraps were superfluous, and Mr. Hamilton-Wells was about to remonstrate, but Lady Adeline exclaimed, "For Heaven's sake, *don't* interfere! It is such a *trifle*. If you irritate them, goodness knows *what* will happen."

But, manlike, he could not let things be.

"Where have you been, you naughty children?" he demanded, in his precisest way. "You have really given a great deal of trouble."

"Well, papa," Angelica retorted hotly, at the top of her voice through the carriage window for the edification of the crowd, "you said we were to be good children, and not get into everybody's way, and here we have been sitting an hour as good as possible, and quite out of the way, and you aren't satisfied! It's quite unreasonable; isn't it, Diavolo? Papa can't get on, I believe, *without* finding fault with us. It's just a bad habit he's got, and when we give him no excuse he invents one."

Mr. Hamilton-Wells beat a hasty retreat, and the party arrived at the church without mishap, but when the procession was formed there was a momentary delay. They were waiting for the bride's page, who descended with the youngest bridesmaid from the last carriage, and the two came

into the church demurely, hand in hand. "What darlings!" "Aren't they pretty?" "What a sweet little boy, with his lovely dark curls!" was heard from all sides; but there was also an audible titter. Lady Adeline turned pale, Mrs. Frayling's fan dropped. Evadne lost her countenance. The twins had changed clothes.

There was nothing to be done then, however; so Angelica obtained the coveted pleasure of acting as page to Evadne, and Diavolo escaped the trouble of having to hold up her train, and managed besides to have some fun with a small but amorous boy who was to have been Angelica's pair, and who, knowing nothing of the fraud which had been perpetrated, insisted on kissing the fair Diavolo, to that young gentleman's lasting delight.

It was a misty morning, with only fitful glimpses of sunshine.

Mrs. Frayling was not a bit superstitious (nobody is), but she had been watching the omens (most people do), and she would have been better satisfied had the day been bright; but still she felt no shadow of a foreboding until the twins appeared. Then, however, there arose in her heart a horrified exclamation: "It is unnatural! It will bring bad luck."

There was no fun for the Heavenly Twins apart, so they decided to sit together at the wedding breakfast, and nobody dared to separate them, lest worse should come of it.

Diavolo bet he would drink as much champagne as Major Colquhoun, and having secured a seat opposite to an uncorked bottle, he proceeded conscientiously to do his best to win the wager. Toward the end of breakfast, however, he lost count, and then he lost his head, and showed signs of falling off his chair.

"You must go to sleep under the table now," said Angelica. "It's the proper thing to do when you're drunk. *I'm* going to. But I'm not far enough gone yet. My legs are queer, but my head is steady. Get under, will you? I'll be down directly." And she cautiously but rapidly dislodged him, and landed him at her feet, everybody's attention being occupied at the moment by the gentleman who was gracefully returning thanks for the ladies. When the speech was over Lady Adeline remembered the twins with a start, and at once missed Diavolo.

"Where is he?" she asked anxiously.

"He is just doing something for me, mamma," Angelica answered.

He was acting at that moment as her footstool under the table. She did not join him there as she had promised, however, because when the wine made her begin to feel giddy she took no more. She said afterward she saw no fun in feeling nasty, and she thought a person must be a fool to think there was, and Diavolo, who was suffering badly at the moment from headache and nausea, the effect of his potations, agreed. That was on the evening of the eventful day at their own town house, their father and mother having hurried them off there as soon after Diavolo was discovered in a helpless condition as they could conveniently make their escape. The twins had been promptly put to bed in their respective rooms, and told to stay there, but, of course, it did not in the least follow that they would obey, and locking them up had not been found to answer. Angelica did remain quiet, however, an hour or so, resting after all the excitement of the morning; but she got up eventually, put on her dressing-gown, and went to Diavolo; and it was

then they discussed the drink question. Discussion, however, was never enough for the twins; they always wanted to *do* something; so now they went down to the library together, erected an altar of valuable books, and arrayed themselves in white sheets, which they tore from the parental couch for the purpose, considerably disarranging the same; and the sheets they covered with crimson curtains, taken down at imminent risk of injuring themselves from one of the dining-room windows, with the help of a ladder, abstracted from the area by way of the front door, although they *were* in their dressing-gowns, the time chosen for this revel being when their parents were in the drawing-room after dinner, and all the servants were having their supper and safe out of the way. The ladder was used to go down to the coal cellar, and never, of course, replaced, the consequence being that the next person who went for coal fell in the dark, and broke her leg, an accident which cost Mr. Hamilton-Wells from first to last a considerable sum, he being a generous man, and unwilling to let anyone suffer in pocket in his service; he thought the risks to life and limb were sufficient without that.

Having completed these solemn preparations, the twins swore a ghastly oath on the altar never to touch drink again, and might they be found out in everything they did on earth if they broke it, and never see heaven when they died!

The wedding breakfast went off merrily enough, and when the bride and bridesmaids left the table, and the dining-room door was safely shut, there was much girlish laughter in the hall, and an undignified scamper up the stairs, also a tussle as to who should take the first pin from the bride's veil and be married next, and much amusement when Mrs. Frayling's elderly maid unconsciously appropriated it herself in the way of business.

Evadne hugged her, exclaiming, "You dear old Jenny! You *shall* be married next, and I'll be your bridesmaid!"

"Oh no, you won't," cried one of the girls. "You'll never be a bridesmaid again."

Then suddenly there was silence. "Never again" is chilling in effect; it is such a very long time.

As Evadne was leaving the room in her travelling dress she noticed some letters lying on her dressing-table, which she had forgotten, and turned back to get them. They had come by the morning's post, but she had not opened any of them, and now she began to put them into her pocket one by one to read at her leisure, glancing at the superscriptions as she did so. One was from Aunt Olive: dear Aunt Olive, how kind of her! Two were letters of congratulation from friends of the family. A fourth was from the old housekeeper at Fraylingay; she kissed that. The fifth was in a strange and peculiar hand which she did not recognise, and she opened it first to see who her correspondent might be. The letter was from the North, and had been addressed to Fraylingay, and she should have received it some days before. As she drew it from its envelope she glanced at the signature, and at the last few words, which were uppermost, and seemed surprised. She knew the writer by name and reputation very well, although they had never met, and, feeling sure that the communication must be something of importance, she unfolded the letter, and read it at once deliberately from beginning to end.

When she appeared among the guests again she was pale, her lips were set, and she held her

head high. Her mother said the dear child was quite overwrought, but she saw only what she expected to see through her own tear-bedimmed eyes, and other people were differently impressed. They thought Evadne was cold and preoccupied when it came to the parting, and did not seem to feel leaving her friends at all. She went out dry-eyed after kissing her mother, took her seat in the carriage, bowed polite but unsmiling acknowledgments to her friends, and drove off with Major Colquhoun with as little show of emotion, and much the same air as if she had merely been going somewhere on business, and expected to return directly.

"Thank goodness, all that is over!" Major Colquhoun exclaimed. She looked at him coolly and critically.

He was sitting with his hat in his hand, and she noticed that his hair was thin on his forehead, and there was nothing of youth in his eyes.

"I expect you are tired," he further observed.

"No, I am not tired, thank you," Evadne answered.

Then she set her lips once more, leant back, and looked out of the carriage window at the street all sloppy with mud, and the poor people seeming so miserable in the rain which had been falling steadily for the last hour.

"Poor weary creatures!" she thought. "We have so much, and they so little!" But she did not speak again till the carriage pulled up at the station, when she leant forward with anxious eyes, and said something confusedly about the crowd.

Major Colquhoun thought she was afraid of being stared at. He took out his watch.

"You will only have to cross the platform to the carriage," he said, "and the train ought to be up by this time. But if you don't mind being left alone a moment, I'll just go myself and see if it is, and where they are going to put us, and then I can take you there straight, and you won't feel the crowd at all."

He was not gone many minutes, but when he returned the carriage was empty.

"Where is Mrs. Colquhoun?" he said.

"She followed you, sir," the coachman answered, touching his hat.

"Confound"—He pulled himself up. "She'll be back in a moment, I suppose," he muttered.

"Dover express! Take your seats!" bawled a porter. "Are you for the Dover express?"

"Yes," said Major Colquhoun.

"Engaged carriage, sir?"

"Yes—oh, by the way, perhaps she's gone to the carriage," and he started to see, the porter following him. "Did you notice a young lady in a grey dress pass this way?" he asked the man as they went.

"With a pink feather in 'er 'at, sir?"

"Yes."

"Not pass up this way, sir," the man rejoined. "She got into a 'ansom over there, and drove off—if it was the same young lady." Major Colquhoun stopped short. The compartment reserved for them was empty also.

"Dover express! Dover express!" the guard shouted as he came along banging the carriage doors to.

"For Dover, sir?" he said, in his ordinary voice, to Major Colquhoun.

"No. It seems not, that gentleman answered deliberately.

The guard went on: "Dover express! Dover express! All right, Bill!" This was to some-

one in front as he popped into his own van and shut the door.

Then the whistle shrieked derisively, the crank turned, and the next moment the train slid out serpent-like into the mist. Major Colquhoun had watched it off like any ordinary spectator, and when it had gone he looked at the porter, and the porter looked at him.

"Was your luggage in the train, sir?" the man asked him.

"Yes, but only booked to Dover," Major Colquhoun answered carelessly, taking out a cigarette case and choosing a cigarette with exaggerated precision. When he had lighted it he tipped the porter, and strolled back to the entrance, on the chance of finding the carriage still there; but it had gone, and he called a hansom, paused a moment with his foot on the step, then finally directed the man to drive to the Fraylings'.

"Swell's bin sold some'ow," commented the porter. "And if I was a swell I wouldn't take on neither."

CHAPTER XIII

THE Fraylings had decided to postpone all further festivities till the bride and bridegroom's return, so that the wedding guests had gone, and the house looked as drearily commonplace as any other in the street when the hansom pulled up a little short of the door for Major Colquhoun to alight.

The servant who answered his ring made no pretence of concealing his astonishment when he saw who it was, but Major Colquhoun's manner effectually checked any expression of it. He was not the kind of man whom a servant would ever have dared to express any sympathy with, however obviously things might have gone wrong. But there was nothing in Major Colquhoun's appearance at that moment to show that anything had gone wrong, except his return when he should have been off on his wedding journey. There was probably a certain amount of assumption in his apparent indifference. He had always cultivated an inscrutable bearing, as being "the thing" in his set, so that it was easy for him now to appear to be cooler and more collected than he was. His attitude, however, was largely due to a want of proper healthy feeling, for he was a vice-worn man, with small capacity left for any great emotion.

He walked into the hall and hung up his hat.

"Is Mr. Frayling alone?" he said.

"Yes, sir—with Mrs. Frayling—and the family—upstairs in the drawing-room," the man stammered.

"Ask him to see me down here, please. Say a gentleman." He stepped to a mirror as he spoke and carefully twisted the ends of his blond moustache.

"Very good, sir," said the servant.

Major Colquhoun walked into the library in the same deliberate way, and turned up the gas. Mr. Frayling came hurrying down, fat and fussy, and puffing a little, but cheerfully rubicund upon the success of the day's proceedings, and apprehending nothing untoward. When he saw his son-in-law he opened his eyes, stopped short, turned pale, and gasped.

"Is Evadne here?" Major Colquhoun asked quietly.

"Here? No! What should she be doing

here? What has happened?" Mr. Frayling exclaimed, aghast.

"That is just what I don't rightly know myself, if she is not here," Major Colquhoun replied, the quiet demeanour he had assumed contrasting favourably with his father-in-law's fuss and fume.

"Why have you left her? What are you doing here? Explain," Mr. Frayling demanded almost angrily.

Major Colquhoun related the little he knew, and Mr. Frayling plumped down into a chair to listen, and bounced up again, when all was said, to speak.

"Let me send for her mother," he began, showing at once where, in an emergency, he felt that his strength lay. "No, though, I'd better go myself and prepare her," he added, on second thought. "We mustn't make a fuss—with all the servants about too. They would talk." And then he fussed off himself, with agitation evident in every step.

Something like a smile disturbed Major Colquhoun's calm countenance for a moment, and then he stood, twisting the ends of his fair moustache slowly with his left hand, and gazing into the fire, which shone reflected in his steely blue eyes, making them glitter like pale sapphires, coldly, while he waited.

Mr. Frayling returned with his wife almost immediately. The latter had had her handkerchief in her hand all day, but she put it in her pocket now.

Major Colquhoun had to repeat his story.

"Did you look for her in the waiting-rooms?" Mrs. Frayling asked.

"No."

"She may be there waiting for you at this very moment."

It was a practical suggestion.

"But the porter said he saw her get into a hansom," Major Colquhoun objected.

"He said he saw a young lady in grey get into a hansom, I understood you to say," Mrs. Frayling corrected him. "A young lady in grey is not necessarily Evadne. There might be a dozen young ladies in grey in such a crowd."

"There might, yes," Mr. Frayling agreed.

"And the proof that it was not Evadne is that she is not here," her mother proceeded. "If she had been seen getting into a hansom it could only have been to come here."

"A hansom might break down on the way," said Major Colquhoun, entertaining the idea for a moment.

"That is not impossible," Mr. Frayling decided.

"But why should she come here?" Major Colquhoun slowly pursued, looking hard at his parents-in-law. "Had she any objection to marrying me? Was she over-persuaded into it?"

"Oh, no!" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed emphatically. "How *can* you suppose such a thing? We should never have *dreamed* of influencing the dear child in such a matter. If there were ever a case of love at first sight it was one. Why, her first words on awaking this morning were, 'Oh, mother! I *am* so happy!' and that doesn't sound like being over-persuaded!"

"Then what, in God's name, is the explanation of all this?" Major Colquhoun exclaimed, showing some natural emotion for the first time.

"That is it," said Mr. Frayling energetically. "There must be some explanation."

"Heaven grant that the dear child has not been entrapped in some way and carried off, and robbed, and murdered, or something *dreadful*," Mrs.

Frayling cried, giving way to the strain all at once, and wringing her hands.

Then they looked at each other, and the period of speculation was followed by a momentary interregnum of silence, which would in due course be succeeded by a desire to act, to do something, if nothing happened in the meantime. Something did happen, however. The door bell rang violently. They looked up and listened. The hall door was opened. Footsteps approached, paused outside the library, and then the butler entered, and handed Mr. Frayling a telegram on a silver salver.

"Is there any answer, sir?" he asked.

Mr. Frayling opened it with trembling hands and read it. "No; no answer," he said.

The butler looked at them all as if they interested him, and withdrew.

"Well," cried Mrs. Frayling, her patience exhausted. "Is it from her?"

"Yes," Mr. Frayling replied. "It was handed in at the General Post Office at"—

"The General Post Office!" Major Colquhoun ejaculated. "What on earth took her there?"

"The hansom, you know," said Mrs. Frayling. "Oh, dear"—to her husband—"do read it."

"Well, I'm going to, if you'll let me," he answered irritably, but delaying, nevertheless, to mutter something irrelevant about women's tongues. Then he read: "'Don't be anxious about me. Have received information about Major C.'s character and past life which does not satisfy me at all, and am going now to make further inquiries. Will write.'"

"Information about my character and past life!" exclaimed Major Colquhoun. "Why, what is wrong with my character? What have I done?"

"Oh, the child is mad! she must be mad!" Mrs. Frayling ejaculated.

Mr. Frayling fumed up and down the room in evident perturbation. He had not a single phrase ready for such an occasion, nor the power to form one, and was consequently compelled to employ quite simple language.

"You had better make inquiries at the post office," he said to Major Colquhoun, "and try and trace her. You must follow her and bring her back at once, if possible."

"Not I, indeed," was Major Colquhoun's most unexpected rejoinder; "I shall not give myself any trouble on her account; she may go."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't say that, George!" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed. "You *do* love her, and she loves *you*; I *know* she does. Some *dreadful* mischief-making person has come between you. But wait, *do* wait, until you know more. It will all come right in the end. I am *sure* it will."

Major Colquhoun compressed his lips and looked sullenly into the fire.

CHAPTER XIV

ON the third day after Evadne's wedding, in the afternoon, Mrs. Orton Beg was sitting alone in her long low drawing-room by the window which looked out into the high-walled garden. She had found it difficult to occupy herself with books and work that day. Her sprained ankle had been troublesome during the night, and she had risen late, and when her maid had helped her to dress, and she had limped downstairs on her

crutches, and settled herself in her long chair, she found herself disinclined for any further exertion, and just sat, reclining upon pale pink satin cushions, her slender hands folded upon her lap, her large, dark, luminous eyes and delicate, refined features all set in a wistful sadness.

There was a singular likeness between herself and Evadne in some things, a vague, haunting family likeness which continually obtruded itself but could not be defined. It had been more distinct when Evadne was a child, and would doubtless have grown greater had she lived with her aunt, but the very different mental attitude which she gradually acquired had melted the resemblance, as it were, so that at nineteen, although her slender figure and air and carriage continually recalled Mrs. Orton Beg, who was then in her thirty-fifth year, the expression of her face was so different that they were really less alike than they had been when Evadne was four years younger. Evadne's disposition, it must be remembered, was essentially swift to act. She would, as a human being, have her periods of strong feeling, but that was merely a physical condition in no way affecting her character; and the only healthy-minded, happy state for her was the one in which thought instantly translated itself into action.

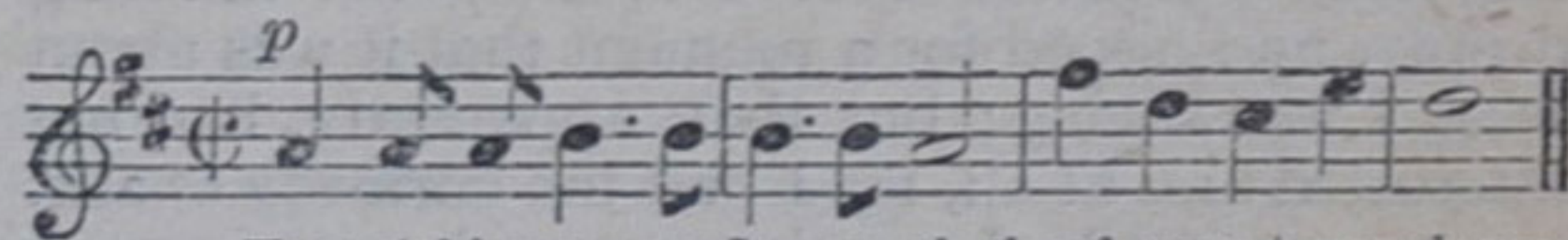
With Mrs. Orton Beg it was different. Her spiritual nature predominated, her habits of mind were dreamy. She lived for the life to come entirely, and held herself in constant communion with another world. She felt it near her, she said. She believed that its inhabitants visit the earth, and take cognisance of all we do and suffer; and she cherished the certainty of one day assuming a wondrous form, and entering upon a new life, as vivid and varied and as real as this, but far more perfect. Her friends were chiefly of her own way of thinking; but her faith was so profound, and the charm of her conversation so entrancing, that the hardest headed materialists were apt to feel strange delicious thrills in her presence, forebodings of possibilities beyond the test of reason and knowledge; and they would return time after time to dispute her conclusions and argue themselves out of the impression she had produced, but only to relapse into their former state of blissful sensation so soon as they once more found themselves within range of her influence. Opinions are germs in the moral atmosphere which fasten themselves upon us if we are predisposed to entertain them; but some states of feeling are a perfume which every sentient being must perceive with emotions that vary from extreme repugnance to positive pleasure through diverse intermediate strata of lively interest or mere passive perception; and the feeling which emanated from Mrs. Orton Beg is one that is especially contagious. For, in the first place, the beauty of goodness appeals pleasantly to the most depraved; to be elevated above themselves for a moment is a rare delight to them; and, in the second, there is a deeply implanted leaning in the heart of man toward the something beyond everything, the impalpable, impossible, imperceptible, which he cannot know and will not credit, but is nevertheless compelled to feel in some of his moods, or in certain presences, and having once felt, finds himself fascinated by it, and so returns to the subject for the sake of the sensation. In that long low drawing-room of Mrs. Orton Beg's, with the window at either end, in view of the grey old cathedral towering above the gnarled elms of the Lower Close, itself the scene of every form of human endeavour, every

expression of human passion, in surroundings so heavy with memories of the past, and listening to the quiet tone of conviction in which Mrs. Orton Beg spoke, with the double charm of extreme polish and simplicity combined—in that same room even the worldliest had found themselves rise into the ecstasy of the higher life, spiritually freed for the moment, and with the desire to go forth and do great deeds of love.

Mrs. Orton Beg had sat idle an hour looking out of the window, her mind in the mood for music, but bare of thought.

A gale was blowing without. The old elms in the Close were tossing their stiff, bare arms about, the ground was strewn with branches and leaves from the limes, and a watery wintry sun made the misery of the muddy ground apparent, and accentuated the blight of the flowers and torn untidiness of the creepers, and all the items which make autumn gardens so desolate. The equinoctial gales had set in early that year. They began on Evadne's wedding-day with a fearful storm which raged all over the country, and burst with especial violence upon Morningquest, and the wind continued high, and showed no sign of abating. It was depressing weather, and Mrs. Orton Beg sighed more than once unconsciously.

But presently the cathedral clock began to strike, and she raised her head to listen. One, two, three, four, the round notes fell; then there was a pause; and then the chime rolled out over the storm-stained city—



He, watching o - ver Is - ra - el, slumbers not, nor sleeps.

Mechanically Mrs. Orton Beg repeated the phrase with each note as it floated forth, filling the silent spaces; and then she awoke with a start to thought once more, and knew that she had been a long, long time alone.

She was going to ring, but at that moment a servant entered and announced, "Mrs. and Miss Beale."

They were the wife and daughter of the Bishop of Morningquest, the one a very pleasant, attractive elderly lady, the other a girl of seventeen, like her mother, but with more character in her face.

"Ah, how glad I am to see you!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed, trying to rise, "and what a delicious breath of fresh air you have brought in with you!"

"My dear Olive, don't move," Mrs. Beale rejoined, preventing her. "We have been nearly blown away walking this short distance. Just look at Edith's hair."

"I feel quite tempest-tossed," said Edith, getting up and going to a glass before which she removed her hat, and let down her hair, which was the colour of burnished brass, and fell to her knees in one straight heavy coil without a wave.

"You remind me of some Saxon Edith I have seen in a picture," said Mrs. Orton Beg, looking at her admiringly.

"But, dear child," her mother deprecated, "should you make a dressing-room of the drawing-room?"

"I know Mrs. Orton Beg will pardon me," said Edith, rolling her hair up deftly and neatly as she spoke, with the air of a privileged person quite at home.

Mrs. Orton Beg smiled at her affectionately; but before she could speak the door opened once

more, and the servant announced, "Lord Dawne."

And there entered a grave, distinguished-looking man between thirty and forty years of age, apparently, with black hair, and deep blue eyes at once penetrating and winning in expression.

Mrs. Orton Beg greeted him with pleasure, Mrs. Beale with pleasure also, but with more ceremony, Edith quite simply and naturally, and then he sat down. He was in riding dress, with his whip and hat in his hand.

"This is an unexpected pleasure. I did not know you were at Morne," said Mrs. Orton Beg. "Is Claudia with you?"

"No, I have only come for a few days," Lord Dawne replied. "I came to see Adeline specially, but they don't return from town till to-morrow. They have all been assisting at the marriage of a niece of yours, I hear, and the Heavenly Twins have been prolonging the festivities on their own account. Adeline wrote to me in despair, and I have come to see if I can be of any use. My sister," he added, turning to Mrs. Beale with his bright, almost boyish smile, which was like his nephew Diavolo's, and made them both irresistible—"my sister flatters herself that I have some influence with the children, and as it is quite certain that nobody else has, I am careful not to dispel the illusion. It is a comfort to her. But the twins will not allow me to deceive myself upon that head. They put me in my place every time I see them. The last time we had a serious talk together I noticed that Diavolo was thinking deeply, and hoped for a moment that it was about what I was saying; but that, apparently, had not interested him at all, for I had the curiosity to ask, just to see if I had, perchance, made any impression, and discovered that he had had something else in his mind the whole time. 'I was just wondering,' he answered, 'if you care much about being Duke of Morningquest.' 'No, not very much,' I assured him; 'why?' 'Well, I was pretty certain you didn't,' he replied; 'and, you see, I do; so I was just thinking, couldn't you remain as you are when grandpapa dies, and let me walk into the title? Then I'd give Angelica the Hamilton House property, and it would be very jolly for all of us.' 'But, look here,' Angelica broke in, in her energetic way, 'if you're going to be a duke I won't be left plain Miss Hamilton-Wells.' 'You couldn't be "plain" Miss anything,' Diavolo gallantly assured her, bowing in the most courtly way. But Angelica said, with more force than refinement, that that was all rot, and then Diavolo lost his temper and pulled her hair, and she got hold of his and dragged him out of the room by his—my presence of course counted for nothing. And the next I saw of them they were on their ponies in a secluded grassy glade of the forest, tilting at each other with long poles for the dukedom. Angelica says she means to beat Demosthenes hollow—I use her own phraseology to give character to the quotation; that delivering orations with a natural inclination to stammering was nothing to get over compared to the disabilities which being a girl imposes upon her; but she means to get over them all by hook, which she explains as being the proper development of her muscles and physique generally, and by crook, which she defines as circumventing the slave-drivers of her sex, a task which she seems to think can easily be accomplished by finessing."

"And what was the last thing?" Mrs. Orton Beg inquired, smiling indulgently.

"Oh, that was very simple," Lord Dawne

rejoined. "Diavolo, dressed in velvet, was caught and taken up by a policeman for recklessly driving a hansom in Oxford Street, Angelica being inside the same disguised in something of her mother's."

"I wonder it was Angelica who went inside!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed.

"Well, that was what her mother said," Lord Dawne replied; "and both her parents seem to think the matter was not nearly so bad as it might have been in consequence. Mr. Hamilton-Wells had to pay a fine for the furious driving, and use all his influence with the Press to keep the thing out of the papers."

"But where did the children get the hansom?" Mrs. Beale begged to be informed.

"I regret to say that they hailed it through the dining-room window, and plied the driver with raw brandy until his venal nature gave in to their earnestly persuasive eloquence and the contents of their purses, and he consented to let Diavolo 'just try what it was like to sit up on that high box,' Angelica having previously got inside; and, of course, the moment the young scamp had the reins in his hands he drove off full tilt."

"Oh, dear, poor Lady Adeline!" Mrs. Beale exclaimed.

Lord Dawne smiled again, and changed the subject. "Did you feel the storm much here?" he asked. "My trees have suffered a great deal, I am sorry to say."

"Ah, that reminds me," Mrs. Beale began. "A very strange and solemn thing happened on the day of the storm; have you heard of it, Olive?"

"No," Mrs. Orton Beg answered, with interest. "What was it?"

"Well, you know the dean's brother has a large family of daughters," Mrs. Beale replied, "and they had a very charming governess, Miss Winstanley, a lady by birth, and an accomplished person, and extremely *spirituelle*. Well, on the morning of the storm she was sitting at work with one of her pupils in the schoolroom, when another came in from the garden, and uttered an exclamation of surprise when she saw Miss Winstanley. 'How did you get in, and take your things off so quickly?' she said. 'I have not been out,' Miss Winstanley answered. 'Why, I saw you—I ran past you over by the duck pond!' 'Dear child, you must be mistaken. I haven't been out to-day,' the governess answered, smiling. Well, that child got out her work and sat down, but she had hardly done so when another came in, and also exclaimed, 'Oh, Miss Winstanley! How did you get here? I saw you standing looking out of the window at the bottom of the picture gallery as I ran past this minute.' 'I must have a double,' said Miss Winstanley lightly. 'But it was you,' the child insisted; 'I saw you quite well, flowers and all.' The governess was wearing some scarlet geranium. 'You know what they say if people are seen like that where they have never been in the body?' she said jokingly. 'They say it is a sign that that person is going to die.' In the afternoon," Mrs. Beale continued, lowering her voice and glancing round involuntarily—and in the momentary pause the rush of the gale without sounded obtrusively—"in the afternoon of that same day she went out alone for a walk, and did not return, and they became alarmed at last, and sent some men to search for her when the storm was at its height, and they found her lying across a stile. She had been killed by the branch of a tree falling on her."

"How do you explain that?" Mrs. Orton Beg said softly to Lord Dawne.

"I should not attempt to explain it," he answered, rising.

"Must you go?"

"Yes, I am sorry to say. Claudia and Ideala charged me with many messages for you."

"They are together as usual, and well, I trust?"

"Yes," he answered, "and most anxious to hear a better account of your foot."

"Ah, I hope to be able to walk soon," she said, holding out her hand to him.

"What a charming man he is," Mrs. Beale remarked, when he had gone. "There is no hope of his marrying, I suppose," she added, trying not to look at her daughter.

"Oh no!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed, in an almost horrified tone.

Lord Dawne's friends made no secret of his grand and chivalrous devotion to the distinguished woman known to them all as Ideala. Every one of them was aware, although he had never let fall a word on the subject, that he had remained single on her account—everyone but Ideala herself. She never suspected it, or thought of love at all in connection with Lord Dawne—and, besides, she was married.

When her friends had gone that day Mrs. Orton Beg sat long in the gathering dusk, watching the newly lighted fire burn up, and thinking. She was thinking of Evadne chiefly, wondering why she had had no news of her, why her sister Elizabeth did not write, and tell her all about the wedding; and she was just on the verge of anxiety—in that state when various possibilities of trouble that might have occurred to account for delays begin to present themselves to the mind, when all at once, without hearing anything, she became conscious of a presence near her, and looking up she was startled to see Evadne herself.

"My dear child!" she gasped, "what has happened? Why are you here?"

"Nothing has happened, auntie; don't be alarmed," Evadne answered, "I am here because I have been a fool."

She spoke quietly but with concentrated bitterness, then sat down and began to take off her gloves with that exaggerated show of composure which is a sign in some people of suppressed emotion.

Her face was pale, but her eyes were bright, and the pupils were dilated.

"I have come to claim your hospitality, auntie," she pursued, "to ask you for shelter from the world for a few days, because I have been a fool. May I stay?"

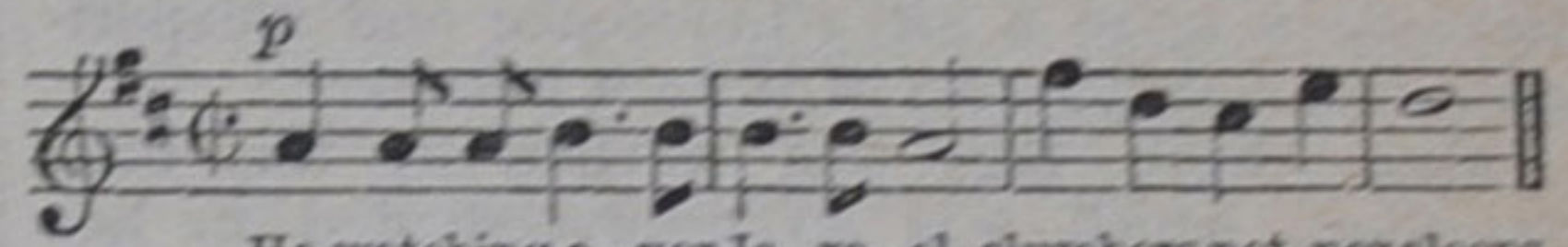
"Surely, dear child," Mrs. Orton Beg replied; and then she waited, mastering the nervous tremor into which the shock of Evadne's sudden appearance had thrown her with admirable self-control. And here again the family likeness between aunt and niece was curiously apparent. Both masked their agitation because both by temperament were shy and ashamed to show strong feeling.

Evadne looked into the fire for a little, trying to collect herself. "I knew what was right," she began at last, in a low voice, "I knew we should take nothing for granted, we should never be content merely to feel and suppose and hope for the best in matters about which we should know exactly. And yet I took no trouble to ascertain. I fell in love, and liked the sensation, and gave

myself up to it unreservedly. Certainly I was a fool—there is no other word for it."

"But are you married, Evadne?" Mrs. Orton Beg asked, in a voice rendered unnatural by the rapid beating of her heart.

"Let me tell you, auntie, all about it," Evadne answered hoarsely. She drew her chair a little closer to the fire, and spread her hands out to the blaze. There was no other light in the room by this time. The wind without howled dismally still, but at intervals, as if with an effort. During one of its noisiest bursts the cathedral clock began to strike, and hushed it, as it were, suddenly. It seemed to be listening, to be waiting, and Evadne waited and listened too, raising her head. There was a perceptible, momentary pause, then came the chime, full, round, mournful, melodious, yet glad too, in the strength of its solemn assurance, filling the desolate regions of sorrow and silence with something of hope whereon the weary mind might repose—



He, watching o - ver Is - ra - el, slumbers not, nor sleeps.

When the last reverberation of the last note had melted out of hearing, Evadne sighed; then she straightened herself, as if collecting her energy, and began to speak.

"Yes, I am married," she said; "but when I went to change my dress after the ceremony I found this letter. It was intended, you see, to reach me some days before it did, but unfortunately it was addressed to Fraylingay, and time was lost in forwarding it." She handed it to her aunt, who raised her eyebrows when she saw the writing, as if she recognised it, hastily drew the letter from its envelope, and held it so that the blaze fell upon it while she read. Evadne knelt on the hearthrug and stirred the fire, making it burn up brightly.

Mrs. Orton Beg returned the letter to the envelope when she had read it. "What did you do?" she said.

"I read it before I went downstairs, and at first I could not think what to do, so we drove off together, but on the way to the station it suddenly flashed upon me that the proper thing to do would be to go at once and hear all that there was to tell; and fortunately Major Colquhoun gave me an opportunity of getting away without any dispute. He went to see about something, leaving me in the carriage, and I just got out, walked round the station, took a hansom, and drove off to the General Post Office to telegraph to my people."

"But why didn't you go home?"

"For several reasons," Evadne answered, "the best being that I never thought of going home. I wanted to be alone and think. I fancied that at home they either could not or would not tell me anything of Major Colquhoun's past life, and I was determined to know the truth exactly. And I can't tell you how many sayings of my father's recurred to me all at once with a new significance, and made me fear that there was some difference between his point of view and mine on the subject of a suitable husband. He told me himself that Major Colquhoun had been quite frank about his past career, and then, when I came to think, it appeared to me clearly that it was the frankness which had satisfied my father; the career itself was nothing. You heard how pleased they were about my engagement?"

"Yes," Mrs. Orton Beg answered slowly, "and

I confess I was a little surprised when I heard from your mother that your *fiancé* had been 'wild' in his youth, for I remembered some remarks you made last year about the kind of man you would object to marry, and it seemed to me from the description that Major Colquhoun was very much that kind of man."

"Then why didn't you warn me?" Evadne exclaimed.

"I don't know whether I quite thought it was a subject for warning," Mrs. Orton Beg answered, "and at anyrate, girls *do* talk in that way sometimes, not really meaning it. I thought it was mere *youngness* on your part, and theory; and I don't know now whether I quite approve of your having been told—of this new departure," she added, indicating the letter.

"I do," said Evadne decidedly. "I would stop the imposition, approved of custom, connived at by parents, made possible by the state of ignorance in which we are carefully kept—the imposition upon a girl's innocence and inexperience of a disreputable man for a husband."

Mrs. Orton Beg was startled by this bold assertion, which was so unprecedented in her experience that for a moment she could not utter a word; and when she did speak she avoided a direct reply, because she thought any discussion on the subject of marriage, except from the sentimental point of view, was indelicate.

"But tell me your position exactly," she begged—"what you did next: why you are here!"

"I went by the night mail North," Evadne answered, "and saw them. They were very kind. They told me everything. I can't repeat the details; they disgust me."

"No, pray don't!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed hastily. She had no mind for anything unsavoury.

"They had been abroad, you know," Evadne pursued; "otherwise I should have heard from them as soon as the engagement was announced. They hoped to be in time, however. They had no idea the marriage would take place so soon."

Mrs. Orton Beg reflected for a little, and then she asked in evident trepidation, for she had more than a suspicion of what the reply would be, "And what are you going to do?"

"Decline to live with him," Evadne answered.

This was what Mrs. Orton Beg had begun to suspect, but there is often an element of surprise in the confirmation of our shrewdest suspicions, and now she sat upright, leant forward, and looked at her niece aghast. "What?" she demanded.

"I shall decline to live with him," Evadne repeated, with emphasis.

Mrs. Orton Beg slowly resumed her reclining position, acting as one does who has heard the worst, and realises that there is nothing to be done but to recover from the shock.

"I thought you loved him," she ventured, after a prolonged pause.

"Yes, so did I," Evadne answered, frowning—"but I was mistaken. It was a mere affair of the senses, to be put off by the first circumstance calculated to cause a revulsion of feeling by lowering him in my estimation—a thing so slight that, after reading the letter, as we drove to the station—even so soon! I could see him as he is. I noticed at once—but it was for the first time—I noticed that, although his face is handsome, the expression of it is not noble at all." She shuddered as at the sight of something repulsive. "You see," she explained, "my taste is cultivated to so

fine an extent, I require something extremely well-flavoured for the dish which is to be the *pièce de resistance* of my life-feast. My appetite is delicate, it requires to be tempted, and a husband of that kind, a moral leper"—she broke off with a gesture, spreading her hands, palms outward, as if she would fain put some horrid idea far from her. "Besides, marrying a man like that, allowing him an assured position in society, is countenancing vice, and"—she glanced round apprehensively, then added in a fearful whisper—"helping to spread it."

Mrs. Orton Beg knew in her head that reason and right were on Evadne's side, but she felt in her heart the full force of the custom and prejudice that would be against her, and shrank appalled by the thought of what the cruel struggle to come must be if Evadne persisted in her determination. In view of this, she sat up in her chair once more energetically, prepared to do her best to dissuade her; but then again she relapsed, giving in to a doubt of her own capacity to advise in such an emergency, accompanied by a sudden and involuntary feeling of respect for Evadne's principles, however peculiar and unprecedented they might be, and for the strength of character which had enabled her so far to act upon them. "You must obey your own conscience, Evadne," was what she found herself saying at last. "I will help you to do that. I would rather not influence you. You may be right. I cannot be sure—and yet—I don't agree with you. For I know if I could have my husband back with me I would welcome him, even if he were—a leper." Evadne compressed her lips in steady disapproval. "I should think only of his future. I should forgive the past."

"That is the mistake you good women all make," said Evadne. "You set a detestably bad example. So long as women like you will forgive anything, men will do anything. You have it in your power to set up a high standard of excellence for men to reach in order to have the privilege of associating with you. There is this quality in men, that they will have the best of everything; and if the best wives are only to be obtained by being worthy of them, they will strive to become so. As it is, however, why should they? Instead of punishing them for their depravity, you encourage them in it by overlooking it; and besides," she added, "you must know that there is no past in the matter of vice. The consequences become hereditary, and continue from generation to generation."

Again Mrs. Orton Beg felt herself checked.

"Where did you hear all this, Evadne?" she asked.

"I never heard it. I read—and I thought," she answered. "But I am only now beginning to understand," she added. "I suppose moral axioms are always the outcome of pained reflection. Knowledge cries to us in vain as a rule before experience has taken the sharp edge off our egotism—by experience, I mean the addition of some personal feeling to our knowledge."

"I don't understand you in the least, Evadne," Mrs. Orton Beg replied.

"Your husband was a good man," Evadne answered indirectly. "You have never thought about what a woman ought to do who has married a bad one—in an emergency like mine, that is. You think I should act as women have been always advised to act in such cases, that I should sacrifice myself to save that one man's soul. I take a different view of it. I see that the world is

not a bit the better for centuries of self-sacrifice on the woman's part, and therefore I think it is time we tried a more effectual plan. And I propose now to sacrifice the man instead of the woman."

Mrs. Orton Beg was silent.

"Have you nothing to say to me, auntie?" Evadne asked at last caressingly.

"I do not like to hear you talk so, Evadne. Every word you say seems to banish something—something from this room—something from my life to which I cling. I think it is my faith in love—and loving. You may be right, but yet—the consequences! the struggle, if we must resist! It is best to submit. It is better not to know."

"It is easier to submit—yes; it is disagreeable to know," Evadne translated.

There was another pause, then Mrs. Orton Beg broke out, "Don't make me think about it. Surely I have suffered enough? Disagreeable to know! It is torture. If I ever let myself dwell on the horrible depravity that goes on unchecked, the depravity which you say we women license by ignoring it when we should face and unmask it, I should go out of my mind. I do know—we all know; how can we live and not know? But we don't think about it—we can't—we daren't. See! I try always to keep my own mind in one attitude, to keep it filled for ever with holy and beautiful thoughts. When I am alone, I listen for the chime, and when I have repeated it to myself slowly—

He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps—my heart swells. I leave all that is inexplicable to Him, and thank Him for the love and the hope with which He feeds my heart and keeps it from hardening. I thank Him too," she went on hoarsely, "for the terrible moments when I feel my loss afresh, those early morning moments, when the bright sunshine and the beauty of all things only make my own barren life look all the more bare in its loneliness; when my soul struggles to free itself from the shackles of the flesh that it may spread its wings to meet that other soul which made earth heaven for me here, and will, I know, make all eternity ecstatic as a dream for me hereafter. It is good to suffer, yes; but surely I suffer enough? My husband—if I cry to him, he will not hear me; if I go down on my knees beside his grave, and dig my arms in deep, deep, I shall not reach him. I cannot raise him up again to caress him, or move the cruel weight of earth from off his breast. The voice that was always kind will gladden me no more; the arms that were so willing to protect—the world—just think how big it is! and if I traverse it every yard, I shall not find him. He is not anywhere in all this huge expanse. Ah, God! the agony of yearning, the ache, the ache; why must I live?"

"Auntie!" Evadne cried. "I am selfish." She knelt down beside her and held her hand. "I have made you think of your own irreparable loss, compared with which I know my trouble is so small. Forgive me."

Mrs. Orton Beg put her arms round the girl's neck and kissed her. "Forgive me," she said. "I am so weak, Evadne, and you—ah! you are strong."

CHAPTER XV

THE Fraylings had sent their children and the majority of their servants back to Fraylingay the

day after the wedding, but had decided to stay in London themselves with Major Colquhoun until Evadne wrote to relieve their anxiety, which was extreme, and gave them some information about her movements and intentions.

Mr. Frayling spent most of the interval in prancing up and down. He recollected all his past grievances, real and imaginary, and recounted them, and also speculated about those that were to come, and mentioned the number of things he was always doing for everybody, the position he had to keep up and consider for the sake of his family, the scandal there would be if this story got about; and described in one breath both his determination to hush it up and his conviction that it would be utterly impossible to do so. Whenever the postman knocked he went to the door to look for a letter, and coming back empty-handed each time, he invariably remarked that it was disgraceful, simply disgraceful, and he had never heard of such a thing in all his life. There was blame and severity in his attitude towards poor Mrs. Frayling; he seemed to insinuate that she might and should have done something to prevent all this; while there was a mixture of sympathy, deprecation, and apology in his manner to his son-in-law, combined with a certain air of absolving himself from all responsibility in the matter.

Major Colquhoun's own attitude was wholly enigmatical. He smoked cigars, read novels, and said nothing except in answer to such remarks as were specially addressed to him, and then he confined himself to the shortest and simplest form of rejoinder possible.

"The dear fellow's patience is exemplary," Mrs. Frayling remarked to her husband as they went to bed one night. "He conceals his own feelings *quite*, and never utters a complaint."

"Humph!" grunted Mr. Frayling, who scented some reproach in this remark; "if the dear fellow does not suffer from impatience, and has no feelings to conceal, it is not much marvel if he utters no complaint. I believe he doesn't care a rap, and is only thinking of how to get out of the whole business."

"Oh, my dear, how *dreadful!*" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed. "I am sure you are quite mistaken. You don't understand him at all."

Mr. Frayling shrugged his shoulders and snorted. He despised feminine conclusions too much to reply to them, but not nearly enough to be wholly unmoved by them.

Mrs. Frayling spent the three days in sitting still, embroidering silk flowers on a satin ground, and watering them well with her tears. But on the morning of the fourth day, by the first post, letters arrived which put an end to their suspense. One was from Mrs. Orton Beg and the other from Evadne herself. Mrs. Frayling read them aloud at the breakfast table, and the three sat for an hour in solemn conclave, considering them.

Mrs. Orton Beg had had time to recover herself and reflect before she wrote, and the consequence was some modification of her first impression.

"MY DEAR ELIZABETH,—Evadne is here; she arrived this afternoon. On her wedding-day she received a letter from a lady, whose name I am not allowed to mention here, but written under the impression that Evadne was being kept in ignorance of Major Colquhoun's past life, and offering to give her any information that had been withheld so that she might not be blindly entrapped into marrying him under the delusion

that he was a worthy man. The letter arrived too late, but Evadne went off, nevertheless, on the spur of the moment to make further inquiries, the result of which is great indignation on her part for having been allowed to marry a man of such antecedents, and a determination not to live with him. She wishes to stay here with me for the present, and I am very glad to have her. I give her an asylum, but I shall not speak a word to influence her decision in any way if I can help it. It is a matter of conscience with her, and I perceive that her moral consciousness and mine are not quite the same; but in the present state of my ignorance, I feel that it would be presumption on my part to set my own up as superior, and therefore I think it better not to interfere in any way.

"You need not be in the least anxious about Evadne. She is quite well, has an excellent appetite, and is not at all inclined to pose as a martyr. I confess I should have thought myself she would have suffered more in the first days of her disillusion, for she certainly was very much in love with Major Colquhoun; but her principles are older than her acquaintance with him, and ingrained principle is a force superior to passion, it seems—which is as it should be.

"I am sorry for you all, and for you especially, dear, in this dilemma, for I know how you will feel it; and I am the more sorry because I cannot say a single word which would relieve the state of perplexity you must be in, or be in any way a comfort to you.—Your loving sister,

"OLIVE ORTON BEG."

Evadne's letter ran thus:—

"THE CLOSE,
MORNINGQUEST, 4th October.

"MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,—Aunt Olive has kindly written to tell you exactly why I am here, so that my letter need only be a supplement to hers. For whatever trouble and anxiety I may have caused you, forgive me. The thought of it will be a pang to me as long as I live.

"Since I left you I have been fully informed of circumstances in Major Colquhoun's past career which make it impossible for me to live with him as his wife. I find that I consented to marry him under a grave misapprehension of his true character—that he is not at all a proper person for a young girl to associate with, and that in point of fact his mode of life has very much resembled that of one of those old-fashioned heroes, Roderick Random or Tom Jones, specimens of humanity whom I hold in peculiar and especial detestation.

"I consider I should be wanting in all right feeling if I held myself bound to him by vows which I took in my ignorance of his history. But I am afraid there will be some difficulty about the legal business. Kindly find out for me what will be the best arrangement to make for our separation, and tell me also if I ought to write to Major Colquhoun myself. I should like it better if my father would relieve me of this dreadful necessity.

"Until we have arranged matters, I should prefer to stay here with Aunt Olive. I am very well, and happier too, than I should have expected to be after the shock of such a disappointment, though perhaps less so than I ought in gratitude to be, considering the merciful deliverance I have had from what would have been the shipwreck of my life.—Your affectionate daughter,

"EVADNE."

"Good heavens! good heavens!" Mr. Frayling ejaculated several times.

Major Colquhoun had curled his moustache during the reading of the letter, with the peculiar set expression of countenance he was in the habit of assuming to mask his emotions.

"What language! what ideas!" Mr. Frayling proceeded. "I have been much deceived in that unhappy child," and he shook his head at his wife severely, as if it were her fault.

Major Colquhoun muttered something about having been taken in himself.

After the reading of the letter, Mrs. Frayling's comely plump face looked drawn and haggard. She could not utter a word at first, and had even exhausted her stock of tears. All at once, however, she recovered her voice, and gave sudden utterance to a determination.

"I must go to that child!" she exclaimed. "I must—I must go at once."

"You shall do no such thing," her husband thundered. He had no reason in the world for opposing the motherly impulse; but it relieves the male of certain species to roar when he is irritated, and the relief is all the greater when he finds some sentient creature to roar at, that will shrink from the noise, and be awed by it.

Mrs. Frayling looked up at him pathetically, then riveted her eyes upon the tablecloth, and rocked herself to and fro, but answered never a word.

Major Colquhoun, with the surface sympathy of sensual men, who resent anything that produces a feeling of discomfort in themselves, felt sorry for her, and relieved the tension by asking what was to be said in reply to Evadne's letter.

This led to a discussion of the subject, which was summarily ended by Mr. Frayling, who deputed to his wife the task of answering the letter, without allowing her any choice in the matter. It was never his way to do anything disagreeable if he could insist upon her doing it for him.

But Mrs. Frayling was nothing loth upon this occasion.

"Well," she began humbly, "I undertake the task since you wish it, but I should have thought a word from you would have gone further than anything I can say. However,"—she ventured to lift a hopeful head,—"*I have certainly always been able to manage Evadne,*"—she turned to Major Colquhoun,—"*I can assure you, George, that child has never given me a moment's anxiety in her life; and*"—she added in a broken voice—"I never, never thought that she would live to quote books to her parents."

Mr. Frayling found in his own inclinations a reason for everything. He was very tired of being shut up in London, and he therefore decided that they should go back to Fraylingay at once, and suggested that Major Colquhoun should follow them in a few days if Evadne had not in the meantime come to her senses. Major Colquhoun agreed to this. He would have hidden himself anywhere, done anything to keep his world in ignorance of what had befallen him. Even a man's independence is injured by excesses. As the tissues waste, the esteem of men is fawned for instead of being honestly earned, criticism is deprecated, importance is attached to the babbling of blockheads, and even to the opinion of fools. What should have been self-respect in Major Colquhoun had degenerated into a devouring vanity, which rendered him thin-skinned to the slightest aspersion. He had married Evadne in